

THE FIVE MOST COMMON DIGITAL MARKETING MISTAKES

And How To Fix Them



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Introduction

If you've been working in sales or marketing or communications for long, you already know many of the best practices around digital marketing. Given all the newsletters, eBooks, videos, webinars, and much more that pour out on the topic of "How to Market Today," it's not hard to stay informed.

Even so, there are a lot of digital marketing mistakes that many businesses are still making. It could be that people got into some bad habits over the years and have failed to leave those habits behind. Or it could be that someone came into marketing from another field and missed out on a few of the ground-floor basics.

Whatever the reason, it's never too late to improve. And it's always a good idea to take a fresh look at your own habits now and then.

We decided to explore the five most common mistakes people make in digital marketing, and also explore how to fix those mistakes. In the end, you'll have a good sense of where the most common digital marketing landmines are, and what you can do to avoid them or fix them.

Before we get started, let's do a quick recap of some of the terms and definitions you should know if you're going to use digital marketing effectively. Act-On has an in-depth guide with nearly 70 different definitions that you can access by [clicking here](#), but we thought we'd review a few of the most important ones for the purposes of this eBook.

**Whatever the reason, it's
never too late to improve.**

Key Definitions



A/B TESTING

This is when you test a campaign by deploying an existing, known performer (the control, usually A) against a trial version (the challenger, usually B) and analyzing behavioral difference among recipients



CALL TO ACTION (CTA)

In digital marketing, it's often an invitation to click to receive some kind of benefit, such as the opportunity to register for a webinar or download a white paper. CTAs are most often seen as a banner, button, or some type of graphic or text on a website, in an email, or in a pay-per-click ad.



CLICK-THROUGH RATE (CTR)

The percentage of people who actually click on a link (e.g., in an email message or sponsored ad) after seeing it.



CONVERSION RATE (CR):

The percentage measure of conversion in various stages in the buyer's journey. For example, if one person in every hundred visitors to a landing page fills out a form, that page's conversion rate is 1:100, or 1 percent.



LANDING PAGE

A single web page that appears in response to a click, usually in an email, an online ad, or on another web page. Landing pages are generally used to promote a single idea or action; they often offer something of value in return for the visitor filling in contact information.



OPTIMIZATION

The process of reviewing (and/or testing) and then revising an asset so that it performs more effectively.

Mistake #1: Not Testing Your Way to Success

The biggest difference between successful digital marketers and unsuccessful digital marketers is that the successful ones continuously test their campaigns.

When you test your campaign, you'll want to use the A/B split testing methodology mentioned in the key definitions. A/B split testing allows you to compare one campaign element (the control) against a variation of that element. The result is that you can test which changes to the control improve the click-through rate or the conversion rate.

Many people try to skip this step and design their campaigns around what they think would be most appealing. But you're only one data point, and you're already an insider, so basing a campaign solely on your opinion (or the opinions of a few people in your office) is a prescription for failure.

Action Steps for You

Be sure to have the discipline to run A/B split tests for your next campaign.

Don't make assumptions about how your target market will respond.



Mistake #1: Not Testing Your Way to Success (continued)

Here's a great story of why you don't want to base your campaign on individual preferences (or previously held assumptions):

It's a commonly held belief that having a security badge on a website improves conversion rates. (A security badge is a graphic that indicates that the website has security features built in.)

But one designer decided to test whether eliminating a security badge from a landing page would significantly decrease his conversion rate. So he did an A/B split test where one landing page had the security badge and the other landing page did not have the security badge.

To his great surprise, eliminating the security badge didn't decrease his conversion rate. Instead it actually increased conversions 400%!

The lesson is that you won't know how your audience responds to specific changes until you test your way to success. With that in mind, remember that it's always a good idea to run A/B split tests to optimize your campaigns.



