

### 5.3: Marketing Communication Methods

**What you'll learn to do:** describe common methods of marketing communication, their advantages and disadvantages

A common challenge for people new to marketing is learning about the many marketing communication tools and methods now available and understanding how to use them effectively. Fortunately, most of us have first-hand experience of being on the receiving end of IMC—whether you like it or not, you are a consumer, and you've been the target of all kinds of marketing communication. You know the difference between an ad that gets your attention and one you just tune out, for example. You are familiar with the line between “persistent” and “annoying” when it comes to getting marketing-related emails or text messages. You recognize which buy-one-get-one-free offers are a great deal, and which ones seem like a racket.

All this experience will come in handy in this section and later in the course. You're getting closer to being on the other side of the wall, where you'll be tasked with using marketing communication methods and tools to devise your own marketing plan (in the last module of this course!). In this section, though, you'll get a chance to examine each of these marketing communication methods one by one. Fortunately, the underlying principles we've discussed up to this point apply to all of them: knowing your audience, defining strategy, setting objectives, crafting the message. Where paths diverge is in the tools themselves: how to design a great ad, how to produce a memorable event, how to get coverage for your organization in the news media, how to use email and social media skillfully for marketing purposes, and so on.

The next several readings provide a general overview of seven important marketing communication methods (shown in Figure 1, below) in common use today. This section will help you become familiar with each method, common tools associated with each method, how to use these methods effectively, and the advantages and disadvantages of each one. Some marketing professionals spend entire careers becoming specialists in one or more of these areas. Other marketers become generalists who are skilled at bringing together different tools—and experts—to execute effective IMC programs.



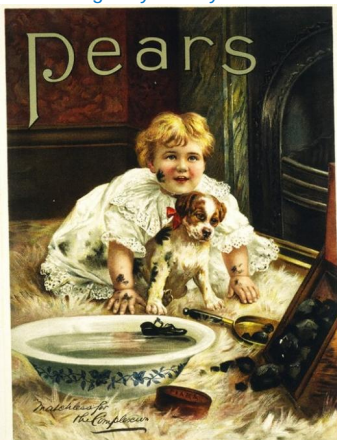
Figure 1. The Promotion Mix

Whether you think you're more of a generalist or a specialist, marketing offers great opportunities for creativity and experimentation. There will always be a new idea, strategy, tool, or combination of tactics that marketers can turn into IMC magic for their companies and their customers. As you learn about and gain experience with the basic tools and approaches, you'll see opportunities to try something new. And you should: in the marketing world, fresh is good!

The specific things you'll learn in this section include:

- Explain Advertising
- Explain Public Relations
- Explain Sales Promotions
- Explain Personal Selling
- Explain Direct Marketing
- Explain Digital Marketing
- Explain Guerrilla Marketing

#### Advertising: Pay to Play



A 1900 advertisement for Pears soap.

Advertising is any paid form of communication from an identified sponsor or source that draws attention to ideas, goods, services or the sponsor itself. Most advertising is directed toward groups rather than individuals, and advertising is usually delivered through media such as television, radio, newspapers and, increasingly, the Internet. Ads are often measured in *impressions* (the number of times a consumer is exposed to an advertisement).

Advertising is a very old form of promotion with roots that go back even to ancient times. In recent decades, the practices of advertising have changed enormously as new technology and media have allowed consumers to bypass traditional advertising venues. From the invention of the remote control, which allows people to ignore advertising on TV without leaving the couch, to recording devices that let people watch TV programs and skip the ads, conventional advertising is on the wane. Across the board, television viewership has fragmented, and ratings have fallen.

Print media are also in decline, with fewer people subscribing to newspapers and other print media and more people favoring digital sources for news and entertainment. Newspaper advertising revenue has declined steadily since 2000.<sup>[1]</sup> Advertising revenue in television is also soft, and it is split across a growing number of broadcast and cable networks. Clearly companies need to move beyond traditional advertising channels to reach consumers. Digital media outlets have happily stepped in to fill this gap. Despite this changing landscape, for many companies advertising remains at the forefront of how they deliver the proper message to customers and prospective customers.

### The Purpose of Advertising

Advertising has three primary objectives: to inform, to persuade, and to remind.

- **Informative Advertising** creates awareness of brands, products, services, and ideas. It announces new products and programs and can educate people about the attributes and benefits of new or established products.
- **Persuasive Advertising** tries to convince customers that a company's services or products are the best, and it works to alter perceptions and enhance the image of a company or product. Its goal is to influence consumers to take action and switch brands, try a new product, or remain loyal to a current brand.
- **Reminder Advertising** reminds people about the need for a product or service, or the features and benefits it will provide when they purchase promptly.



Left: Informative Advertising Right: Persuasive Advertising



Reminder Advertising

When people think of advertising, often **product-focused advertisements** are top of mind—i.e., ads that promote an organization's goods or services. **Institutional advertising** goes beyond products to promote organizations, issues, places, events, and political figures. **Public service announcements (PSAs)** are a category of institutional advertising focused on social-welfare issues such as drunk driving, drug use, and practicing a healthy lifestyle. Usually PSAs are sponsored by nonprofit organizations and government agencies with a vested interest in the causes they promote.

### Advantages and Disadvantages of Advertising

As a method of marketing communication, advertising has both advantages and disadvantages. In terms of advantages, advertising creates a sense of credibility or legitimacy when an organization invests in presenting itself and its products in a public forum. Ads can convey a sense of quality and permanence, the idea that a company isn't some fly-by-night venture. Advertising allows marketers to repeat a message at intervals selected strategically. Repetition makes it more likely that the target audience will see and recall a message, which improves awareness-building results. Advertising can generate drama and human interest by featuring people and situations that are exciting or engaging. It can introduce emotions, images, and symbols that stimulate desire, and it can show how a product or brand compares favorably to competitors. Finally, advertising is an excellent vehicle for brand building, as it can create rational and emotional connections with a company or offering that translate into goodwill. As advertising becomes more sophisticated with digital media, it is a powerful tool for tracking consumer behaviors, interests, and preferences, allowing advertisers to better tailor content and offers to individual consumers. Through the power of digital media, memorable or entertaining advertising can be shared between friends and go viral—and viewer impressions skyrocket.

The primary disadvantage of advertising is cost. Marketers question whether this communication method is really cost-effective at reaching large groups. Of course, costs vary depending on the medium, with television ads being very expensive to produce and place. In contrast, print and digital ads tend to be much less expensive. Along with cost is the question of how many people an advertisement actually reaches. Ads are easily tuned out in today's crowded media marketplace. Even ads that initially grab attention can grow stale over time. While digital ads are clickable and interactive, traditional advertising media are not. In the bricks-and-mortar world, it is difficult for marketers to measure the success of advertising and link it directly to changes in consumer perceptions or behavior. Because advertising is a one-way medium, there is usually little direct opportunity for consumer feedback and interaction, particularly from consumers who often feel overwhelmed by competing market messages.

## Developing Effective Ads: The Creative Strategy

Effective advertising starts with the same foundational components as any other IMC campaign: identifying the target audience and the objectives for the campaign. When advertising is part of a broader IMC effort, it is important to consider the strategic role advertising will play relative to other marketing communication tools. With clarity around the target audience, campaign strategy, and budget, the next step is to develop the **creative strategy** for developing compelling advertising. The creative strategy has two primary components: the *message* and the *appeal*.

The **message** comes from the messaging framework discussed earlier in this module: what message elements should the advertising convey to consumers? What should the key message be? What is the call to action? How should the brand promise be manifested in the ad? How will it position and differentiate the offering? With advertising, it's important to remember that the ad can communicate the message not only with words but also potentially with images, sound, tone, and style.



### Effective wordless advertisement

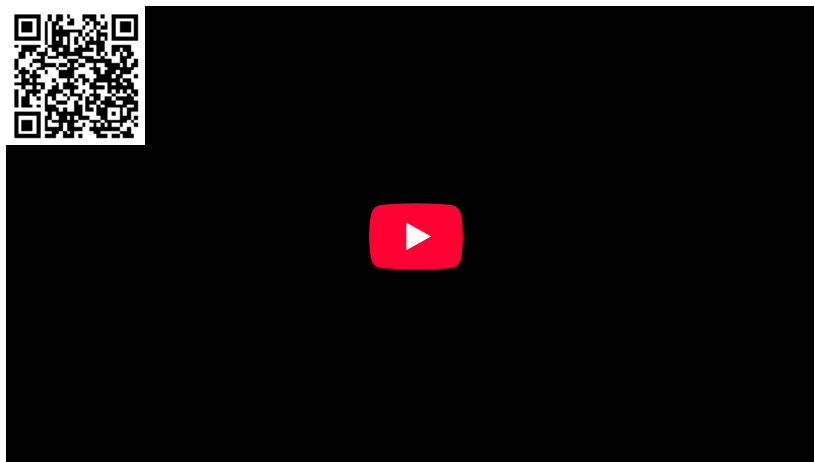
Marketers also need to consider existing public perceptions and other advertising and messages the company has placed in the market. Has the prior marketing activity resonated well with target audiences? Should the next round of advertising reinforce what went before, or is it time for a fresh new message, look, or tone?

Along with message, the creative strategy also identifies the **appeal**, or how the advertising will attract attention and influence a person's perceptions or behavior. Advertising appeals can take many forms, but they tend to fall into one of two categories: *informational* appeal and *emotional* appeal.

The **informational appeal** offers facts and information to help the target audience make a purchasing decision. It tries to generate attention using rational arguments and evidence to convince consumers to select a product, service, or brand. For example:

- More or better product or service features: Ajax "Stronger Than Dirt"
- Cost savings: Wal-Mart "Always Low Prices"
- Quality: John Deere "Nothing runs like a Deere"
- Customer service: Holiday Inn "Pleasing people the world over"
- New, improved: Verizon "Can you hear me now? Good."

The following Black+Decker commercial relies on an informational appeal to promote its product. (Note: There is no speech in this video; only instrumental music.)

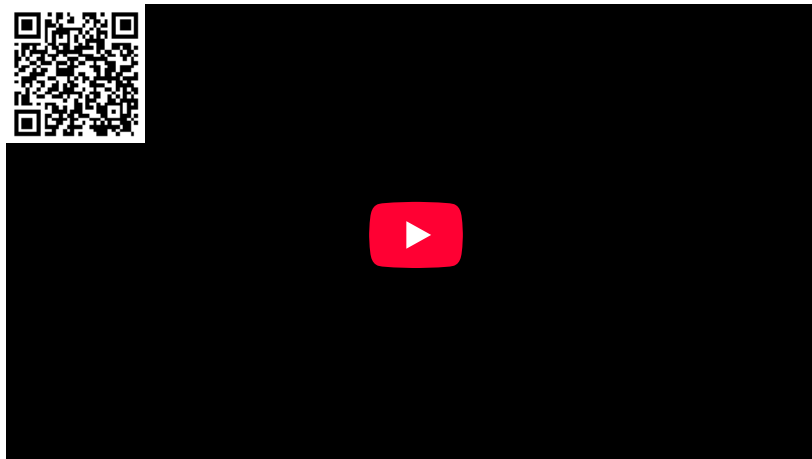


The **emotional appeal** targets consumers' emotional wants and needs rather than rational logic and facts. It plays on conscious or subconscious desires, beliefs, fears, and insecurities to persuade consumers and influence their behavior. The emotional appeal is linked to the features and benefits provided by the product, but it creates a connection with consumers at an emotional level rather than a rational level. Most marketers agree that emotional appeals are more powerful and differentiating than informational appeals. However, they must be executed well to seem authentic and credible to the target audience. A poorly executed emotional appeal can come across as trite or manipulative. Examples of emotional appeals include:

- Self-esteem: L'Oreal "Because I'm worth it"
- Happiness: Coca-Cola "Open happiness"
- Anxiety and fear: World Health Organization "Smoking Kills"
- Achievement: Nike "Just Do It"
- Attitude: Apple "Think Different"
- Freedom: Southwest "You are now free to move about the country"
- Peace of Mind: Allstate "Are you in good hands?"
- Popularity: NBC "Must-see TV"

- Germophobia: Chlorox “For life’s bleachable moments, there’s Chlorox”

The following Heinz Ketchup commercial offers a humorous example of an ad based entirely on an emotional appeal:



### Developing the Media Plan

The media plan is a document that outlines the strategy and approach for an advertising campaign, or for the advertising component in an IMC campaign. The media plan is developed simultaneously with the creative strategy. A standard media plan consists of four stages: (a) stating media objectives; (b) evaluating media; (c) selecting and implementing media choices; and (d) determining the media budget.

**Media objectives** are normally started in terms of three dimensions:

- *Reach*: number of different persons or households exposed to a particular media vehicle or media schedule at least once during a specified time period.
- *Frequency*: the number of times within a given time period that a consumer is exposed to a message.
- *Continuity*: the timing of media assertions (e.g. 10 per cent in September, 20 per cent in October, 20 per cent in November, 40 per cent in December and 10 per cent the rest of the year).

The process of **evaluating media** involves considering each type of advertising available to a marketer, and the inherent strengths and weaknesses associated with each medium. The table below outlines key strengths and weaknesses of major types of advertising media. Television advertising is a powerful and highly visible medium, but it is expensive to produce and buy air time. Radio is quite flexible and inexpensive, but listenership is lower and it typically delivers fewer impressions and a less-targeted audience. Most newspapers and magazines have passed their advertising heydays and today struggle against declining subscriptions and readership. Yet they can be an excellent and cost-effective investment for reaching some audiences. Display ads offer a lot of flexibility and creative options, from wrapping busses in advertising to creating massive and elaborate 3-D billboards. Yet their reach is limited to their immediate geography. Online advertising such as banner ads, search engine ads, paid listings, pay-per-click links and similar techniques offers a wide selection of opportunities for marketers to attract and engage with target audiences online. Yet the internet is a very crowded place, and it is difficult to for any individual company to stand out in the crowd.

