

# Top 10 Online Marketing Trends for 2015



INTRO



As 2014 draws to a close, it is time to look forward and start planning for a new marketing year. Digital marketing continues to undergo a substantial transformation. As with any field that relies on communication technologies, digital marketing is rapidly developing in some areas, changing direction in others, and completely rendering some practices obsolete. Trends that gained prominence this year will continue to grow in importance and complexity.

Industry experts, pundits, and marketing bloggers have been making predictions for 2015 since early this summer, and more will probably be coming as the year comes to an end. JumpDEMAND has taken that data, reviewed those opinions, mixed in our own data, and compiled the list of topics that came to the top.

This e-book outlines the top 10 digital marketing trends as we see them and other items to keep an eye on. While some concepts are not necessarily new, their focus is changing and so it is still critical for businesses to keep that in mind as they move forward with their marketing strategies for 2015.

# CONTENT MARKETING

## 1. CONTENT MARKETING: SHIFTING TOWARDS HIGHER QUALITY AND VISUAL STORYTELLING

**Content Marketing** – the creation and delivery of information to prospects and existing customers – is the main driver of inbound marketing, and this trend continues to increase. This can take on many forms, such as blogs, case studies, how-to articles, white papers, application notes, and more visual sources like webinars, infographics, photos, and product videos. For content to be effective, it needs to provide value for potential customers. Since content is so diverse, companies need to determine which source works best with their audience.

The study on content marketing benchmarks and trends for 2014[1] shows that 93 per cent of polled marketers rely on content marketing for brand building and demand generation. However the push is more than just quantity, as quality of the content is improving. Marketers see the value in trying to get better at content marketing – 42 per cent of respondents indicated that they are more

effective at content marketing when compared to previous years. This number is expected to continue to grow as more emphasis is put on higher quality content.

The survey also found that 76 per cent of business-to-business (B2B) marketers are using video and they're increasingly sharing video and other content types via social media platforms. This focus on video and visual storytelling is expected to increase into next year.

Marketers are banking that content marketing is vastly more effective when images or video are added. Visual content in brands encourages greater engagement with customers. Visuals help marketers tell their stories quickly with impact and emotion – but they have to be the right visuals. And when the visual is a powerful one, be it an image or video, the effect is magnified.

**48%**  
plan to increase



**32%**  
remain the same



The majority of B2B marketers plan to increase their content marketing budget over the next 12 months.

**10%**  
plan to increase significantly



**1%**  
plan to decrease



**8%**  
are unsure



## SEARCH &amp; SOCIAL MEDIA

## 2. SEARCH AND SOCIAL MEDIA: NEW LEVEL OF INTEGRATION AND COLLABORATION

**Search engine optimization (SEO) and social media marketing** have always been connected, but they are slowly becoming one and the same. Some experts go so far as to suggest SEO and social media marketing will merge into a new discipline.

SEO has long been effective at consistently and affordably attracting high-intent traffic to pages. However, increasingly pure-play SEO strategies are coming under fire. As search engine algorithms continue to change, and users have more and more search options, keyword rankings begin to have less meaning. SEO is trending to being less an exercise in ranking as it is an effort to optimize visibility for different types of searches.



Social media continues to be a cultural phenomenon. Whether connectivity via desktop or mobile devices, the message is clear – social media is vast and fast growing.

As of the third quarter of 2014, Facebook had 1.35 billion monthly active users [2]. In the third quarter of 2012, the number of active Facebook users had surpassed one billion. Twitter's volume of unique visitors is growing at more than 80 percent [3] a year.

Individually, both of these disciplines produce good marketing results, but working together they become a growth machine. Search specialists in these fields need to leverage analytical techniques, as they are now for SEO, as well as be engaging, which is key to social marketing. SEO specialists need to

consider brand awareness and thought leadership into their strategic calculations. Social specialists need to become much more proficient in applying analytics to their work. This integration and collaboration may indeed see some companies melding these responsibilities into one position or department.

Being aware of the user's device preferences is also much more important. How people search, what types of content they search for and consume, and how they engage vary greatly based on whether they are using smartphones, tablets, or computers.



How user's engage varies greatly based on whether they are using smartphones, tablets, or computers.

## THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

### 3. BRANDING: INVEST IN AUTHENTICITY AND THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

**Every great company knows the importance of branding.** A successful brand is one that understands the needs and wants of customers and prospects. It's done by integrating brand strategies through a company at every point of public contact. A brand is the sum total of customers' experiences and perceptions with a company – some of which can be influenced while others cannot. As consumers continue to share and promote their user experiences across social media, consistency and authenticity of a brand is critical. Companies need to stay true to their brand images throughout their messaging or customers will spot the disconnect, and call them out on it.

Companies need to invest in marketing that allows them to establish a level of authenticity with their audience. They need to understand what's valuable to their customers and demonstrate that consistently. It is not good enough anymore to simply tell people what they stand for; they have to show it at every level of engagement.

To that end, thought leadership is taking precedence over personal branding. These terms are closely related yet they are subtly different. Some see personal branding as a solely self-serving tactic where thought leadership promotes credibility, an invested audience, and brand awareness. Done properly, thought leadership is a valuable way to brand a company. It allows people to feel comfortable with a firm even if it's a small business within an industry and not the market leader.



## RETARGETING EFFECT

## 4. RETARGETING: GROWING IN EFFECTIVENESS

**Retargeting isn't a new trend but it is a trend that will continue well into 2015.** Simply put, retargeting is advertising to people based on their prior engagement with your product, service or brand. Invesp Consulting reports that online ad click-through rates multiply tenfold when retargeting is used [4].

Because retargeting is growing in popularity, the options available to small business, marketers and advertisers are growing.

**Website Retargeting:** This isn't new but will continue to grow. When a user visits a website and leaves without converting, the company's display ads will be shown to the user on partner sites. This is a great way to help lessen the stress that comes with a website's bounce rate. With retargeting not all hope is lost.

**Email Retargeting:** This means supporting email campaigns with ad retargeting. Companies deliver their messages through partner sites to those opening their email messages.

**Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Retargeting:** Services exist where a business provides its mailing list and its targeted display ads begin popping up across the web.

**Facebook Retargeting:** Much like website retargeting, users who visit a website and leave without converting and then visit Facebook can be delivered specific display ads.



46% of search engine marketing professionals believe retargeting is the most underused online marketing technology.



Retargeted customers are three times more likely to click on your Ad than people who haven't interacted with your business before.



Here are a few best practices as reported by ReTargeter:[5]

- Frequency Cap:** Limit the number of ads a user is served so they don't become overwhelmed.
- Burn Code:** A burn code is a tracking element placed on a conversion page to help control what converted users will be retargeted with. Companies don't want to target them with something they just purchased so a related offering may be more appropriate.
- Audience Segmentation:** Just like email campaigns, companies want to segment their audiences when it comes to retargeting. If they sell kid's shoes and women's jackets, they need to make sure users get the right message.
- Use demographic, geographic & contextual targeting:** Companies can significantly increase their click-through-rates and lower customer acquisition costs when further segmenting their audiences.
- Retargeting is always about clicks:** Understand that retargeting has an element of branding attached to it. Click-through-rates may not be as high when compared to other types of campaigns, however part of retargeting involves brand recognition.
- Test and Optimize Creative:** Split-test your creative and always look for ways to improve it.

## PAID SEARCH

## 5. PAID SEARCH CONTINUES TO DOMINATE: SPEND YOUR MONEY ON THE RIGHT CONTENT AND PLATFORM

**The coming year shows no signs of pay-per-click (PPC) spending slowing down.** While Google dominates the field, there are several players investing in delivering a PPC option that meet the needs of small businesses. Many come from the social media genre including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and others. Of course, we also need to recognize Bing & Yahoo as players.

### Two things we know for sure:

1. The PPC options for small businesses continue to grow.
2. As the options grow, so does the complexity.

To really take advantage of PPC in 2015, small businesses will need to understand the statistics behind the ads to make intelligent decisions. Once they understand what the marketing is doing, they'll then need to understand how to use the tools to refine PPC campaigns.

The notion that one should spend money on PPC solely because a competitor is will not help businesses succeed. PPC provides any business the opportunity to grow. The products and/or services provided will dictate what advertiser's platform one should use.

As for the complexity of tools PPC providers give you to set-up and manage ad campaigns, small business will need to either commit time to learning the tools or look at outsourcing campaign management to a third party. While every PPC provider makes it relatively easy for any new company to quickly and easily set-up a PPC campaign, being able to make the campaign perform requires training, knowledge and experience. That said, companies should not be afraid of engaging in PPC. The reason the industry continues to grow as an advertising platform is that, when done right, it works. Companies already investing in PPC should watch the numbers and work on continuous improvement. Those businesses not yet investing in PPC, should seriously consider it for 2015. If they don't have the time or knowledge, there are many trusted organizations that can help them.