Mistake #2: Having Unrealistic Expectations on How Long It Takes to Test a Campaign

Wouldn't it be great if we could run a campaign and have instant data that allows us to make changes on the fly? In some cases, that's possible. For example, if you're A/B testing an email marketing campaign, as soon as one version or the other wins, the rest of the campaign can go out with the winning message. And within 48 hours, you should have enough data to tell whether the campaign worked or not. But other digital marketing platforms require more time before you can make a judgment on the success or the failure the campaign.

For example, it takes about 90 days before you can get a good read on whether or not paid search is a viable channel for your business. Sure, early on, you'll have some winning paid search ads and some losing ads, but you won't get a statistically viable read until you've collected data over a longer period of time.

Action Steps for You

Even though some campaigns can provide you a quick, early indication on whether or not they work, other campaigns require much more time to fully play out. That's not to say that you shouldn't optimize along the way. It's just to say that in some cases, you'll need a longer period of time before you decide to pull the plug (or increase the budget).

- **Be realistic about how soon to expect results.**
- **Don't end a trial before you have conclusive results.**
- **Don't spend resources on a trial if you can't see it all the way through.**

Mistake #2: Having Unrealistic Expectations on How Long It Takes to Test a Campaign (continued)

In a similar sense, online display campaigns take about 90 days before they're effectively optimized for success. Why? Because there are adjustments you should be making on your ads and where they run that can happen only as you collect data on the results.

In other words, as the ads run across 1000 websites, you'll learn which websites are your top performers. The only way to do that is to let the ads run and then make adjustments as the data comes in.

Search engine optimization also takes about 90 to 180 days to see the full effects. If you're developing content around a certain set of keywords, then it will require three to six months to see if search engines adjusted your rankings based on your changes.



Mistake #3: Focusing Your Efforts on the Most Popular Platforms

It's common for marketers to focus their attention on whatever is getting the most press at that moment.

When search engine optimization was king, marketers focused all their attention on SEO, ignoring some of the more tried-and-true techniques. A few years later, social media came along, and the same thing happened. (During that period, Pepsi famously pulled most of its marketing budget out of traditional media and put it into social media. The results were [less than stellar](#).)

Now that mobile is the hot topic, many marketers are jumping on that bandwagon. While it's always a good idea to try new techniques and technologies, it's important to remember that tried and true technologies still work. So as you're exploring new channels, be sure to keep in mind that more traditional channels such as email, direct mail, telemarketing, and other traditional platforms are still highly effective. (And email still has the highest rate of return for most marketers: For every \$1 spent, email marketing generates \$38 in ROI, says the [DMA](#).)

That's not to discourage you from trying new things – it's just to say that you shouldn't put all your eggs in whatever the platform du jour is.

Action Steps for You

It's always a good idea to try out new tactics, but not at the expense of tried-and-true technologies and channels. With that in mind, carve off a small percentage of your budget to test new technologies or tactics while continuing to optimize your traditional approaches. By doing so, you'll have a much more balanced and even-keeled campaign, while still taking advantage of emerging trends and tech – to see if they're right for you.

- **Keep doing what works for your company, even if it's not the trending thing.**
- **Keep part of your budget for experiments. Expect a percentage of them to fail.**
- **Introduce change in small doses, so you can find the right balance of old standbys and new hot techniques.**

Mistake #4: Thinking that Mobile is Just for B2C

Econsultancy reports that 39% of marketers have no mobile strategy. Given the fact that consumers now spend more time on their mobile devices than they do on their desktop devices, missing that opportunity is a big mistake.

The challenge with mobile is that it's a little more intimidating than social media or email marketing. Marketers are still scratching their heads on how to use it to grow their business. And it may require technical change to your website and email messages in order for you to use it well. That said, when it all comes down to it, mobile technology is really not all that complex.

There are seven key categories for mobile:

- mobile websites
- mobile apps
- mobile emails
- SMS
- proximity marketing
- mobile display
- mobile paid search

Each of these categories has its strengths and weaknesses for B2B marketers, so be sure to explore each one in order to put it to use for your business.