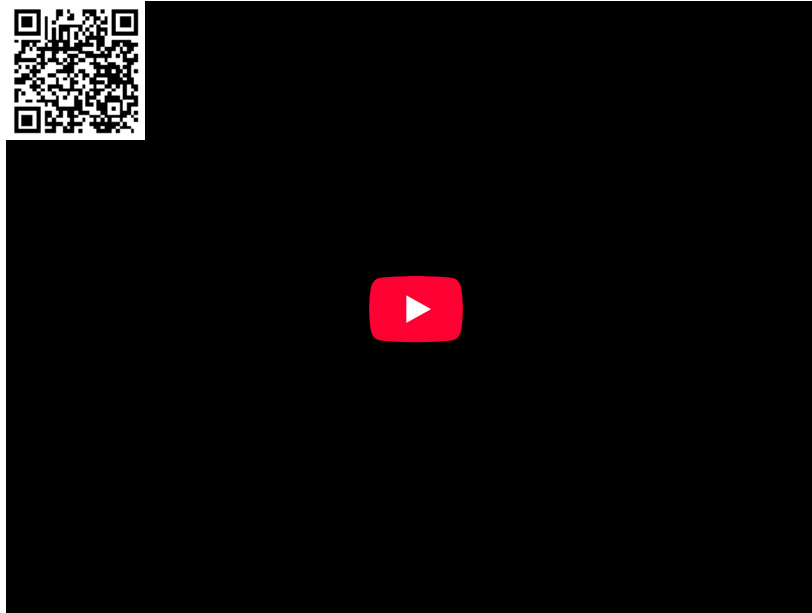
**Table: Advertising Media Strengths and Weaknesses**

| Advertising Media Type  | Strengths   | Weaknesses   |
|---|---|--|
| Television  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong emotional impact</li> <li>• Mass coverage/small cost per impression</li> <li>• Repeat message</li> <li>• Creative flexibility</li> <li>• Entertaining/prestigious</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High costs</li> <li>• High clutter (too many ads)</li> <li>• Short-lived impression</li> <li>• Programming quality</li> <li>• Schedule inflexibility</li> </ul> |
| Radio   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immediacy</li> <li>• Low cost per impression</li> <li>• Highly flexible</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited national coverage</li> <li>• High clutter</li> <li>• Less easily perceived during drive time</li> <li>• Fleeting message</li> </ul>                     |
| Newspapers  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexibility (size, timing, etc.)</li> <li>• Community prestige</li> <li>• Market coverage</li> <li>• Offer merchandising services</li> <li>• Reader involvement</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Declining readership</li> <li>• Short life</li> <li>• Technical quality</li> <li>• Clutter</li> </ul>   |
| Magazines   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly segmented audiences</li> <li>• High-profile audiences</li> <li>• Reproduction quality</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inflexible</li> <li>• Narrow audiences</li> <li>• Waste circulation</li> </ul>  |
| Display Ads: Billboards, Posters, Flyers, etc.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mass coverage/small cost per impression</li> <li>• Repeat message</li> <li>• Creative flexibility</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High clutter</li> <li>• Short-lived impression</li> </ul>   |
| Online Ads (including mobile): Banner ads, search ads, paid listings, pay-per-click links, etc. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly segmented audiences</li> <li>• Highly measurable</li> <li>• Low cost per impression</li> <li>• Immediacy; link to interests, behavior</li> <li>• Click-thru and code allow further interaction</li> <li>• Timing flexibility</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High clutter</li> <li>• Short-lived impression</li> <li>• Somewhat less flexibility in size, format</li> </ul>  |

The evaluation process requires research to assess options for reaching their target audience with each medium, and how well a particular message fits the audience in that medium. Many advertisers rely heavily on the research findings provided by the medium, by their own experience, and by subjective appraisal to determine the best media for a given campaign.

To illustrate, if a company is targeting young-to-middle-aged professional women to sell beauty products, the person or team responsible for the media plan should evaluate what options each type of media offers for reaching this audience. How reliably can television, radio, newspapers or magazines deliver this audience? Media organizations maintain carefully-researched information about the size, demographics and other characteristics of their viewership or readership. Cable and broadcast TV networks know which shows are hits with this target demographic and therefore which advertising spots to sell to a company targeting professional women. Likewise newspapers know which sections attract the eyeballs of female audiences, and magazines publishers understand very well the market niches their publications fit. Online advertising becomes a particularly powerful tool for targeted advertising because of the information it captures and tracks about site visitors: who views and clicks on ads, where they visit and what they search for. Not only does digital advertising provide the opportunity to advertise on sites that cater to a target audience of professional women, but it can identify which of these women are searching for beauty products, and it can help a company target these individuals more intensely and provide opportunities for follow-up interaction.

The following video further explains how digital advertising targets and tracks individuals based on their expressed interests and behaviors.



[Read the transcript for the video “Behavioral Targeting.”](#)

### Selection and Implementation

The media planner must make decisions about the media mix and timing, both of which are restricted by the available budget. The media-mix decision involves choosing the best combination of advertising media to achieve the goals of the campaign. This is a difficult task, and it usually requires evaluating each medium quantitatively and qualitatively to select a mix that optimizes reach and budget.

Unfortunately, there are few valid rules of thumb to guide this process, in part because it is difficult to compare audiences across different types of advertising media. For example, Nielsen ratings measure audiences based on TV viewer reports of the programs watched, while outdoor (billboard) audience-exposure estimates are based on counts of the number of automobiles that pass particular outdoor poster locations. The “timing of media” refers to the actual placement of advertisements during the time periods that are most appropriate, given the selected media objectives. It includes not only the scheduling of advertisements, but also the size and position of the advertisement.

There are three common patterns for advertising scheduling:

1. **Continuous** advertising runs ads steadily at a given level indefinitely. This schedule works well products and services that are consumed on a steady basis throughout the year, and the purpose of advertising is to nudge consumers, remind them and keep a brand or product top-of-mind.
2. **Flighting** involves heavy spurts of advertising, followed by periods with no advertising. This type of schedule makes sense for products or services that are seasonal in nature, like tax services, as well as one-time or occasional events.
3. **Pulsing** mixes continuous scheduling with flighting, to create a constant drum-beat of ads, with periods of greater intensity. This approach matches products and services for which there is year-round appeal, but there may be some seasonality or periods of greater demand or intensity. Hotels and airlines, for example, might increase their advertising presence during the holiday season.

### Budget

When considering advertising as a marketing communication method, companies need to balance the cost of advertising—both of producing the advertising pieces and buying placement—against the total budget for the IMC program. The selection and scheduling of media have a huge impact on budget: advertising that targets a mass audience is generally more expensive than advertising that targets a local or niche audience. It is important for marketers to consider the contribution advertising will make to the whole. Although advertising is generally one of the more expensive parts of the promotion mix, it may be a worthwhile investment if it contributes substantially to the reach and effectiveness of the whole program. Alternatively, some marketers spend very little on advertising because they find other methods are more productive and cost-effective for reaching their target segments.

### Anatomy of an Advertisement

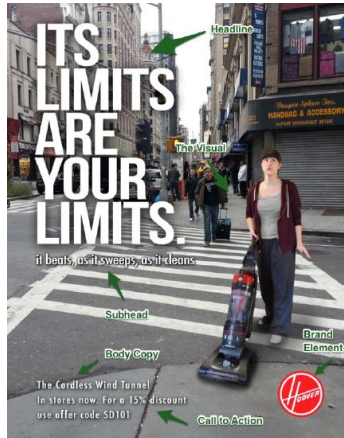
Advertisements use several common elements to deliver the message. The **visual** is the picture, image, or situation portrayed in the advertisement. The visual also considers the emotions, style, or look-and-feel to be conveyed: should the ad appear tender, businesslike, fresh, or supercool? All of these considerations can be conveyed by the visual, without using any words.

The **headline** is generally what the viewer reads first—i.e., the words in the largest typeface. The headline serves as a hook for the appeal: it should grab attention, pique interest, and cause the viewer to keep reading or paying attention. In a radio or television ad, the headline equivalent might be the voice-over of a narrator delivering the primary message, or it might be a visual headline, similar to a print ad.

In print ads, a **subhead** is a smaller headline that continues the idea introduced in the headline or provides more information. It usually appears below the headline and in a smaller typeface. The **body copy** provides supporting information. Generally it appears in a standard, readable font. The **call to action** may be part of the body copy, or it may appear elsewhere in a larger typeface or color treatment to draw attention to itself.

A variety of **brand elements** may also appear in an advertisement. These include the name of the advertiser or brand being advertised, the logo, a tagline, hashtag, Web site link, or other standard “branded” elements that convey brand identity. These elements are an important way of establishing continuity with other marketing communications used in the IMC campaign or

developed by the company. For example, print ads for an IMC campaign might contain a campaign-specific tagline that also appears in television ads, Website content, and social media posts associated with the campaign.



Hoover advertisement with ad elements shown.

### Ad Testing and Measurement

When organizations are poised to make a large investment in any type of advertising, it is wise to conduct marketing research to test the advertisements with target audiences before spending lots of money on ads and messages that may not hit the mark. Ad testing may preview messages and preliminary ad concepts with members of a target segment to see which ones resonate best and get insight about how to fine-tune messages or other aspects of the ad to make them more effective. Organizations may conduct additional testing with near-final advertising pieces to do more fine-tuning of the messages and visuals before going public.

To gauge the impact of advertising, organizations may conduct pre-tests and post-tests of their target audience to measure whether advertising has its intended effect. A pre-test assesses consumer attitudes, perceptions, and behavior before the advertising campaign. A post-test measures the same things afterward to determine how the ads have influenced the target audience, if at all.

Companies may also measure sales before, during, and after advertising campaigns run in the geographies or targets where the advertising appeared. This provides information about the *return on investment* for the campaign, which is how much the advertising increased sales relative to how much money it cost to execute. Ideally advertising generates more revenue and, ultimately profits, than it costs to mount the advertising campaign.

### Public Relations: Getting Attention to Polish Your Image



Public relations (PR) is the process of maintaining a favorable image and building beneficial relationships between an organization and the public communities, groups, and people it serves. Unlike advertising, which tries to create favorable impressions through paid messages, public relations does not pay for attention and publicity. Instead, PR strives to earn a favorable image by drawing attention to newsworthy and attention-worthy activities of the organization and its customers. For this reason, PR is often referred to as “free advertising.”

In fact, PR is not a costless form of promotion. It requires salaries to be paid to people who oversee and execute PR strategy. It also involves expenses associated with events, sponsorships and other PR-related activities.

#### The Purpose of Public Relations

Like advertising, public relations seeks to promote organizations, products, services, and brands. But PR activities also play an important role in identifying and building relationships with influential individuals and groups responsible for shaping market perceptions in the industry or product category where an organization operates. Public relations efforts strive to do the following:

- Build and maintain a positive image
- Inform target audiences about positive associations with a product, service, brand, or organization
- Maintain good relationships with *influencers*—the people who strongly influence the opinions of target audiences
- Generate goodwill among consumers, the media, and other target audiences by raising the organization’s profile
- Stimulate demand for a product, service, idea, or organization
- Head off critical or unfavorable media coverage

#### When to Use Public Relations

Public relations offers an excellent toolset for generating attention whenever there is something newsworthy that marketers would like to share with customers, prospective customers, the local community, or other audiences. PR professionals maintain relationships with reporters and writers who routinely cover news about the company, product category, and industry, so they can alert media organizations when news happens. At times, PR actually creates activities that are newsworthy, such as establishing a scholarship program or hosting a science fair for local schools. PR is involved in publishing general information about an organization, such as an annual report, a newsletter, an article, a white paper providing deeper information about a topic of interest, or an informational press kit for the media. PR is also responsible for identifying and building relationships with influencers who help shape opinions in the marketplace about a company and its



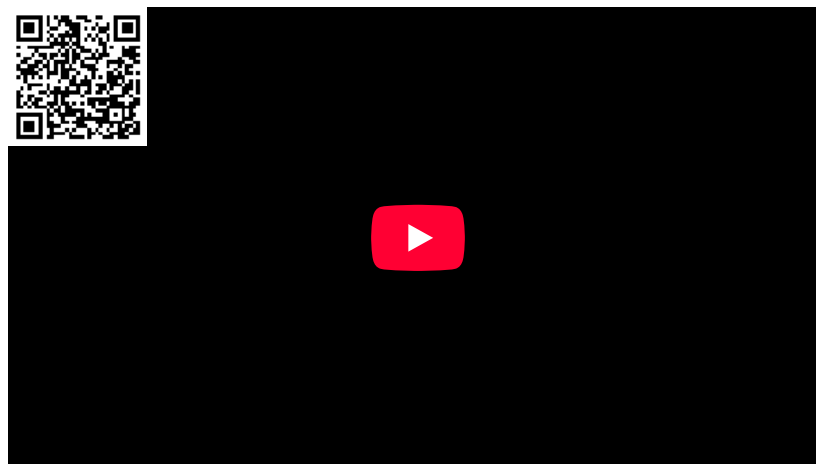
products. When an organization finds itself facing a public emergency or crisis of some sort, PR professionals play an important role strategizing and managing communications with various stakeholder groups, to help the organization respond in effective, appropriate ways and to minimize damage to its public image.

To illustrate, PR techniques can help marketers turn the following types of events into opportunities for media attention, community relationship building, and improving the organization's public image:

- Your organization develops an innovative technology or approach that is different and better than anything else available.
- One of your products wins a "best in category" prize awarded by a trade group.
- You enter into a partnership with another organization to collaborate on providing broader and more complete services to a target market segment.
- You sponsor and help organize a 10K race to benefit a local charity.
- You merge with another company.
- You conduct research to better understand attitudes and behaviors among a target segment, and it yields insights your customers would find interesting and beneficial.
- A customer shares impressive and well-documented results about the cost savings they have realized from using your products or services.
- Your organization is hiring a new CEO or other significant executive appointment.
- A quality-assurance problem leads your company to issue a recall for one of your products.

It is wise to develop a PR strategy around strengthening relationships with any group that is important in shaping or maintaining a positive public image for your organization: reporters and media organizations; industry and professional associations; bloggers; market or industry analysts; governmental regulatory bodies; customers and especially leaders of customer groups, and so forth. It is also wise to maintain regular, periodic communications with these groups to keep them informed about your organization and its activities. This helps build a foundation of familiarity and trust, so these relationships are established and resilient through the ups and downs of day-to-day business.