Did You Know?

Google found that four out of five people surveyed used search engines to conduct local searches. Eighty-eight percent used smartphones and 84 percent used a computer or tablet.

## EMAIL EVOLUTION

## 6. EVOLUTION OF DIRECT EMAIL: SEGMENTATION, PERSONALIZATION, RESPONSIVE DESIGN

**If you haven't heard, email is not dead.** In fact, email marketing continues to deliver the highest rate of return. WolfgangJaegel.com reported that for every dollar spent on email marketing, the average return was \$44.25.[6] Email remains the de facto communication standard for online consumers.

**The main email trends that will continue in 2015 include:**

**List segmentation:** This means segmenting a contact list so the value proposition is increased. By narrowing the focus and sending messages to targeted groups, recipients will find the campaign more relevant—and relevant campaigns get better results.

**Personalization:** Personalization is more than just using the recipient's first name in the opening line of an email message. We'll see more email marketing in 2015 that includes content specific to the recipient based on their interests.

**Extending the message:** In 2015 the emphasis will be on guiding people down a path. Rather than simply sending an email with information, a pitch or an announcement, more email marketers are focussing on accompanying their emails with landing pages to drive conversions.



**Responsiveness:** With the continued growth in the smart phone and tablet market, electronic communication needs to adapt to different electronic mediums. People viewing emails on smaller devices need to be able to easily navigate and read the email (i.e. have a positive experience).

**Permission-based email:** Getting permission to send email will continue to be important in 2015. Anyone leveraging email marketing needs to be aware of the trends in legislation that govern electronic communication. In North America, there are two main laws: the United States' CAN-SPAM Act of 2003; and the Canada's Anti-Spam Law (CASL) that came into effect on July 1, 2014. The aim of both laws is to combat SPAM. Understanding the rules governing email marketing will lead to better results and avoidance of financial penalties and email blocking.

Those that shy away from email marketing because of their own perception that emails are a nuisance will fall behind their competitors who have embraced it. When done right, email delivers value. When value is delivered brands are strengthened and business grows.



## MOBILE REVOLUTION

## 7. THE MOBILE REVOLUTION: MOBILE-FRIENDLY CONTENT AND ENGAGEMENT IS A MUST



Companies that don't have a mobile strategy should get one. This includes ensuring all digital assets are built using responsive design.

**Savvy marketers realize that the mobile revolution is upon us** and they have the numbers to back it up. According to eMarketer the number of local searches made via the mobile web continues to grow at a faster rate than desktop searches[7]. In addition, consumers who do local mobile searches are more likely to take action. One study found that half of consumers who conducted local searches via smartphone visited the store within a day, and 18 per cent of local queries on smartphones led to a purchase[8]. The importance of mobile marketing is undeniable. Another study by ABI research, predicts the global market for mobile commerce to reach \$163B by 2015[9]. Respondents consistently rated it as critical with more than 50 per cent of respondents within each sector surveyed saying their firms will invest heavily in mobile technologies over the next five years.

What does this mean for marketers in the coming year? Companies that don't have a mobile strategy, should get one. This includes ensuring all websites, conversion landing pages, user forms, emails and other digital assets are built using responsive design. The design and development should respond to the user's behavior and environment based on screen size, platform and orientation. As the user switches from their laptop to tablet to smartphone, the assets should automatically switch to accommodate for resolution, image size and scripting abilities. This is quickly becoming an important criterion in evaluating possible marketing tools.

Did You Know?

When it comes to how users interact with local-focused pay-per-click ads, more than 60 percent in the study said they used the local information found in an ad. **Of that local info:**

77%  
Seventy-seven percent of computer and tablet users also said the phone number was important in an ad versus 70 percent of smartphone users.

73%  
Seventy-three percent of smartphone users said directions were important in an ad; 78 percent of computer and tablet users said the same.