Action Steps for You

For the B2B world, the most important tools are mobile websites and mobile emails. The other tools (e.g., apps, SMS, display, paid search, proximity marketing) can be used as well, but the starting point is to have a mobile optimized website, as well as emails that can be easily read on a mobile device.

After all, almost 40% of the time, your customer will be reading your email and visiting your website via mobile. Therefore, it's important to design your emails and your website with that in mind.

- Optimize your website and email templates for mobile ([get the How to Use Mobile Marketing to Generate Leads eBook](#)).
- Most companies will be best served with responsive design.
- Test, test, test.

Mistake #5: Low Quality Content

Content marketing gets a lot of press and deservedly so; good content can be extremely effective. However, if you're just pushing out content for the sake of pushing out content, you'll get diminishing returns over time.

The only way to succeed at content marketing is for the reader to feel as though the content was written specifically for them, and for the content to be of such high quality that they come back for more.

In the old days, it was fine to focus on quantity of content over quality of content. Google tended to rank websites that were updated on a regular basis higher than those that weren't. But today, Google ranks web pages based on a wider variety of criteria, including engagement, with increasing emphasis on time on site, as well as social sharing. They see time on site and social sharing as two key indicators that your content is resonating with your audience.

Action Steps for You

- **Raise your standards for content.**
- **Resist the temptation to share content that isn't stellar.**
- **Go for quality over quantity. You're far better off with one good piece than five or even ten not-so-good pieces.**

And, if you're bold enough, have a strong point of view that is not commonly held by others. In other words, if you can take and defend a contrarian point of view on a topic, you'll get people to sit up and take notice. And when people sit up and take notice, they spend more time on your page and share it with more friends. That's a path towards success.

The Bottom Line

It's important to understand what digital marketing best practices are. It's equally important to understand what the common mistakes are. You'll be able to avoid those pitfalls. Better still, you'll be able to make adjustments to your own campaigns so that those campaigns become more and more successful over time. We've given you five key mistakes to avoid in the previous pages, but we're going to give you a final, bonus error that magnifies those five.

What's that mistake? Many people don't take action on what they learn in guides and eBooks like this one. With that in mind, we'd like to encourage you to take these tips and techniques and put them into action for your own business. Start with the one that addresses your weakest area and focus on the action steps, then incorporate the others. By doing so, you can continuously optimize your campaigns and test your way to success.

And that will put you on the path to profitability.

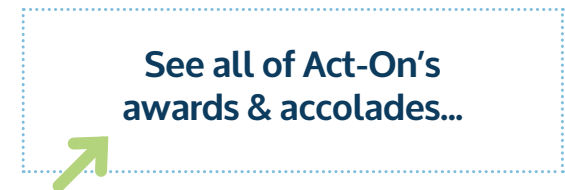
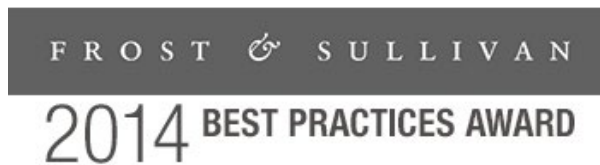


About the Author:

Jamie Turner is the co-author of [How to Make Money with Social Media and Go Mobile](#). He is a regular guest on CNN on the subjects of social media, mobile marketing, and branding. He also runs [SIXTY](#), a marketing optimization firm, and the [60 Second Marketer](#), an online magazine for marketers around the globe.



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About Act-On Software

Act-On Software is a marketing automation company delivering innovation that empowers marketers to do the best work of their careers. Act-On is the only integrated workspace to address the needs of the customer experience, from brand awareness and demand generation, to retention and loyalty. With Act-On, marketers can drive better business outcomes and see higher customer lifetime value. The Act-On platform provides marketers with power they can actually use, without the need for a dedicated IT resource.

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