The following video, about Tyson Foods' "Meals That Matter" program, shows how one company cooked up an idea that is equal parts public relations and corporate social responsibility (CSR). The video covers the Tyson disaster-relief team delivering food to the residents of Moore, Oklahoma, shortly after tornados struck the area on May 20, 2013. The company received favorable publicity following the inauguration of the program in 2012. (You can read one of the articles here: "[Tyson Foods Unveils Disaster Relief Mobile Feeding Unit.](#)")



## Standard Public Relations Techniques

Public relations encompasses a variety of marketing tactics that all share a common focus: managing public perceptions. The most common PR tools are listed in the following table and discussed below.

Tools for managing public relations

| Public Relations Technique          | Role and Description   | Examples  |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| Media Relations                     | Generate positive news coverage about the organization, its products, services, people, and activities                             | Press release, press kit, and interview leading to a news article about a new product launch; press conference                            |
| Influencer/Analyst Relations        | Maintain strong, beneficial relationships with individuals who are thought leaders for a market or segment                         | Product review published by a renowned blogger; company profile by an industry analyst; celebrity endorsement                             |
| Publications and Thought Leadership | Provide information about the organization, showcase its expertise and competitive advantages                                      | Organization's annual report; newsletters; white papers focused on research and development; video case study about a successful customer |
| Events                              | Engage with a community to present information and an interactive "live" experience with a product, service, organization or brand | User conference; presentation of a keynote address; day-of-community-service event  |
| Sponsorships                        | Raise the profile of an organization by affiliating it with specific causes or activities  | Co-sponsoring an industry conference; sponsoring a sports team; sponsoring a race to benefit a charity                                    |
| Award Programs                      | Generate recognition for excellence within the organization and/or among customers   | Winning an industry "product of the year" award; nominating customer for an outstanding achievement award                                 |
| Crisis Management                   | Manage perceptions and contain concerns in the face of an emergency situation  | Oversee customer communication during a service outage or a product recall; execute action plan associated with an environmental disaster |

**Media relations** is the first thing that comes to mind when many people think of PR: public announcements about company news, talking to reporters, and articles about new developments at a company. But media relations is the tip of the iceberg. For many industries and product categories, there are influential bloggers and analysts writing about products and the industry. PR plays an important role in identifying and building relationships with these individuals. Offering periodic "company update" briefings, newsletters, or email updates helps keep these individuals informed about your organization, so you are top of mind.

The people responsible for PR are also involved in developing and distributing general information about an organization. This information may be in the form of an annual report, a "state of the company" briefing call, video pieces about the company or its customers, and other **publications** that convey the company's identity, vision, and goals. "Thought leadership" publications

assert the company's expertise and position of leading thought, practice, or innovation in the field. These publications should always be mindful of the same messaging employed for other marketing activities to ensure that everything seems consistent and well aligned.

While some consider event marketing a marketing communication method of its own, others categorize it with public relations as we have done here. **Events**, such as industry conferences or user group meetings, offer opportunities to present the company's value proposition, products, and services to current and prospective customers. Themed events, such as a community service day or a healthy lifestyle day, raise awareness about causes or issues with which the organization wants to be affiliated in the minds of its employees, customers, and other stakeholder groups. A well-designed and well-produced event also offers opportunities for an organization to provide memorable interaction and experiences with target audiences. An executive leader can offer a visionary speech to generate excitement about a company and the value it provides—now or in the future. Events can help cement brand loyalty by not only informing customers but also forging emotional connections and goodwill.

**Sponsorships** go hand-in-hand with events, as organizations affiliate themselves with events and organizations by signing on to co-sponsor something available to the community. Sponsorships cover the gamut: charitable events, athletes, sports teams, stadiums, trade shows and conferences, contests, scholarships, lectures, concerts, and so forth. Marketers should select sponsorships carefully to make sure that they are affiliating with activities and causes that are well managed and strategically aligned with the public image they are trying to cultivate.



Innovation Award, sponsored by IBM and the United Nations Development Program, being given to Kenya's Information and Communication Technology Authority

**Award programs** are another common PR tool. Organizations can participate in established award programs managed by trade groups and media, or they can create award programs that target their customer community. Awards provide opportunities for public recognition of great work by employees and customers. They can also help organizations identify great targets for case studies and public announcements to draw attention to how customers are benefitting from an organization's products and services.

**Crisis management** is an important PR toolset to have on hand whenever it may be needed. Few companies choose this as a promotional technique if other options are available. But when crises emerge, as inevitably they do, PR provides structure and discipline to help company leaders navigate the crisis with communications and actions that address the needs of all stakeholders. Messaging, communication, listening, and relationship building all come to the fore. When handled effectively, these incidents may help an organization emerge from the crisis stronger and more resilient than it was before. This is the power of good PR.

## Advantages and Disadvantages of Public Relations

Because PR activity is earned rather than paid, it tends to carry more credibility and weight. For example, when a news story profiles a customer's successful experience with a company and its products, people tend to view this type of article as less biased (and therefore more credible) than a paid advertisement. The news story comes from an objective reporter who feels the story is worth telling. Meanwhile an advertisement on a similar topic would be viewed with skepticism because it is a paid placement from a biased source: the ad sponsor.

### Advantages of Public Relations<sup>[2]</sup>

1. **The opportunity to amplify key messages and milestones.** When PR activities are well-aligned with other marketing activities, organizations can use PR to amplify the things they are trying to communicate via other channels. A press release about a new product, for example, can be timed to support a marketing launch of the product and conference where the product is unveiled for the first time.
2. **Believable.** Because publicity is seen to be more objective, people tend to give it more weight and find it more credible. Paid advertisements, on the other hand, are seen with a certain amount of skepticism, since people that companies can make almost any kind of product claim they want.
3. **Employee pride.** Organizing and/or sponsoring charitable activities or community events can help with employee morale and pride (both of which get a boost from any related publicity, too). It can also be an opportunity for teamwork and collaboration.
4. **Engaging people who visit your Web site.** PR activities can generate interesting content that can be featured on your organization's Web site. Such information can be a means of engaging visitors to the site, and it can generate interest and traffic long after the PR event or moment has passed. Industry influencers may visit the site, too, to get updates on product developments, growth plans, or personnel news, etc.

### Disadvantages of Public Relations<sup>[3]</sup>

1. **Cost.** Although publicity is usually less expensive to organize than advertising, it isn't "free." A public relations firm may need to be hired to develop campaigns, write press releases, and speak to journalists. Even if you have in-house expertise for this work, developing publicity materials can take employees away from their primary responsibilities and drain off needed resources.
2. **Lack of control.** There's no guarantee that a reporter or industry influencer will give your company or product a favorable review—it's the price you pay for "unbiased" coverage. You also don't have any control over the accuracy or thoroughness of the coverage. There's always a risk that the journalist will get some facts wrong or fail to include important details.
3. **Missing the mark.** Even if you do everything right—you pull off a worthy event and it gets written up by a local newspaper, say—your public relations effort can fall short and fail to reach enough or the right part of your target audience. It doesn't do any good if the reporter's write-up is very short or it appears in a section of the paper that no one reads. This is another consequence of not being able to fully control the authorship, content, and placement of PR.

## PR and Integrated Marketing Communication

Public relations activities can provide significantly greater benefits to organizations when they happen in conjunction with a broader IMC effort, rather than on their own. Because PR focuses heavily on communication with key stakeholder groups, it stands to reason that other marketing communication tools should be used in conjunction with public relations. For example:

- Press releases can be distributed to media contacts, customers, and other stakeholder groups via email marketing campaigns that might also include additional information or offers—such as an invitation to a webinar to learn more about the subject of the press release.
- Press releases are posted to the Web site to update content and provide a greater body of information for Web site visitors
- Event presentations and other activities should align with an organization's broader marketing strategy, goals, and messaging. Everything should be part of the same, consistent approach and theme—e.g., the topics of speeches, information available in trade show booths, interactions with event participants via email and social media, etc.
- Sponsorship activities often provide an opportunity to advertise at the event, as well. Naturally it is important for there to be good alignment between these advertising opportunities, company messaging, and the audience for the sponsored activity.
- A thought-leadership piece, such as an article or a white paper authored by a company leader, can be published on the Web site and incorporated into an email marketing campaign that targets selected audiences

Smart marketers consider PR tools in concert with other marketing activity to determine how to make the greatest impact with their efforts. Because PR activities often involve working with many other people inside and outside the organization, they usually need a long lead time in order to come together in the desired time frame. Event planning happens months (and sometimes



years) in advance of the actual event itself. Press releases and public announcements can be mapped out over several months to give marketers and other stakeholders plenty of time to prepare and execute effectively. PR is undoubtedly a powerful toolset to amplify other marketing efforts.

## Sales Promotions

Sales promotion helps make personal selling and advertising more effective. Sales promotions are marketing events or sales efforts—not including traditional advertising, personal selling, and public relations—that stimulate buying. Sales promotion can be developed as part of the social media or e-commerce effort just as advertising can, but the methods and tactics are much different. Sales promotion is a \$300 billion—and growing—industry. Sales promotion is usually targeted toward either of two distinctly different markets. Consumer sales promotion is targeted to the ultimate consumer market. Trade sales promotion is directed to members of the marketing channel, such as wholesalers and retailers.

The goal of many promotion tactics is immediate purchase. Therefore, it makes sense when planning a sales-promotion campaign to target customers according to their general behavior. For instance, is the consumer loyal to the marketer's product or to the competitor's? Does the consumer switch brands readily in favor of the best deal? Does the consumer buy only the least expensive product, no matter what? Does the consumer buy any products in your category at all?

### Proctor & Gamble



Figure 1. Pet lovers want the best for their animals, and choosing a proper diet is an essential part of raising happy, healthy pets. That's why many dog food providers such as Purina and Blue Buffalo are creating specific size- and age-appropriate diets for dogs. (Credit: Ted Van Pelt/ Flickr/ Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC BY 2.0))

Procter & Gamble believes shoppers make up their mind about a product in about the time it takes to read this paragraph.

This “first moment of truth,” as P&G calls it, is the three to seven seconds when someone notices an item on a store shelf. Despite spending billions on traditional advertising, the consumer-products giant thinks this instant is one of its most important marketing opportunities. It recently created a position entitled Director of First Moment of Truth, or Director of FMOT (pronounced “EFF-mott”), to produce sharper, flashier in-store displays. There is a 15-person FMOT department at P&G headquarters in Cincinnati as well as 50 FMOT leaders stationed around the world.<sup>[4]</sup>

One of P&G's most prominent in-store promotions has been for a new line of Pampers. In the United States, P&G came up with what it calls a “shopper concept”—a single promotional theme that allows it to pitch products in a novel way. The theme for Pampers was “Babies First.” In stores, the company handed out information on childhood immunizations, car-seat safety, and healthy diets while promoting its diapers and wipes in other parts of the store. To market Pampers diapers in the United Kingdom, P&G persuaded retailers earlier this year to put fake doorknobs high up on restroom doors, to remind parents how much babies need to stretch.



Figure 2. Free samples of Starbucks Mocha Toffee Latte

## Sales Promotion Techniques

Most consumers are familiar with common sales promotion techniques including samples, coupons, point-of-purchase displays, premiums, contents, loyalty programs and rebates.

Do you like free samples? Most people do. A **sample** is a sales promotion in which a small amount of a product that is for sale is given to consumers to try. Samples encourage trial and an increased awareness of the product. You have probably purchased a product that included a small free sample with it—for example, a small amount of conditioner packaged with your shampoo. Have you ever gone to a store that provided free samples of different food items? The motivation behind giving away samples is to get people to buy a product. Although sampling is an expensive strategy, it is usually very effective for food products. People try the product, the person providing the sample tells consumers about it, and mentions any special pricing or offers for the product.

The objectives of a promotion depend on the general behavior of target consumers, as described in Table 1. For example, marketers who are targeting loyal users of their product don't want to change behavior. Instead, they want to reinforce existing behavior or increase product usage. Frequent-buyer programs that reward consumers for repeat purchases can be effective in

strengthening brand loyalty. Other types of promotions are more effective with customers prone to brand switching or with those who are loyal to a competitor's product. Cents-off coupons, free samples, or an eye-catching display in a store will often entice shoppers to try a different brand.

The use of sales promotion for services products depends on the type of services. Consumer services, such as hairstyling, rely heavily on sales promotions (such as providing half off the price of a haircut for senior citizens on Mondays). Professional services, however, use very little sales promotion. Doctors, for example, do not often use coupons for performing an appendectomy, for example. In fact, service product companies must be careful not to utilize too many sales-promotion tactics because they can lower the credibility of the firm. Attorneys do not have a sale on providing services for divorce proceedings, for example.