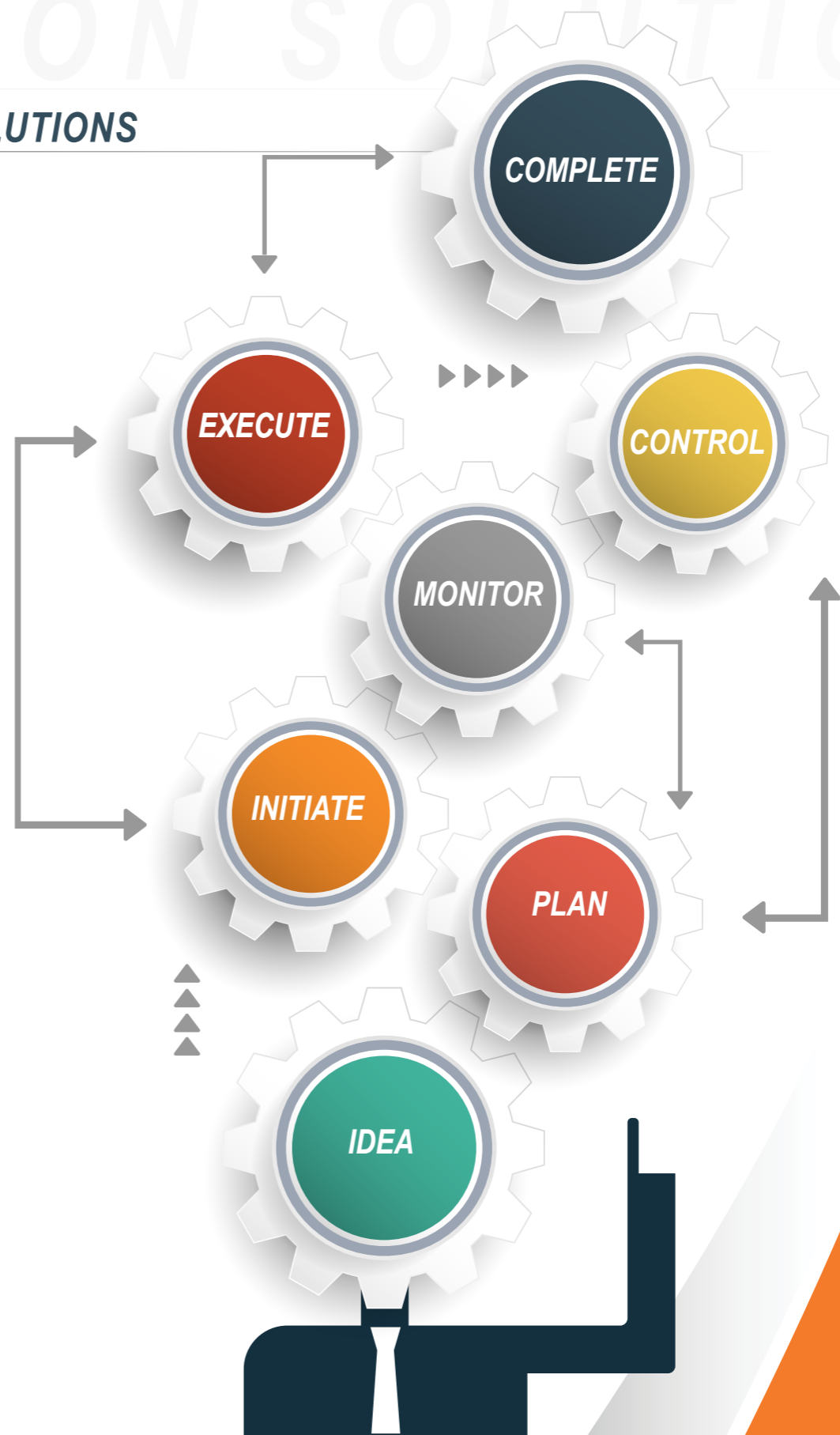


## 8. MARKETING AUTOMATION: LEVERAGE THE RIGHT TOOLS AND CLOUD SOLUTIONS

**Marketing automation** has been around for a while but over the last few years it has really begun to hit its stride as a necessary tool for facilitating next-level marketing strategies. According to research from The Aberdeen Group, using marketing automation can increase conversion rates by more than 50 per cent [10]. This will continue into and through 2015. There is no shortage of marketing automation tools on the market. They range from email service providers costing a few dollars a month to sophisticated and complex B2B solutions that can cost \$10K a month.

A trend that we'll see in 2015 is the adoption of marketing automation by businesses of all sizes. Whether a company is a one-person operation or employs 1,000 people, the usability of marketing automation tools is coinciding with the skill-set of a small business owner.

