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SPECIAL REPORT: MARKETING

COMMENTARY: Ways to boost digital marketing ROI

by Dan Sondhelm

Effective digital marketing can help fill your asset management firm's pipeline and qualify potential leads so your sales team can make the most of their outbound contact efforts.

So where do you begin?

Nearly all of your digital marketing efforts will revolve around your website. Your goal should be a visually compelling site with brief, concise content that immediately tells a visitor who you are, what you do and why you're different.

Navigation should be intuitive. Information on your products should be easy to find. Your home page should mix the "who/what/why" content with links to timely content, such as recent



commentaries, white papers and videos.

Contact information should be easy to find. Calls to action should be clear, and when you get a lead, add the contact to your email list and have a process for wholesaler follow-up. If you regularly produce new content, add a "subscribe" link to

DIGITAL, on page 7

DIGITAL
from page 1

every page to encourage prospects to sign up for future communications. And implement responsive design coding to ensure optimal viewability on PCs, tablets and smartphones.

While you're fixing the front end, don't forget about cleaning up the back end. Check the speed of your site to make sure pages don't take too long to load. Audit every page to check for outdated content and dead links, and delete pages no longer in use.

ADD SEO

Say you're a mid-cap value manager and you want your site to appear near the top of results when people enter "mid cap" or "mid-cap value" into Google and other search engines. Many website managers use search engine optimization strategies to manipulate Google into listing their pages higher. These include placing the desired search terms as high as possible on a page, or including these terms in special HTML codes (known as meta tags) that are commonly scanned by search engines.

Your in-house web content managers and programmers can do most of this SEO work for free. But don't overdo it. Some firms try to boost SEO results by overstuffing pages with multiple uses of search phrases. Most search engines detect and ignore these manipulations, and may even "demote" sites that try to game the system.

USE GOOGLE ADS

Enter "mid-cap value fund" in Google right now. Chances are, the No. 1 result will be a text ad for a specific mid-cap value fund or ETF. That ad didn't get there by accident.

The fund company paid for the privilege by using Google Ads to get the top spot.

With Google Ads, you pay Google to bid on certain keywords that will position clickable text ads you create near the top of its search results. To make the best use of Google Ads, your ad should be short and feature a specific offer of value-added content, such as a commentary or white paper. Make follow-through easy by creating a standalone landing page built around the offer that captures the user's contact information.

BRING BACK VISITORS

You want qualified prospects to return to your website to consume your content. But how do you get them to come back without bombarding them with email messages?

Retargeting offers an alternative. You've probably experienced it hundreds of times yourself. A typical example: You look at a product on Amazon, and then you see ads for the same product when you visit other sites.

Here's how retargeting works. When a new visitor comes to your site, the site drops a bit of code, or cookies, in their browser that tracks their online activities. When they go to other sites featuring online ads, your ad is included in the mix.

To take advantage of retargeting, you need to use a retargeting platform that often inte-



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grates with your marketing automation platform. And you'll need to design online ads that meet the retargeter's specifications.

UPGRADE TO AUTOMATION

Email marketing services can tell you which clients and prospects opened a particular message or clicked on a link. But they can't tell you what people they do once they're there. That's where marketing automation platforms comes in.

Applications such as Pardot, Hubspot and SharpSpring can track and report the online activities of anyone in your subscriber database. They can tell you who engages with your website, email messages and social media posts the most over time.

Most marketing automation programs can assign "lead scores" that reflect users' levels of online engagement with digital communications, sorting those who are the most engaged to the top.

Many also integrate with CRM systems,

which can make it easy for your wholesalers to figure out which clients and prospects should be at the top of their contact lists — and what they should be offering when they reach out to them.

GET MORE FROM LINKEDIN

Social media, and LinkedIn in particular, offers an inexpensive way to promote your brand. Creating a robust corporate page on LinkedIn and using it to promote news and thought leadership content gives you an additional cost-free way to bring your investment story and subject matter expertise to potentially thousands of qualified prospects.

Ask everyone in your firm to like or comment on your corporate posts so they'll appear in their own LinkedIn feeds that will

be viewable by members of their own professional networks. In addition, your executives should post long-form content in the articles section to showcase thought leadership, and pay attention to relevant groups related to financial advisors, for example, where your firm can play a role.

Your digital marketing priorities should be based on your existing digital program, goals and budget. If your website isn't up to par, start there. If you're still blasting emails, consider an upgrade. Always be thinking, what is the potential return on investment for this spend?

And always remember that your efforts to attract investors to your website will only be as effective as the quality of the experience they get when they arrive there. [MME](#)

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