Table 1. Types of Consumers and Sales Promotion Goals

| Type of Behavior   | Desired Results  | Sales Promotion Examples  |
|--|--|---|
| <i>Loyal customers:</i> People who buy your product most or all of the time                  | Reinforce behavior, increase consumption, change purchase timing             | Loyalty marketing programs, such as frequent-buyer cards and frequent-shopper clubs. Bonus packs that give loyal consumers an incentive to stock up or premiums offered in return for proof of purchase.                                  |
| <i>Competitor's customers:</i> People who buy a competitor's product most or all of the time | Break loyalty, persuade to switch to your brand                              | Sweepstakes, contests, or premiums that create interest in the product  |
| <i>Brand switchers:</i> People who buy a variety of products in the category                 | Persuade to buy your brand more often  | Sampling to introduce your product's superior qualities compared to their brand   |
| <i>Price buyers:</i> People who consistently buy the least expensive brand                   | Appeal with low prices or supply added value that makes price less important | Trade deals that help make the product more readily available than competing products. Coupons, cents-off packages, refunds, or trade deals that reduce the price of the brand to match that of the brand that would have been purchased. |

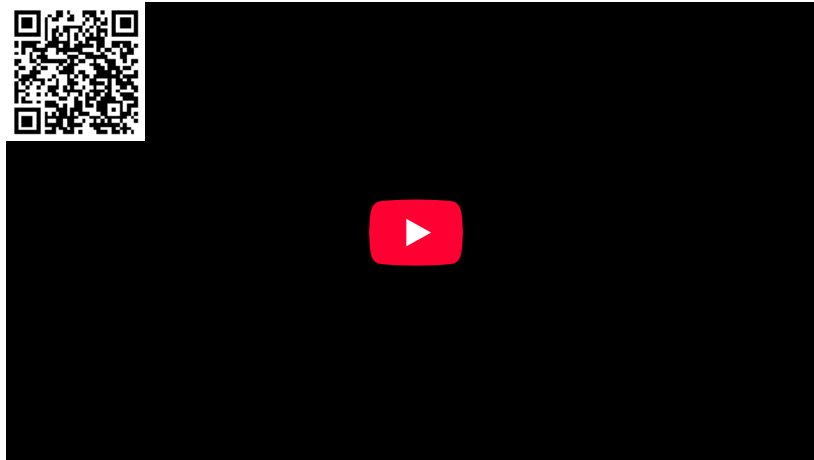


Figure 3. Whether making a cameo appearance or starring in a major role, brands are top talent in the entertainment world. NASCAR drivers, racing cars, and tracks are speckled with corporate brands, and Coca-Cola sits at the judges' table on American Idol. Does product placement blur the lines between advertising and content, and should viewers be concerned? (Credit: roger blake/ Flickr/ Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC BY 2.0))

Two growing areas of sales promotion are couponing and product placement. American consumers receive over \$321 billion worth of coupons each year and redeem about \$3 billion.<sup>[5]</sup> Almost 85 percent of all Americans redeem coupons. Sunday newspaper supplements remain the number one source, but there has been explosive growth of online or consumer-printed coupons. General Mills, Kimberly-Clark, and General Electric like online coupons because they have a higher redemption rate. Coupons are used most often for grocery shopping. Do they save you money? One study found that people using coupons at the grocery store spent eight percent more than those who didn't.<sup>[6]</sup>

*Product placement* is paid inclusion of brands in mass media programming. This includes movies, TV, books, music videos, and video games. So when you see Ford vehicles in the latest James Bond movie or Tom Hanks putting on a pair of Nikes on-screen, that is product placement. Product placement has become a huge business. For example, companies paid more than \$6 billion in a recent year to have their products placed prominently in a film or television program; that figure is expected to reach more than \$11 billion by 2019.<sup>[7]</sup> It is easy to go overboard with this trend and be portrayed as a parody, however. The 2017 *Emoji Movie* is an example of failed product placements. The theme of the movie centered on various emojis caught in a smartphone as they are forced to play Candy Crush and say glowing things about such apps as Dropbox and Instagram as they make their way through the phone.<sup>[8]</sup> Also, some have suggested that product placement might doom the products and companies. For example, Atari products appeared in the classic 1982 film *Blade Runner*, but the original company went out of business shortly after the movie was released, while another product, the Cuisinart food processor, had to settle a price-fixing scandal after making an appearance in the film. This has not stopped companies such as Sony, Peugeot, and Coca-Cola from tempting fate by appearing in the recently released *Blade Runner 2049*.<sup>[9]</sup> Many large companies are cutting their advertising budgets to spend more on product placements. One area of product placement that continues to raise ethical issues is so-called "experts" being paid to mention brands on the air.

Contests and sweepstakes are also popular consumer sales promotions. **Contests** are games of skill offered by a company, that offer consumers the chance to win a prize. Cheerios' *Spoonfuls of Stories* contest, for example, invited people to submit an original children's story and the chance to win money and the opportunity to have their story published. **Sweepstakes** are games of chance people enter for the opportunity to win money or prizes. Sweepstakes are often structured as some variation on a random drawing. The companies and organizations that conduct these activities hope consumers will not only enter their games, but also buy more of their products and ideally share their information for future marketing purposes. As the following video shows, marketers have become increasingly sophisticated in the way they approach this "gaming" aspect of sales promotions.



[Read the transcript for the video "Gamification."](#)

#### Which Sales Promotions Work Best, and When?

Although different types of sales promotions work best for different organizations, rebates are very profitable for companies because, as you have learned, many consumers forget to send in their rebate forms. In a weak economy, consumers tend to use more coupons, but they also buy more store brands. Coupons available online or at the point of purchase are being used more often by consumers. Trade shows can be very successful, although the companies that participate in them need to follow-up on the leads generated at the shows.

#### Advantages and Disadvantages of Sales Promotions<sup>[10]</sup>

In addition to their primary purpose of boosting sales in the near term, companies can use consumer sales promotions to help them understand price sensitivity. Coupons and rebates provide useful information about how pricing influences consumers' buying behavior. Sales promotions can also be a valuable—and sometimes sneaky—way to acquire contact information for current and prospective customers. Many of these offers require consumers to provide their names and other information in order to participate. Electronically-scanned coupons can be linked to other purchasing data, to inform organizations about buying habits. All this information can be used for future marketing research, campaigns and outreach.

Consumer sales promotions can generate loyalty and enthusiasm for a brand, product, or service. Frequent flyer programs, for example, motivate travelers to fly on a preferred airline even if the ticket prices are somewhat higher. If sales have slowed, a promotion such as a sweepstakes or contest can spur customer excitement and (re)new interest in the company's offering. Sales promotions are a good way of energizing and inspiring customer action.

Trade promotions offer distribution channel partners financial incentives that encourage them to support and promote a company's products. Offering incentives like prime shelf space at a retailer's store in exchange for discounts on products has the potential to build and enhance business relationships with important distributors or businesses. Improving these relationships can lead to higher sales, stocking of other product lines, preferred business terms and other benefits.

Sales promotions can be a two-edged sword: if a company is continually handing out product samples and coupons, it can risk tarnishing the company's brand. Offering too many freebies can signal to customers that they are not purchasing a prestigious or "limited" product. Another risk with too-frequent promotions is that savvy customers will hold off purchasing until the next promotion, thus depressing sales.

Often businesses rush to grow quickly by offering sales promotions, only to see these promotions fail to reach their sales goals and target customers. The temporary boost in short term sales may be attributed to highly price-sensitive consumers looking for a deal, rather than the long-term loyal customers a company wants to cultivate. Sales promotions need to be thought through, designed and promoted carefully. They also need to align well with the company's larger business strategy. Failure to do so can be costly in terms of dollars, profitability and reputation.

If businesses become overly reliant on sales growth through promotions, they can get trapped in short-term marketing thinking and forget to focus on long-term goals. If, after each sales dip, a business offers another sales promotion, it can be damaging to the long-term value of its brand.

#### IMC Support for Sales Promotions

Sales promotions are delivered to targeted groups via marketing campaigns during a pre-set, limited amount of time. In order to broaden awareness, impact and participation, sales promotions are often combined with other marketing communication methods in the promotional mix. Examples of IMC support for sales promotions include:

- Weekly email messages to consumers informing them about the week's sales, special offers, and coupons
- Promotional information on a Web site informing consumers about the availability of a rebate or other special offer
- Posters and other promotional materials to enhance a point-of-purchase display
- Sweepstakes forms incorporated into a magazine advertisement
- Social media campaigns encouraging people to post about entering a sponsored contest on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram

These types of activities create synergies between the sales promotions and other marketing activities. IMC activities can amplify the message about the sales promotion and encourage active participation from target customers.

Finally, it is important to recognize that sales promotions cannot compensate for a poor product, a declining sales trend, ineffective advertising, or weak brand loyalty. If these fundamentals are not working, sales promotions can serve only as a temporary solution.

#### People Power



Personal selling uses in-person interaction to sell products and services. This type of communication is carried out by sales representatives, who are the personal connection between a buyer and a company or a company's products or services. Salespeople not only inform potential customers about a company's product or services, they also use their power of persuasion and remind customers of product characteristics, service agreements, prices, deals, and much more. In addition to enhancing customer relationships, this type of marketing communications tool can be a powerful source of customer feedback, as well. Later we'll cover marketing alignment with the sales process in greater detail. This section focuses on personal selling as one possible tool in the promotional mix.

Effective personal selling addresses the buyer's needs and preferences without making him or her feel pressured. Good salespeople offer advice, information, and recommendations, and they can help buyers save money and time during the decision process. The seller should give honest responses to any questions or objections the buyer has and show that he cares more about meeting the buyer's needs than making the sale. Attending to these aspects of personal selling contributes to a strong, trusting relationship between buyer and seller.<sup>[11]</sup>

### Common Personal Selling Techniques

Common personal selling tools and techniques include the following:

- **Sales presentations:** in-person or virtual presentations to inform prospective customers about a product, service, or organization
- **Conversations:** relationship-building dialogue with prospective buyers for the purposes of influencing or making sales
- **Demonstrations:** demonstrating how a product or service works and the benefits it offers, highlighting advantageous features and how the offering solves problems the customer encounters
- **Addressing objections:** identifying and addressing the concerns of prospective customers, to remove any perceived obstacles to making a purchase
- **Field selling:** sales calls by a sales representative to connect with target customers in person or via phone
- **Retail selling:** in-store assistance from a sales clerk to help customers find, select, and purchase products that meet their needs
- **Door-to-door selling:** offering products for sale by going door-to-door in a neighborhood
- **Consultative selling:** consultation with a prospective customer, where a sales representative (or consultant) learns about the problems the customer wants to solve and recommends solutions to the customer's particular problem
- **Reference selling:** using satisfied customers and their positive experiences to convince target customers to purchase a product or service

Personal selling minimizes wasted effort, promotes sales, and boosts word-of-mouth marketing. Also, personal selling measures marketing return on investment (ROI) better than most tools, and it can give insight into customers' habits and their responses to a particular marketing campaign or product offer.

### When to Use Personal Selling

Not every product or service is a good fit for personal selling. It's an expensive technique because the proceeds of the person-to-person sales must cover the salary of the sales representative—on top of all the other costs of doing business. Whether or not a company uses personal selling as part of its marketing mix depends on its business model. Most often companies use personal selling when their products or services are highly technical, specialized, or costly—such as complex software systems, business consulting services, homes, and automobiles.

In addition, there are certain conditions that favor personal selling:<sup>[12]</sup>

- **Product situation:** Personal selling is relatively more effective and economical when a product is of a high unit value, when it is in the introductory stage of its life cycle, when it requires personal attention to match consumer needs, or when it requires product demonstration or after-sales services.
- **Market situation:** Personal selling is effective when a firm serves a small number of large-size buyers or a small/local market. Also, it can be used effectively when an indirect channel of distribution is used for selling to agents or middlemen.
- **Company situation:** Personal selling is best utilized when a firm is not in a good position to use impersonal communication media, or it cannot afford to have a large and regular advertising outlay.
- **Consumer behavior situation:** Personal selling should be adopted by a company when purchases are valuable but infrequent, or when competition is at such a level that consumers require persuasion and follow-up.

It's important to keep in mind that personal selling is most effective when a company has established an effective sales-force management system together with a sales force of the right design, size, and structure. Recruitment, selection, training, supervision, and evaluation of the sales force also obviously play an important role in the effectiveness of this marketing communication method.<sup>[13]</sup>

### Advantages and Disadvantages of Personal Selling



The most significant strength of personal selling is its flexibility. Salespeople can tailor their presentations to fit the needs, motives, and behavior of individual customers. A salesperson can gauge the customer's reaction to a sales approach and immediately adjust the message to facilitate better understanding.

Personal selling also minimizes wasted effort. Advertisers can spend a lot of time and money on a mass-marketing message that reaches many people outside the target market (but doesn't result in additional sales). In personal selling, the sales force pinpoints the target market, makes a contact, and focuses effort that has a strong probability of leading to a sale.

As mentioned above, an additional strength of personal selling is that measuring marketing effectiveness and determining ROI are far more straightforward for personal selling than for other marketing communication tools—where recall or attitude change is often the only measurable effect.

Another advantage of personal selling is that a salesperson is in an excellent position to encourage the customer to act. The one-on-one interaction of personal selling means that a salesperson can effectively respond to and overcome objections—e.g., concerns or reservations about the product—so that the customer is more likely to buy. Salespeople can also offer many customized reasons that might spur a customer to buy, whereas an advertisement offers a limited set of reasons that may not persuade everyone in the target audience.

A final strength of personal selling is the multiple tasks that the sales force can perform. For example, in addition to selling, a salesperson can collect payments, service or repair products, return products, and collect product and marketing information. In fact, salespeople are often the best resources when it comes to disseminating positive word-of-mouth product information.

High cost is the primary disadvantage of personal selling. With increased competition, higher travel and lodging costs, and higher salaries, the cost per sales contract continues to rise. Many companies try to control sales costs by compensating sales representatives through commissions alone, thereby guaranteeing that salespeople are paid only if they generate sales. However, commission-only salespeople may become risk averse and only call on clients who have the highest potential return. These salespeople, then, may miss opportunities to develop a broad base of potential customers that could generate higher sales revenues in the long run.

Companies can also reduce sales costs by using complementary techniques, such as telemarketing, direct mail, toll-free numbers for interested customers, and online communication with qualified prospects. Telemarketing and online communication can further reduce costs by serving as an actual selling vehicle. Both technologies can deliver sales messages, respond to questions, take payment, and follow up.

A second disadvantage of personal selling is the problem of finding and retaining high-quality people. Experienced salespeople sometimes realize that the only way their income can outpace their cost-of-living increase is to change jobs. Also, because of the push for profitability, businesses try to hire experienced salespeople away from competitors rather than hiring college graduates, who take three to five years to reach the level of productivity of more experienced salespeople. These two staffing issues have caused high turnover in many sales forces.

Another weakness of personal selling is message inconsistency. Many salespeople view themselves as independent from the organization, so they design their own sales techniques, use their own message strategies, and engage in questionable ploys to generate sales. (You'll recall our discussion in the ethics module about the unique challenges that B2B salespeople face.) As a result, it can be difficult to find a unified company or product message within a sales force or between the sales force and the rest of the marketing mix.

A final disadvantage of personal selling is that sales-force members have different levels of motivation. Salespeople may vary in their willingness to make the desired number of sales calls each day; to make service calls that do not lead directly to sales; or to take full advantage of the technologies available to them.