Marketing automation is a loosely used term that can refer to a simple web form that collects information from a user to sophisticated lead scoring and nurture campaign platforms. In 2015 businesses will continue to migrate to end-to-end marketing automation solutions versus disparate piecemeal solutions.



## Marketing automation elements that are making waves include:

**Responsive Landing Page Tools:** Landing pages play an important part in campaigns. Whether it is an email promotion, PPC advertisement, or another campaign, a landing page can make or break a campaign. Having landing pages that adapt to the screen sizes of tablets and smartphones is a must.

**Tracking Prospects:** Web analytics tools, such as Google Analytics, are very powerful. The downfall is they report anonymous data. Without specific prospect data it becomes difficult to create personalized promotions. Marketing automation platforms that include a marketing relationship management database to track and store prospect history will continue to rise in popularity.

**Conversion Tracking:** All marketing automation platforms have some form of tracking and reporting. Historically, reporting was isolated to specific campaign metrics, not conversions. Knowing how many people opened your email campaign is good but there is a shift to reporting how many people actually converted. Going into 2015, marketing automation platforms will be reporting actual campaign conversions in addition to the regular metrics we're used to seeing.

**Scalability:** Once invested in a marketing automation platform, it is tough to switch. Marketing automation providers understand this so a trend that will continue is making marketing automation platforms scale as businesses grow.

**Small Business:** More marketing automation players are going after smaller businesses. Marketing automation is not just for Fortune 500 companies – solutions do exist for one-person companies. The technology is out there to support businesses of any size.



## 9. BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE: ON-DEMAND, ACTIONABLE ANALYTICS



Today marketing technologists are self-made but look for the role to become more formalized in the coming years.

### Marketing used to suffer from a lack of metrics

on what was working and what was not. Now companies are drowning in a sea of data collected on customers, competitors, campaigns, and the global landscape. Much of this data is fragmented, collected from a variety of sources in inconsistent formats and stored away in separate departmental databases, websites, or spreadsheets.

In today's world, accurate data drives nearly every aspect of business operations. Marketing is no different. Success is dependent on decision-making and companies must move closer to operating in real time. Therefore the ability to analyze information rapidly to inform decision-making will be essential.

Marketers already use dozens of analytics tools in order to see how customers interact with their company's products or services. The importance of this aspect of marketing will rise in 2015, and spending for this is expected to rise by 60 per cent.[11] Further, we'll see marketing automation technologies applied more and more often – their use is predicted to grow by 50 per cent. In short, marketing data will become a crucial point in any marketing endeavor and its acquisition will be easier and faster. Consumers will generate a vast amount of detailed information and companies are expected to use specialized software to help them in making sense of the data at hand.

## 10. *Now Hiring:* *THE RISE OF THE MARKETING TECHNOLOGIST*

In a digital marketing world, automation software is the main means of engaging prospects and customers. A marketing team's choice of software and how to configure and operate it, along with how creatively the team applies it, greatly affects how your company influences its audience and how the audience perceives your company.

As digital marketing evolves the importance of mastering those capabilities grows. As such we're beginning to see the rise of marketing technologists within companies of all sizes. The online marketing world encompasses many elements. This requires strategy, understanding, and the skills to leverage online marketing tools cohesively. A marketing technologist is a hybrid of someone who understands their product and their customer, as well as being a tech-savvy marketer.

Scott Briner of Ion Interactive points out that "not every marketer needs to become a marketing technologist. But having one on your team dramatically improves the leverage that the rest of the marketing department is able to achieve with technology." [12]





Here are a few characteristics to look for in a marketing technologist:

**Proficient with Content Management Systems (CMS):** Marketing technologists understand how to configure the different CMS systems such as WordPress, Drupal, Joomla, and others.

**Competent in Marketing Automation:** Marketing technologists not only understand the elements that make up a marketing automation platform, but they know how to leverage the elements to have them work in-sync to execute effective campaigns.

**Tracking & Reporting:** Marketing technologists understand how to use technology to track campaign performance and conversions. Not only does proper tracking get put into place, the technologist can read and interpret the data to make informed decisions and strategies.

**Understand the Business:** Marketing technologists are not solely tech-savvy people, they also understand the principles of marketing, business, customers, and strategy.

So where does one find a marketing technologist? Many companies may already have one. Today marketing technologists are self-made but look for the role to become more formalized in the coming years.

**Interested in learning more  
about upcoming online  
marketing trends?**

**Contact ActiveDEMAND**  
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