

Tips to tweak your digital thinking

 By [Godfrey Parkin](#)

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Since a critical mass of senior executives were given iPads for Christmas, even the most previously technophobic of business leaders are demanding that digital marketing be taken seriously. This is a blessing and a curse - we see a lot of overnight app-happiness driving silly projects ahead of important initiatives. But at last the momentum is building and companies are striving to connect with customers in the digital places where they hang out.

None of this should be done without a strategy, of course, but that can take some time to develop and implement. In the meantime, what are some of the things you can do right now to achieve digital success?

Here are some ideas:

- Distinguish between brand awareness and lead conversion. Understand that different marketing activities have different outcomes, and that some initiatives will be great for building your brand, while others will be great for building sales. Click-through rate is generally a good measure of success if you are looking for traffic; but it doesn't measure your impact on brand awareness.
- Target your marketing locally, not nationally. Whether it is restaurants, bars, retail stores or petrol stations, customers are more loyal to a particular outlet than to a national brand. If you are a single independent entity, say a shop or a panel beater, why waste good marketing exposure on people outside your catchment area?
- Use digital press release services (SANEPR, Pressportal, PRWeb, PR Newswire, Marketwire, Business Wire and PrimeNewswire). Search optimise your text (especially your subject line and first paragraph) so your release will show when potential customers search. Don't forget to include hyperlinks to your web pages.
- Segment your emailing list into meaningful groups, and send targeted messages to each group. Think about segmenting by past behaviour rather than by demographics, or by personas if you have them.
- Create and promote a hashtag for every event you run and encourage participants to Tweet about their experience. An event doesn't have to be major or even public - a dinner for two, a night at the movies, even just enjoying the view can be cause to Tweet.
- Treat customer criticism like gold. People will Tweet about the things that irritate them at the time they are feeling the irritation, but rarely bother to call in to complain. Track mentions for free with tools like WhosTalkin and SocialMention.

Social criticism lets you identify and fix persistent customer experience issues - the small things that make all the difference.

- Pay attention to what successful companies in other industries are doing, especially those companies you personally are loyal to. Work out why you are loyal, and apply the lessons to your own brand. Look at every aspect of their digital presence, including their email marketing, their SEO, user experience, advertising, and social media.
- Outclass or flank your competitors by publishing or curating content around customer interests rather than around your brand. Growing communities (or "collectives") is easier and more powerful than growing brand fans. Don't let Facebook blind you to other alternatives in social media - consider using Pinterest, LinkedIn, or building your own social network on Ning.
- Don't let ROI drive your activities. While ROI may be important, it is not the only metric by which you can measure success, nor is it necessarily the most useful metric for managing continuous improvement. Managing your marketing exclusively on its ROI is like evaluating a vehicle exclusively on its fuel consumption rate. If that were the only measure of worthiness, we'd still be riding horses instead of flying in planes.
- Put time into testing. A/B split test landing pages, conversion funnel pages, email subject lines, ad copy, and calls to action. It is easier to get ten times the business out of your current contact base than to grow your contact base ten times.

ABOUT GODFREY PARKIN

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