### How IMC Supports Personal Selling<sup>[14]</sup>

As with any other marketing communication method, personal selling must be evaluated on the basis of its contribution to the overall marketing mix. The costs of personal selling can be high and carry risks, but the returns may be just as high. In addition, when personal selling is supported by other elements of a well-conceived IMC strategy, it can be very effective indeed.

Consider the following example of Audi, which set out to build a customer-relationship program:

Audi's goal was to not have the relationship with the customer end after the sale was made. Operating on the assumption that the company's best potential customers were also its existing customers, the company initiated an online program to maintain contact, while allowing its sales force to concentrate on selling. Based on its television campaign for the new A4 model, Audi offered a downloadable screensaver that frequently broadcasted updated news and information automatically to the consumers' computers. After displaying the screensaver option on its Web site, Audi sent an email to owners and prospects offering them the opportunity to download it. More than 10,000 people took advantage of the offer. Audi then began to maintain a continuous dialog with the adopters by sending them newsletters and updates. Click-through rates ranged from 25 to 35 percent on various parts of the site—well exceeding the standard rates—and car sales were 25 percent higher than they were the previous year, even in a down economy.<sup>[15]</sup>

As a result of several coordinated communication methods (TV advertising, email, downloadable screensaver, newsletters, and product information) and presumably a well-designed customer relationship management (CRM) system, Audi helped its sales force be more effective (by freeing it up to focus on sales and by connecting it with more prospective customers), which, turn, meant higher profits.

### Direct Marketing: Going Straight to the Customer



Direct marketing activities bypass any intermediaries and communicate directly with the individual consumer. Direct mail is personalized to the individual consumer, based on whatever a company knows about that person's needs, interests, behaviors, and preferences. Traditional direct marketing activities include mail, catalogs, and telemarketing. The thousands of "junk mail" offers from credit card companies, bankers, and charitable organizations that flood mailboxes every year are artifacts of direct marketing. Telemarketing contacts prospective customers via the telephone to pitch offers and collect information. Today, direct marketing overlaps heavily with digital marketing, as marketers rely on email and, increasingly, mobile communications to reach and interact with consumers.

### The Purpose and Uses of Direct Marketing

The purpose of direct marketing is to reach and appeal directly to individual consumers and to use information about them to offer products, services and offers that are most relevant to them and their needs. Direct marketing can be designed to support any stage of the AIDA model, from building awareness to generating interest, desire, and action. Direct marketing, particularly email, also plays a strong role in post-purchase interaction. Email is commonly used to confirm orders, send receipts or warranties, solicit feedback through surveys, ask customers to post a social media recommendation, and propose new offers.

Direct marketing is an optimal method for marketing communication in the following situations:

- A company's primary distribution channel is to sell products or services directly to customers
- A company's primary distribution method is through the mail or other shipping services to send directly to the customer
- A company relies heavily on sales promotions or discounts, and it is important to spread the word about these offers to consumers
- An advertisement cannot sufficiently convey the many benefits of a company's product or service, and so a longer marketing piece is required to express the value proposition effectively
- A company finds that standard advertising is not reaching its target segments, and so better-targeted marketing communications are required to reach the right individuals; for example, using direct mail to reach wealthier people according to their affluent zip code
- A company sells expensive products that require more information and interaction to make the sale
- A company has a known "universe" of potential customers and access to contact information and other data about these customers
- A company is heavily dependent on customer retention, reorders and/or repurchasing, making it worthwhile to maintain "permissioned" marketing interaction with known customers



## Data: The Key to Effective Direct Marketing

The effectiveness of direct marketing activity depends on marketers using databases to capture the information of target customers and the use of this information to extend ever-more-personalized offers and information to consumers. Databases record an individual's residence, geography, family status, and credit history. When a person moves or makes a significant purchase like a car or a home, these details become part of the criteria marketers use to identify who will be a good target for their products or services. With electronic media, the information flow about consumers opens the floodgates: marketing databases capture when a consumer opens an email message and clicks on a link. They track which links piqued consumers' interests, what they view and visit, so that the next email offer is informed by what a person found interesting the last time around. These databases also collect credit card information, so marketers can link a person's purchasing history to shopping patterns to further tailor communications and offers.

Mobile marketing adds another dimension of personalization in direct-to-consumer communications. It allows marketers to incorporate location-sensitive and even activity-specific information into marketing communications and offers. When marketers know you are playing a video game at a mall, thanks to your helpful smart phone, they can send you timing-, location- and activity-specific offers and messages.

## Direct Marketing in Action

How does this work in practice? If you've ever paid off an auto loan, you may have noticed a torrent of mail offers from car dealerships right around the five-year mark. They know, from your credit history, that you're nearly done paying off your car and you've had the vehicle for several years, so you might be interested in trading up for a newer model. Based on your geography and any voter registration information, you may be targeted during election season to participate via telephone in political polls and to receive "robocalls" from candidates and parties stomping for your vote.

Moving into the digital world, virtually any time you share an email address with an organization, it becomes part of a database to be used for future marketing. Although most organizations that engage in email marketing give the option of opting out, once you become a customer, it is easy for companies to justify continuing to contact you via email or text as part of the customer relationship you've established. As you continue to engage with the company, your behavior and any other information you share becomes part of the database record the company uses to segment and target you with offers it thinks will interest you.

Similarly, marketers use SMS (text) for marketing purposes, and direct marketing activity takes place in mobile apps, games, and Web sites. All of these tools use the data-rich mobile environment to capture information about consumers and turn it into productive marketing opportunities. QR codes, another direct-to-consumer mobile marketing tool, enable consumers to scan an image with a mobile phone that takes them to a Web site where they receive special information or offers.



A great illustration of how companies use consumer information for direct marketing purposes comes from a *New York Times* article that interviewed Andrew Pole, who conducts marketing analytics for the retailer Target. The article discusses how Target uses behavioral data and purchasing history to anticipate customers' needs and make them offers based on this information:

Target has a baby registry, and Pole started there, observing how shopping habits changed as a woman approached her due date, which women on the registry had willingly disclosed. He ran test after test, analyzing the data, and before long some useful patterns emerged. Lotions, for example. Lots of people buy lotion, but one of Pole's colleagues noticed that women on the baby registry were buying larger quantities of unscented lotion around the beginning of their second trimester. Another analyst noted that sometime in the first twenty weeks, pregnant women loaded up on supplements like calcium, magnesium, and zinc. Many shoppers purchase soap and cotton balls, but when someone suddenly starts buying lots of scent-free soap and extra-big bags of cotton balls, in addition to hand sanitizers and washcloths, it signals they could be getting close to their delivery date.

As Pole's computers crawled through the data, he was able to identify about twenty-five products that, when analyzed together, allowed him to assign each shopper a "pregnancy prediction" score. More important, he could also estimate her due date to within a small window, so Target could send coupons timed to very specific stages of her pregnancy.

One Target employee I spoke to provided a hypothetical example. Take a fictional Target shopper named Jenny Ward, who is twenty-three, lives in Atlanta, and in March bought cocoa-butter lotion, a purse large enough to double as a diaper bag, zinc and magnesium supplements, and a bright blue rug. There's, say, an 87 percent chance that she's pregnant and that her delivery date is sometime in late August. What's more, because of the data attached to her Guest ID number, Target knows how to trigger Jenny's habits. They know that if she receives a coupon via e-mail, it will most likely cue her to buy online. They know that if she receives an ad in the mail on Friday, she frequently uses it on a weekend trip to the store.<sup>[16]</sup>

The article goes on to tell the well-documented story of an outraged father who went into his local Target to complain about the mailer his teenage daughter received from Target featuring coupons for infant clothing and baby furniture. He accused Target of encouraging his daughter to get pregnant. The customer-service employee he spoke with was apologetic but knew nothing about the mailer. When this employee phoned the father a few days later to apologize again, it emerged that the girl was, in fact, pregnant, and Target's marketing analytics had figured it out before her father did.

## Advantages and Disadvantages of Direct Marketing

All this data-driven direct marketing might seem a little creepy or even nefarious, and certainly it can be when marketers are insensitive or unethical in their use of consumer data. However, direct marketing also offers significant value to consumers by tailoring their experience in the market to things that most align with their needs and interests. If you're going to have a baby (and you don't mind people knowing about it), wouldn't you rather have Target send you special offers on baby products than on men's shoes or home improvement goods?

As suggested in the *New York Times* excerpt, above, direct marketing can be a powerful tool for anticipating and predicting customer needs and behaviors. Over time, as companies use consumer data to understand their target audiences and market dynamics, they can develop more effective campaigns and offers. Organizations can create offers that are more personalized to consumer needs and preferences, and they can reach these consumers more efficiently through direct contact. Because it is so data intensive, it is relatively easy to measure the effectiveness of direct marketing by linking it to outcomes: did a customer request additional information or use the coupons sent? Did he open the email message containing the discount offer? How many items were purchased and when? And so forth. Although the cost of database and information infrastructure is not insignificant, mobile and email marketing tend to be inexpensive to produce once the underlying infrastructure is in place. As a rule, direct marketing tactics can be designed to fit marketing budgets.

Among the leading disadvantages of direct marketing are, not surprisingly, concerns about privacy and information security. Target's massive data breach in 2013 took a hefty toll on customer confidence, company revenue, and profitability at the time. Direct marketing also takes place in a crowded, saturated market in which people are only too willing to toss junk mail and unsolicited email into trash bins without a second glance. Electronic spam filters screen out many email messages, so people may never even see email messages from many of the organizations that send them. Heavy reliance on data also leads to the challenge of keeping databases and contact information up to date and complete, a perennial problem for many organizations. Finally, direct marketing implies a direct-to-customer business model that inevitably requires companies to provide an acceptable level of customer service and interaction to win new customers and retain their business.



## Direct Marketing in the IMC Process

Direct marketing, and email marketing in particular, plays a critical role in many IMC campaigns because it is a primary means of communicating with any named-and-known target audiences. It is a common vehicle for spreading the word about sales promotions and public relations activities. Direct marketing pieces can reuse and reinforce messages and images developed for advertisements, offering another touch point for reaching target segments. QR codes and other mobile marketing tactics may be used at the point of sale to engage customers and persuade them to purchase. Email marketing messages commonly include links to social media, inviting consumers to share experiences, opinions, marketing messages, and offers with their social networks.

Direct marketing can also be a useful tool in personal selling, as it helps marketers and sales representatives efficiently maintain ongoing relationships with customers and prospects as they are nurtured through the sales process. The rich data behind direct marketing also provides insight for sales representatives to help them segment prospective customers and develop offers and sales approaches personalized to their needs and interests.

## Digital Marketing: Inform, Entice, Engage

Digital marketing is an umbrella term for using a digital tools to promote and market products, services, organizations and brands. As consumers and businesses become more reliant on digital communications, the power and importance of digital marketing have increased. The direct marketing section of this module already discussed two digital tools: email and mobile marketing, which fit into both categories. This section will discuss other essential tools in the digital marketing tool kit: websites, content marketing and search-engine optimization (SEO), and social media marketing.

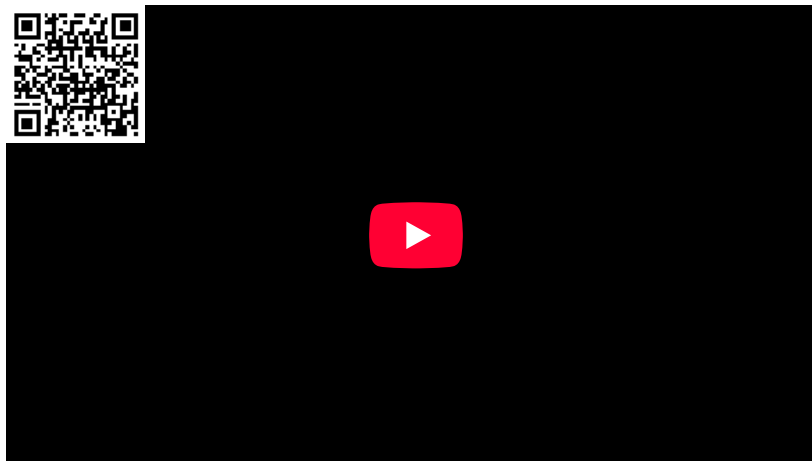
## What Makes Digital Marketing Tools Unique

In part, digital marketing is critically important because people use digital technologies frequently, and marketing needs to happen where people are. But digital marketing tools also have other unique capabilities that set them apart from traditional (predigital) marketing communication tools. These capabilities make them uniquely suited to the goals of marketing. Digital marketing tools are:

- **Interactive:** A primary focus of many digital marketing tools and efforts is to interact with target audiences, so they become actively engaged in the process, ideally at multiple points along the way. This may happen by navigating a website, playing a game, responding to a survey, sharing a link, submitting an email address, publishing a review, or even “liking” a post. Asking consumers to passively view an advertisement is no longer enough: now marketers look for ways to interact.
- **Mobile and portable:** Today’s digital technologies are more mobile and portable than ever before. This means digital marketing tools are also mobile and portable: consumers can access them—and they can access consumers—virtually anytime and anywhere through digital devices. Digital marketing can reach people in places and ways that simply were not possible in the past. A tired mother stuck in traffic might encourage her child to play a game on her smart phone, exposing both child and mother to marketing messages in the process. A text message sent to a remote location can remind an adventurer to renew a subscription or confirm an order. Many physical limitations fall away in the digital world.
- **Highly measurable and data driven.** Digital technologies produce mountains of data about who is doing what, when, how, and with whom. Likewise, digital marketing tools enable marketers to determine very precisely whom they want to reach, how to reach them, and what happens when people begin the process of becoming a customer. By tracking and analyzing these data, marketers can also identify which channels are most productive for bringing people into the site and what types of interactions are most efficient at turning them to customers.
- **Sharable:** Because digital marketing tools are digital, it is easy to share them at low or no cost—a benefit for marketers and for consumers who find content they want to share virally. People routinely share videos, games, websites, articles, images, and brands—any number of overt or covert marketing artifacts. In fact, the degree to which something is shared has become a key metric to confirm how successful it is as a marketing vehicle. Sharing has always been a primary means of spreading ideas. Digital marketing tools now facilitate extremely rapid, efficient, global sharing.
- **Synergistic with other marketing activities:** Digital marketing tools offer quick, easy, and inexpensive ways to repurpose marketing messages and content from other marketing communication methods. They help amplify and reinforce the messages targeting consumers through other media. For example, uploading a TV ad to YouTube creates a piece of digital marketing content that can be posted to Facebook, tweeted on Twitter, embedded in a website page, and shared via an email from a sales representative engaged in personal selling to a target customer.

## Always #LikeaGirl

Let’s take a look at this commercial from Always. What did they do to take advantage of digital marketing tools?



Not only did Always produce a video on a relevant topic, but they invited people to join the conversation. At the end of the commercial, they invited viewers to share the message, to tweet using #likeagirl, and to visit their website.

## The Imperative to Use Digital Marketing

For virtually every organization that wants to do business in the world today, having some level of digital marketing presence is a requirement. A website is quite literally an organization’s digital address and calling card. People of all ages routinely use Web searches for information that shapes their purchasing decisions; using the Web helps them decide where to look, what to buy, where to find it, and how much to pay. Marketers must develop useful Web content and engage in search engine optimization (SEO) strategies in order to make sure their websites will be found when people come looking.

Social media marketing helps organizations tap into the power of word-of-mouth sharing, so that people hear about a company, product, or brand from trusted sources. Social media allow marketers to foster communities and listen in on timely conversations about their brands and products, providing insight into what’s working or not working with their marketing or the customer experiences they provide. Email and mobile marketing reflect the dominant communication patterns in the developed world as well as in many developing countries. Communicating with prospects and customers effectively requires marketers to use these common, everyday tools.

Digital marketing tools are an integral part of most IMC campaigns, as they provide digital communication support to target and reinforce campaign messages and activities in other media. Examples of digital marketing tools supporting broader IMC activity include the following:

- Media companies host and monitor forums for fans to live-tweet during broadcast and cable TV programs, such as *The Walking Dead* and *Empire*, including commentary on the programming, advertising, the entertainment “brand,” and nature of the fan community.
- Companies routinely upload television ads to YouTube and then work to create “buzz” by promoting this content through their websites, blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms.
- Well-designed Web content such as research reports, articles, and e-books are used as informational giveaways to generate interest and cultivate leads during trade shows, conferences, and personal selling activities.

## Website Marketing

Websites represent an all-in-one storefront, a display counter, and a megaphone for organizations to communicate in the digital world. For digital and bricks-and-mortar businesses, Websites are a primary channel for communicating with current and prospective customers as well as other audiences. A good website provides evidence that an organization is real, credible, and legitimate.

The variety of online website-building services now available make setting up a basic website relatively simple and inexpensive. Once the website is established, it can continue to be fairly easy and inexpensive to maintain if the organization uses cost-effective and user-friendly tools. On the other hand, sophisticated websites can be massively expensive to build and maintain, and populating them with fresh, compelling content can devour time and money. But organizations can adjust the scope, scale, and resources required for their websites in proportion to their business objectives and the value they want their websites to deliver.

## Websites As Marketing Tools

Websites are very flexible, allowing organizations to build the kinds of features and capabilities they need to conduct business effectively. Common marketing objectives and website functions include the following:

- **Providing general information** about an organization such as the value proposition, products and services, and contact information
- **Expressing the brand** of an organization through design, look and feel, personality, and voice
- **Demonstrating products, services, and expertise**, including the customer experience, features, benefits, and value they provide
- **Proof points** about the value a company offers, using evidence in the form of case studies, product reviews, testimonials, return on investment data, etc.
- **Lead generation**, capturing information about website visitors to use in ongoing sales and marketing activity
- **Communities and forums** for target audiences to share information and ask/answer questions
- **Publishing value-adding content** and tools for informational or entertainment purposes to bring people in and draw them back to the website
- **Communication** about company news, views, culture, developments, and vision through an electronic newsroom or a company blog, for example
- **Shopping**, providing tools for customers to research, find, and select products or services in the digital environment
- **Recommendations** that direct customers to information, products, services, and companies that meet their interests and needs
- **Sales**, the ability to conduct sales and transact business online
- **Capturing customer feedback** about the organization, its products, services, content, and the website experience itself

Before starting to build a website, the marketing manager should meet with other company leaders to lay out a common vision for what the Website should accomplish and the business functions it should provide. For example, if a business does not plan to handle sales online, there is no need to build a “shopping cart” function or an e-commerce engine. If cultivating lively dialogue with an active customer community is an important business objective, this capability should be incorporated into the website strategy and design decisions from the outset. The website strategy must be effective at achieving the organization’s goals to inform, engage, entertain, explore, support, etc.

## Top Tips for Effective Websites

Many factors go into building an effective website. The following table serves as a checklist for key considerations.

Tips for building effective website elements

| Website Element | Tips and Recommendations   |
|-----------------|--|
| Domain name     | The domain name is your digital address. Secure a name that is memorable and functional for your business.   |
| Look and feel   | A site’s look and feel conveys a lot about a company. Make sure your site makes positive impressions about credibility, product quality, the customer experience, etc.   |
| Messaging       | Messaging and how it is presented can draw people in or turn them off immediately. Find concise, compelling ways to tell your story.   |
| Design          | Website design is about usability as well as aesthetics. Make conscious choices about how design expresses your brand personality as well as its role in making the user experience intuitive and effective.                 |
| Structure       | Structure the website and organize information so that it is easy for visitors to navigate the site and find what they want.   |
| Content quality | To a large degree, the quality of content is what brings traffic into a website (more on this soon). Produce content and organize it so it can drive traffic, move customers through the sales cycle, and generate business. |
| Content variety | Use a mix of professional-quality text, images, video, and other visual content to make your website interesting and readable.   |
| Language        | Typos and grammatical errors are an immediate website turnoff. Proofread everything with fresh eyes before you publish.  |
| Accessibility   | Follow basic principles of website accessibility to ensure that people can use your site effectively regardless of device or disability.   |
| Call to action  | Provide cues for your website visitors about what to do next. Give each page a clear call to action and a path that invites people to keep exploring and moving closer to a purchasing decision.                             |
| Analytics       | Track website traffic and usage patterns using a tool like Google Analytics. Monitor which website pages get attention and which ones flop. Use what you learn to improve how well your website meets your objectives.       |

## Advantages and Disadvantages of Website Marketing

Websites have so many advantages that there is almost no excuse for a business not to have one. Effective website marketing declares to the world that an organization exists, what value it offers, and how to do business. Websites can be an engine for generating customer data and new business leads. An electronic storefront is often dramatically less expensive than a physical storefront, and it can serve customers virtually anywhere in the world with internet access. Websites are very flexible and easy to alter. Organizations can try out new strategies, content and tactics at relatively low cost to see what works and where the changes pay off.

At the same time, websites carry costs and risks. They do require some investment of time and money to set up and maintain. For many organizations, especially small organizations without a dedicated website team, keeping website content fresh and up-to-date is a continual challenge. Organizations should make wise, well-researched decisions about information infrastructure and website hosting, to ensure their sites remain operational with good performance and uptime. Companies that capture and maintain customer data through their websites must be vigilant about information security to prevent hackers from stealing sensitive customer data. Some company websites suffer from other types of information security challenges, such as electronic vandalism, trolling (offensive or provocative online posts), and denial-of-service attacks mounted by hackers to take websites out of commission.

## Search-Engine Optimization and Content Marketing

Search-engine optimization (SEO) is the process of using Internet search engines, such as Google, Bing, and Yahoo, to gain notice, visibility, and traffic from people conducting searches using these tools. SEO works in lockstep with content marketing, which takes a strategic approach to developing and distributing valuable content targeted to the interests of a defined audience, with the goal of driving sales or another profitable customer action. In other words, content marketers create worthwhile Internet content aimed at their target audiences. Then organizations use SEO tactics to get this content noticed and to generate new traffic and sales leads.

Together, SEO and content marketing can help boost awareness and brand perceptions about the value a company provides. Content marketing can help an organization gain visibility as an expert or leader in its competitive set. Together these marketing communications tools help organizations get noticed and stay top of mind among individuals seeking the types of products or services they offer.

### How SEO Works

The basic premise behind search-engine optimization is this: People conduct Internet searches. The search terms they use bring up a given set of results. When someone is searching for the types of things your organization offers, as a marketer you want your results to be at the top. You can boost your search rankings by identifying and applying SEO and content marketing strategies to the search terms people use when they are looking for products or services like yours. It may even be worth paying to get their attention, because people searching for the things you offer are likely to be better-qualified prospective customers.

Because the supply of Internet content on any given topic is continually expanding, and because search-engine companies regularly fine-tune their search algorithms to deliver ever more helpful results, SEO is not a one-time task. It's an ongoing process that companies should incorporate into their entire approach to digital marketing.

In the world of SEO, there are two types of search results: 1) organic (or unpaid) search results, and 2) inorganic (or paid) search results.

**Organic search results** are the unpaid listings that appear solely because of their relevance to the search terms entered when you conduct an Internet search. These are unpaid listings, and they earn their place because the search engine determines they are most relevant and valuable based on a variety of factors including the content itself and the popularity of that content with other Internet users.

**Inorganic, or paid search results**, appear because companies have paid the search engine for a high-ranking placement based on the search terms used. Organizations bid for this placement and typically pay per click when someone clicks through to a website. Most search engines mark the paid results as ads, so that Internet users can distinguish between organic and paid search results. In Figure 1, below, the results preceded by the word *Ad* in yellow indicate paid search results from a Google search of “cats for sale.”

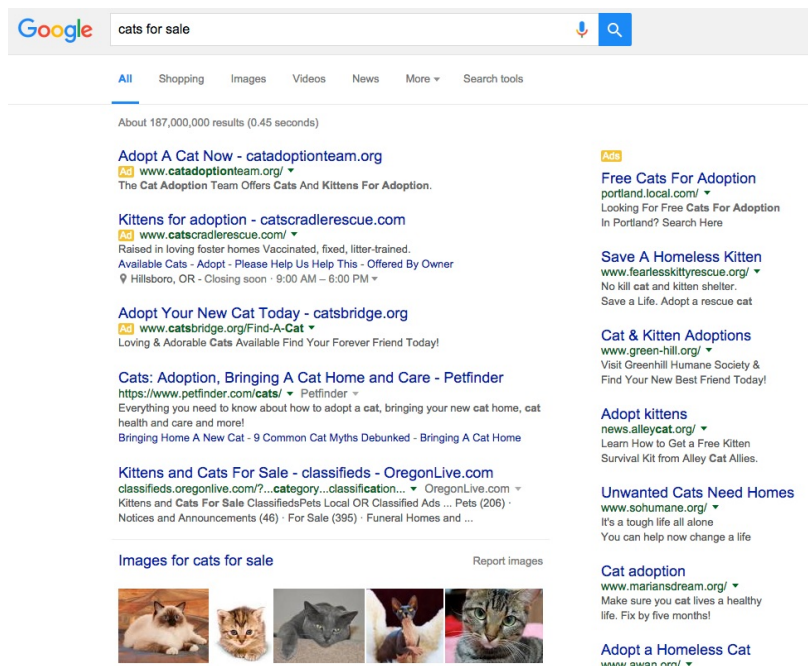
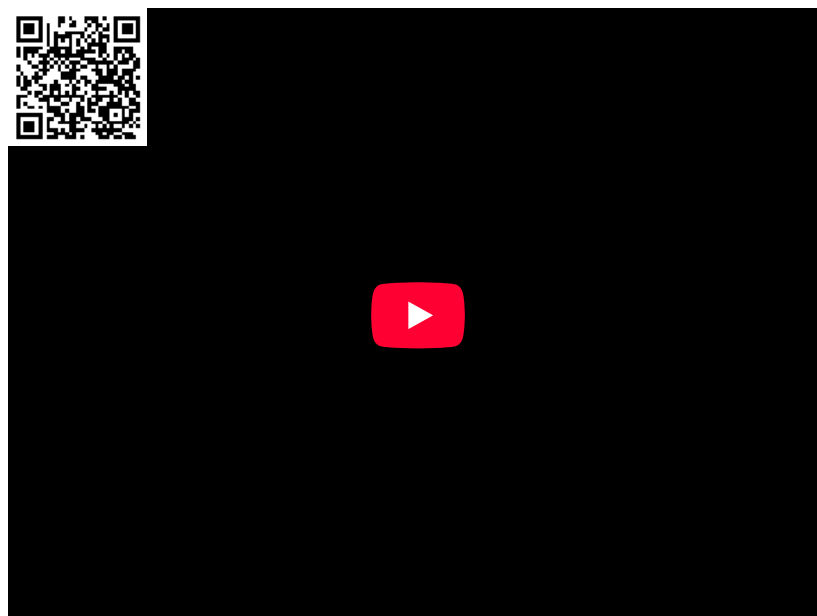


Figure 1. Google Search results for the search “cats for sale”

The following short video explains what makes Google AdWords so powerful.

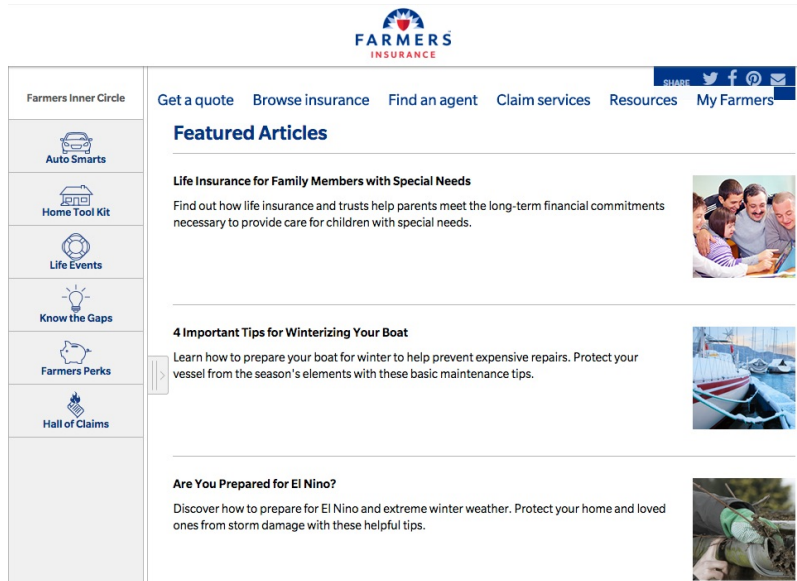


[Read the transcript for the video "Google AdWords."](#)

Marketers use key-word research to guide their efforts to improve their rankings for both organic and inorganic searches. Key-word research helps marketers identify the search terms people are most likely to use when looking for the types of products, services, or information their website offers. Tools such as freely available Google AdWords Keyword Planner and Google Trends help marketers identify and compare popular search terms. Armed with optimal search key words, they can buy high-ranking placement in inorganic, paid search results for their search terms of choice. They can improve their organic (unpaid) search rankings by applying content marketing strategies.

#### How Content Marketing Works

There is a popular saying among digital marketers: "Content is king." Good content attracts eyeballs, while poor content does not. Content marketing is based on the premise that marketers can use web content as a strategic asset to attract attention and drive traffic of target audiences. As a marketer, part of your job is to help the organization publish substantive web content—articles, videos, e-books, podcasts, images, infographics, case studies, games, calculators, etc.—that will be interesting for your target segments. When you do this, you should incorporate your optimal search terms into the content, so that it's more likely to show up in organic search results. You should also look for ways to link to that content from other webpages, so that search-engine "bots" (or computer programs) responsible for cataloguing websites will think your content is popular and well regarded by the Internet-user community. As your content appears in search results, it will rank higher as more and more people click through to your content and link to it from other locations on the Internet.



The screenshot shows the Farmers Insurance website. At the top is the Farmers Insurance logo. Below it is a navigation bar with links: "Get a quote", "Browse insurance", "Find an agent", "Claim services", "Resources", and "My Farmers". On the left is a sidebar with icons and labels: "Farmers Inner Circle", "Auto Smarts", "Home Tool Kit", "Life Events", "Know the Gaps", "Farmers Perks", and "Hall of Claims". The main content area is titled "Featured Articles" and contains three articles, each with a title, a brief description, and a small image. The first article is "Life Insurance for Family Members with Special Needs", the second is "4 Important Tips for Winterizing Your Boat", and the third is "Are You Prepared for El Nino?".

Articles and tips on Farmers Insurance website.

#### Top Tips for SEO and Content Marketing

You can use the following simple recommendations to realize the benefits of SEO and content marketing. When the two work together, they can support your organization's success raising its profile, improving search rankings, and generating traffic and new business.

Tips for utilizing SEO and content marketing on a website

| SEO/Content Element | Tips and Recommendations  |
|---------------------|---|
| Content quality     | Make website content substantive, and showcase your expertise. Create material that makes people want to stay on your site to keep reading, interacting, and exploring. |

| SEO/Content Element   | Tips and Recommendations  |
|-----------------------|---|
| Key-word research     | Conduct key-word research to learn what actual search terms people are using that relate to your goods, products, services, and brand.  |
| Incorporate key words | Make sure your content matches the search terms you want to be associated with. Be sure to use actual, real-world search terms in order to get the bump to higher rankings.   |
| Content freshness     | Search-engine algorithms like new content, as well as content where there is a flurry of activity. Create and promote fresh new content regularly to get the “freshness boost” in search results.   |
| Evergreen content     | Be sure to develop some Web content that won’t age and become outdated quickly, such as news releases. Persistently useful, interesting content generates more visits, more external links from other sites, and higher search rankings.  |
| Internal links        | Create internal links between content pages on your website. This points users to additional material that may interest them. It also helps search engines crawl through your site to reach and discover all of your content. And more sites that link to a page help boost that page’s search rankings.                    |
| Headlines             | Create great headlines for your Web content that grab attention while also helpfully indicating what the content will provide. Also, make sure your content delivers on the headline.   |
| Call to action        | Include a clear call to action on each Web page or content element, whether that involves sharing information, registering for a webinar, downloading an e-book, or linking to another Web page. Use content and calls to action to move people through the AIDA model toward purchasing decisions.                         |
| Promoting content     | Once content is published, use other marketing communication tools to promote it. Write posts about it on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, or other social networks of choice. Send email messages to active sales opportunities. Link to it from the Website home page. Create a flurry to help give it an SEO boost. |

### Advantages and Disadvantages of SEO and Content Marketing

Internet search is a fact of life in the modern world. It is a critical tool for customer decision making in B2B and B2C markets. Practicing the basic tenets of SEO helps an organization get into the search-engine fray. When marketers do it skillfully, they can easily track the results, see what works, and adjust course to improve outcomes. When organizations generate high-quality content, it can be relatively inexpensive to achieve great SEO results, particularly as search engines themselves increasingly reward the “real deal”: good information and true substance targeted to a specific audience.

While SEO and content marketing are powerful tools, they are also rather like puppies that need ongoing feeding and care. Both require regular monitoring to check whether they are effective and need refreshing. The Internet is a crowded and competitive place, where organizations from around the globe can compete with one another for attention and customer loyalty. It takes persistence and hard work to get on top of the Internet content world and stay there.

### Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing is the use of online applications, networks, blogs, wikis, and other collaborative media for communicating brand messaging, conducting marketing, public relations, and lead generation. Social media are distinctive for their networking capabilities: they allow people to reach and interact with one another through interconnected networks. This “social” phenomenon changes the power dynamic in marketing: no longer is the marketer the central gatekeeper for all communication about a product, service, brand, or organization. Social media allows for organic dialogue and activity to happen directly between individuals, unmediated by a company. Companies can (and should) listen, learn, and find ways to participate authentically.

Social media marketing focuses on three primary objectives:

1. **Creating buzz:** Developing and publishing messages (in a variety of formats—e.g., text, video, and images) that is disseminated via user-to-user contact
2. **Fostering community:** Building ways for fans to engage with one another about a shared interest in a brand, product, or service
3. **Facilitating two-way communication:** Online conversations are not controlled by the organizations. Instead, social media promotes and encourages user participation, feedback, and dialogue

### How Social Media Marketing Works

Organizations have opportunities to engage in social media for marketing purposes in several ways: paid, earned, and owned social media activity.

- **Paid:** Paid social media activity includes advertisements on social media (placed in various locations), sponsored posts or content, and retargeting advertisements that target ads based on a consumer’s previous actions. This type of social media activity is best suited for sales, lead generation, event participation, and incorporation into IMC campaigns.
- **Earned:** Earned social media activity involves news organizations, thought leaders, or other individuals who create content about an organization. It is particularly suited to supporting public relations efforts.
- **Owned:** Owned social media activity happens through social media accounts that an organization owns (e.g., Facebook page, Twitter handle, Instagram name, etc.). This activity is ideal for brand awareness, lead generation, and goals around engaging target audiences.

Effective use of social media to reach your target audience requires more effort by an organization than the traditional marketing methods. Not only must an organization create unique content and messaging, but it must be prepared to engage in two-way communication regarding the content that it produces and shares on social media. To be effective at using social media to reach target audiences, an organization must:

- **Create unique content, often.** Social media, unlike traditional methods, cannot rely on static content. An organization must regularly publish new, unique content to stay relevant on any social media platform.
- **Ask questions.** To foster engagement, an organization must solicit feedback from users, customers, and prospects. This is critical to creating conversation, insight, and discussion on social media platforms.
- **Create short-form media.** Most social media platforms have character limits per post. Users on social media expect to be able to scan their feed. Long posts (even within character limits) tend to underperform. The more succinct an organization can be, the better.
- **Try different formats.** Most social media platforms provide users with the option to add images and video to text. Social media is becoming an increasingly visual medium, where content that performs the best usually includes an image or video. Try to convert messages into images and video when possible for maximum reach.
- **Use a clear, immediate call to action.** Social media works best for achieving marketing goals with a clear call to action that a user can do immediately from their computer or mobile device. Examples include 1) Web traffic (click-through), 2) downloads of content (e.g., white papers, articles, etc.), 3) online purchases, and 4) engagement (comment, like, share, view, read).

### Common Social Media Marketing Tools

What’s hot in social media is a moving target, but the following table provides a listing and description of primary social media platforms.

#### Listing and Description of Primary Social Media Platforms

| Tool      | Description   |
|-----------|---|
| Blogs     | Long- or short-form medium for communicating with audiences   |
| YouTube   | Video-hosting social media site   |
| Twitter   | Short-form (140 character) “microblogging” medium that is intended for text and image sharing   |
| Facebook  | Long-form (up to 2,000 characters per post) medium for sharing text, images, videos, and other multimedia content   |
| Instagram | Image-based social network that is intended as a visual medium. Does not have capabilities to drive click-through rate (CTR) because posts offer no link option |
| Google+   | Long-form medium for sharing text, images, videos, and other multimedia content   |
| Pinterest | Medium for sharing photos and visual content categorized by theme   |
| LinkedIn  | Long- or short-form medium for sharing text, images, videos, and other multimedia content targeted to the business community                                    |

#### Top Tips for Social Media Marketing

The following tips help break down the process of mounting a successful social media marketing strategy.

Tips and recommendations for social media marketing activities.

| Activity             | Tips and Recommendations   |
|----------------------|--|
| Start with SWOT      | Start by conducting a SWOT analysis of your social media activity. Evaluate how your organization is currently using social media, as well as the competition (platforms, messaging, tactics, and campaigns).      |
| Establish a baseline | Establish a baseline. Take measurements for current reach and engagement before starting to use social media for marketing. This will help you gauge the impact and improve as you pursue a social media strategy. |
| Set goals            | Set specific goals for your social media campaign. Make them S.M.A.R.T. goals that align with your broader marketing strategy.   |
| Target audience      | Understand how your target audience is using social media (and what platforms).  |
| Platforms            | Identify which social media platforms you will use and what you want to accomplish in each.  |
| Ownership            | Identify who within the organization will “own” and share responsibility for social media participation. Work out plans for how to coordinate activity and messaging if there are multiple owners.                 |
| Testing              | A/B test your content using the targeting features of the social media platform. Figure out which types of posts, messages, content, and topics generate better response.  |
| Measurement          | Regularly take measurements for how much engagement your efforts are producing. Compare them to the benchmark and assess progress toward goals.  |
| Monitor              | Monitor social media activity regularly and be sure to respond to customers, prospects, and other users.   |

#### Advantages and Disadvantages of Social Media Marketing

The advantages and benefits of social media marketing focus heavily on the two-way and even multidirectional communication between customers, prospects, and advocates for your company or brand. By listening and engaging in social media, organizations are better equipped to understand and respond to market sentiment. Social media helps organizations identify and cultivate advocates for its products, services, and brand, including the emergence of customers who can become highly credible, trusted voices to help you sell. Unlike many other forms of marketing, social media are very measurable, allowing marketers to track online customer behavior and how target audiences respond to content created by the organization. Social media offers a virtually unlimited audience for communicating and sharing key messages in the market. It also offers marketers the ability to relatively easily target and test the effectiveness of content using the various targeting capabilities of social media for location, interests, income, title, industry, and other sociographic differentiators.

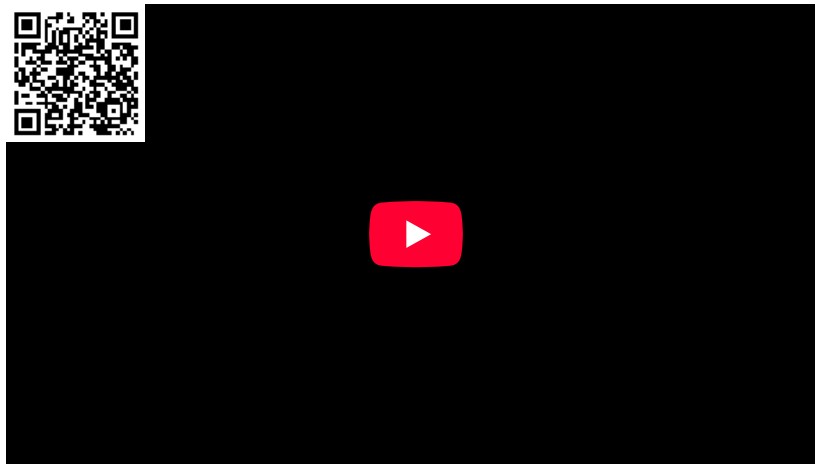
Social media also carry a number of inherent challenges. Social media are dynamic environments that requires significant effort to monitor and stay current on. It is also difficult to continually create “share-worthy” content. The variety of social media tools makes it a challenge to understand which platforms to use for which target audiences and calls to action. Crisis communications can be difficult, too, particularly in the public environment of social media, in which it is difficult to contain or control communication. This means it can be difficult to mitigate the impact of a crisis on the brand.

One of the biggest challenges facing organizations is determining who in the organization should “own” the social media platforms for the organization. Too few hands to help means the burden of content creation is high on a single individual. However, too many people often results in duplication of efforts or conflicting content.

#### Expert Insight on Using Social Media: JetBlue

Airline carrier JetBlue has received attention and accolades for its effective use of social media to foster two-way communication with customers. In this video, JetBlue’s head of social media strategy, Morgan Johnston, explains the company’s approach to social media and how it complements other corporate and marketing communication activity. He also shares insights about how the company used social media to manage crisis communications and respond to customers during Hurricane Sandy, when extreme weather conditions hit the company’s northeastern U.S. travel routes hard.





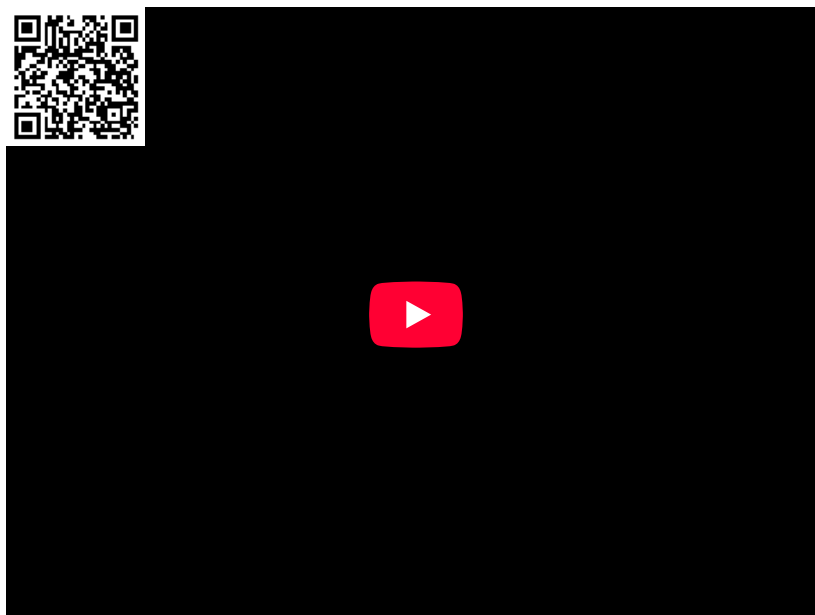
### Guerrilla Marketing: Thinking Outside the Box

Guerrilla marketing is a relatively new marketing strategy that relies on unconventional, often low-cost tactics to create awareness of and goodwill toward a brand, product, service, or even a company. The term “guerrilla marketing” itself comes from Jay Conrad Levinson, who coined the term in his 1984 book *Guerrilla Advertising*. Though “guerrilla” has military connotations (the word means “little war”), guerrilla promotion strategies often combine elements of wit, humor, and spectacle to capture people’s attention and engage them in the marketing act. Guerrilla marketing is memorable. And, like the renegade militias it was presumably named for, unexpected.

Practitioners of guerrilla marketing today have used other words to describe it: *disruptive*, *anti-establishment*, *newsworthy*, and a *state of mind*. By its nature, guerrilla marketing defies precise description, so it may be worthwhile to view an example before going further.

#### Classic Guerrilla: Nike Livestrong at the Tour de France

Although this campaign was a full-blown IMC effort, at its core it was really a memorable guerrilla marketing stunt: the spectacle of painting the streets of France during the world-famous Tour de France bicycle race. It ran in 2008 when Lance Armstrong was still one of the most revered athletes of his generation. Designed to generate awareness for Nike, the nonprofit Livestrong Foundation, and the cause of fighting cancer, marketers succeeded in sharing inspiring messages of hope with their target audiences: athletes, sports enthusiasts and people affected by cancer, particularly young people.



#### Telltale Signs of Guerrilla Marketing



Guerrilla marketing campaigns can be very diverse in their approach and tactics. So what do they have in common? Guerrilla marketing often has the following characteristics:

- It's imaginative and surprising, but in a very hip or antiestablishment way
- Doesn't resemble a traditional marketing initiative, such as a straightforward print or TV advertising campaign
- Uses combinations of different marketing communications tactics, in creative ways
- Is experiential, drawing in the target audience to participate
- Takes risks in what it aspires to accomplish, even if it might ruffle some feathers
- Is not 100 percent approved by the establishment (i.e. the city, the event planners, the powers that be)

### When to Use Guerrilla Marketing

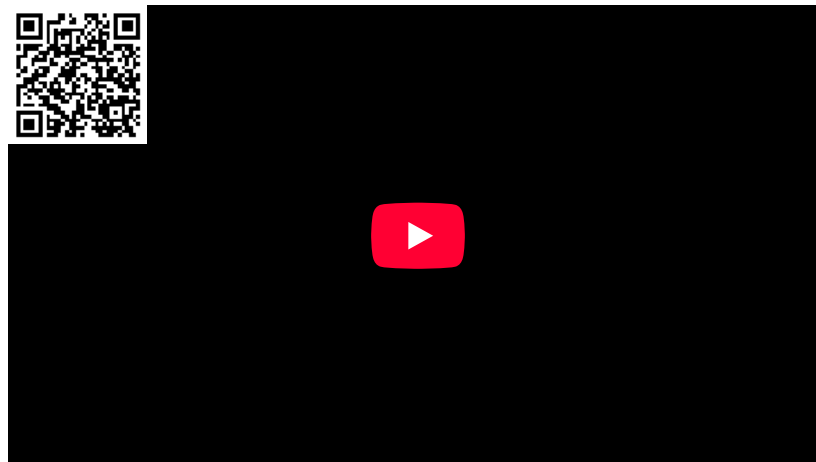
This edgy marketing approach focuses on two goals: 1) get media attention, and 2) make a positive and memorable connection with your target audience. Many noteworthy guerrilla campaigns, like Nike Livestrong, focus on creating an experience that embodies the spirit of the brand. Often these projects invite people who encounter the campaign to become co-conspirators in achieving the campaign's vision and reach.

Guerrilla marketing experts assert that this technique can work for virtually any brand or organization, so long as the organization doesn't mind taking some risks, and so long as the project is true to who you are and what you represent. The right concept for the guerrilla marketing effort should capture your organization's authentic voice and express what is unique about your brand identity. At some point you may be asked to stand up for your actions if you're called onto the carpet, so you need to believe in what you are doing. Guerrilla marketing is particularly suited to small, imaginative organizations that may not have much money but have a burning desire to do something memorable—to make an entrance or a splash. Severe budget constraints can encourage creative teams to be very inventive and original.<sup>[17]</sup>

Because it is inherently *spectacle*, guerrilla marketing tactics work very well for building brands and generating awareness and interest in an organization, product, service, or idea. They aim to put a company on the map—the mind-share map. It's interesting that guerrilla marketing often calls on the audience to engage or take action, but turning participants into a paying customers may not be the goal. However, successful guerrilla marketing can make audiences undergo a kind of “conversion” experience: if the impact is powerful enough, it can move consumers further along the path towards brand loyalty.

### Volkswagen: Take the Slide

Take a look at the following guerrilla marketing spectacle organized by Volkswagen. Notice how the event capitalizes on a unique combination of emotional appeal and surprise. (Note: there is no narration to the video; just background music.)



### Guerrilla Marketing Tactics: The Usual Suspects

As you saw in the example of the lamppost transformed into a McDonald's coffee pot, all kinds of spaces and urban environments present opportunities for the guerrilla marketer. In fact, guerrilla marketing initiatives can be executed offline or online. Some companies feel that an edgy, unexpected online campaign with creative guerrilla elements is a little safer than executing a project in the bricks-and-mortar world.

It goes against the very notion of guerrilla marketing to establish a set of tactics or practices that are “conventional” or “typical.” However, the following list describes some examples of guerrilla marketing tactics from noteworthy campaigns, which will give you an idea of what's been used in the past.<sup>[18]</sup>

Guerrilla marketing tactics and their descriptions.

| Guerrilla Tactic                 | Description   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Graffiti                         | Graffiti marketing, a subset of guerrilla marketing, turns walls, alleys, and streets into larger-than-life canvases for marketing activity.  |
| Stencil graffiti                 | Use of stencils to create repeated works of graffiti, with the stencils enabling the project team to rapidly recreate the same work in multiple locations. Stencils tend to be smaller-scale and simpler than classic graffiti art.   |
| Undercover, or stealth marketing | Use of marketers or paid actors to go “undercover” among peers to engage unsuspecting people in a marketing activity of some sort. For example, attractive actors are paid to strike up conversations, rave about a new mobile device, and then ask people to take a photo using the device, so that they get hands-on experience with the product in question. |
| Stickers                         | Inventive use of stickers as a temporary medium for creating an image, posing an illusion, or conveying a message   |
| Flash mobs                       | A group of people organized to perform an action at a predetermined place and time; usually they blend in with bystanders initially and then join the “mob” activity at the designated moment, as in the Do Re Mi video, above.   |
| Publicity stunts                 | Extraordinary feats to attract the attention of the general public, as well as media  |

| Guerrilla Tactic | Description   |
|------------------|---|
| Treasure hunts   | Placing a series of online and offline “treasure hunt” clues in an urban environment and inviting target audiences to participate in the hunt to win prizes and glory |
| Sham events      | Staging an activity or event that appears real, but in fact is a fake, for the purposes of drawing attention and making a statement                                   |

Despite the irreverent, antiestablishment spirit of guerrilla marketing, marketers should use good judgment about seeking permission from building owners, city managers, event planners, or others in a position of authority, to avoid unpleasant or unnecessary complications. Some coordination, or even a heads-up that something is happening, can go far toward earning goodwill and a cooperative spirit in the face of an unexpected spectacle.

#### How NOT to Guerrilla Market

When three guerrilla marketing veterans spoke with *Entrepreneur* about their work, they gave their top advice about what NOT to do with these projects:<sup>[19]</sup>

- Adam Salacuse of ALT TERRAIN: “Never aim to upset, scare, or provoke people in a negative way. The goal should be to implement something that people will embrace, enjoy, and share with friends.”
- Brett Zaccardi of Street Attack: “Don’t be contrived or too bland. Don’t try to be something you’re not.”
- Drew Neisser of Renegade Marketing: “Try not to annoy your target. [It] is generally not a good idea to do something that will cause someone on the team to go to jail.”

#### Advantages and Disadvantages of Guerrilla Marketing

Guerrilla marketing has several notable advantages. It can be inexpensive to execute—it’s often much cheaper than traditional advertising when you consider the number of impressions and amount of attention generated. It encourages creativity and inventiveness, since the goal is to create something novel and original. Guerrilla marketing is about buzz: it is designed for viral sharing, and it taps into powerful word-of-mouth marketing as people share their memorable guerrilla-inspired impressions and experiences with friends and acquaintances. A guerrilla marketing phenomenon can take on a life of its own and live in the memories of the people it affected long after the actual event is over. Finally, when executed effectively, guerrilla tactics are designed with media and publicity in mind. Media attention can snowball and generate a larger-than-expected “bounce” as local or even national outlets choose to cover these events.

As suggested above, guerrilla marketing also carries some disadvantages and risks. When an (apparently) spontaneous activity springs up in a public space, property owners, the police, and other authorities may object and try to interfere or stop the event. Unexpected obstacles can arise, which even the best-laid plans may have missed: weather, traffic, current events, timing, etc. Some audiences or bystanders may misinterpret what is happening, or even take offense at provocative actions or messages. When guerrilla projects are cloaked in secrecy or mystery, people may become uncomfortable or fearful, or the aura of mystery may cause them to interpret the message and goals incorrectly. Similarly, if people feel they have been duped by a guerrilla marketing activity, they may come away with negative impressions. If some people disapprove of a given guerrilla marketing activity or campaign, there’s a risk of backlash, anger, and frustration.

Compared to traditional marketing, guerrilla tactics are definitely riskier. Then again, the rewards can be brilliant, when things go as planned.

#### The Role of IMC in Guerrilla Marketing

As noted above, one telltale sign of guerrilla marketing is the way it blends multiple tactics to create maximum exposure and impact. Most guerrilla marketing campaigns incorporate multiple marketing communication methods and tools to carry out the the full vision. This makes them more than IMC compatible—they are really IMC *dependent*. For example, organizers of guerrilla stunts and feats frequently film their activities and post them online to generate (hopefully) viral videos and other content. Real-world guerrilla messages and promotional pieces often include information to access company Web sites, where custom-designed landing pages welcome visitors to the online counterpart of the guerrilla experience.

Social media is a staple of guerrilla marketing. Organizing, publicizing, and sharing a campaign’s outcomes and impact may all take place through social channels. Social media also helps generate the buzz that drives guerrilla content to become viral. As guerrilla activities draw media attention, they intersect with PR and media relations.

#### Try It

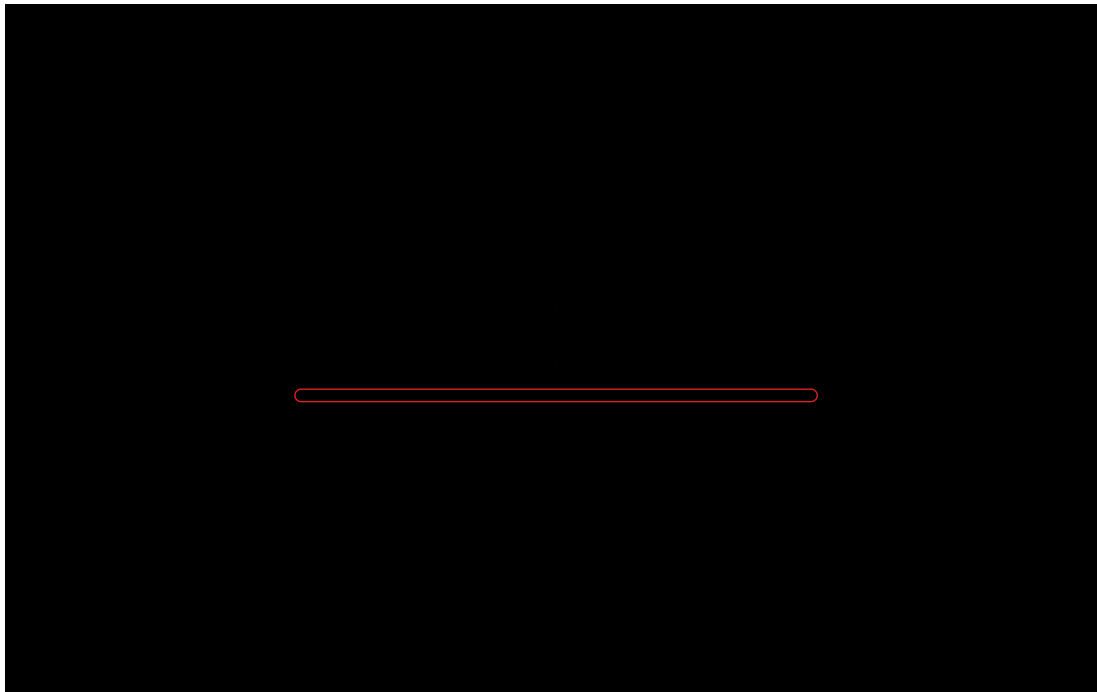
Congratulations: you’ve been learning a lot about IMC, and if the length of this module is any indicator, there’s a lot to learn!

Are you sick of just *reading about* integrated marketing communications and ready to actually *try* it?

You’re in luck. This simulation gives you the opportunity to start up your marketing engine and see what you can do with IMC. Play the simulation below multiple times to see how different choices lead to different outcomes. In this simulation environment, you don’t have to shy away from choices that seem a little off: you can learn as much from the wrong choices as the right ones. All simulations allow unlimited attempts so that you can gain experience applying the concepts.

Have fun!

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