

# How to write an online digital internet marketing plan 2018



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Are you a student looking for how to write a digital marketing plan? Or maybe you're a small business owner trying to figure out what does an online marketing plan look like?

This article shows how to write an **online internet digital marketing plan in 2018**. It's right up to date with new developments in the form of leaked [Google search quality guidelines](#) and the latest [voice search quality guidelines](#) and includes a **digital marketing plan template** & advice on how to develop an **digital marketing strategy**. [Updated January 2018]

## Writing your digital marketing plan

Where to start? If you have ever tackled a business plan you know what I mean. But...hello, it's your lucky day thanks to a clear simple framework called the [SOSTAC® planning model](#). In plain English this simply means breaking your plan down into six elements: –

**S** stands for **Situation Analysis** – which means where are we now?

**O** stands for **Objectives** which means where do we want to go?

**S** stands for **Strategy** which summarises how we are going to get there.

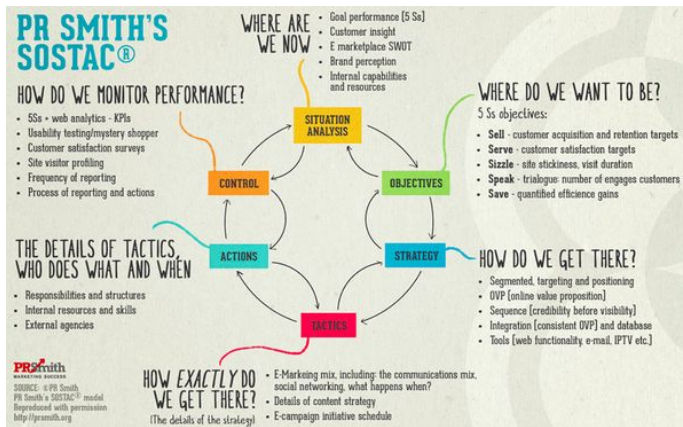
**T** stands for **Tactics** which are the details of strategy.

**A** is for **Action** or implementation – putting the plan to work.

**C** is for **Control** which means measurement, monitoring, reviewing, updating and modifying.

Visually it looks like this...

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If you want to find out more about digital marketing strategy or get hold of a FREE Digital Marketing Plan Template visit Smart Insights website and follow them on twitter @SmartInsights. More information about the SOSTAC® Planning System is at PR Smith's SOSTAC® webpage or follow on twitter @PR\_Smith.

Xtensio have a range of document templates for startups, consultancies and marketing agencies to help map out a digital marketing plan. These include templates for Competitive Analysis, SWOT Analysis, Content Strategy Planner, User Persona Creator, Brand Positioning Canvas and many more.

## Digital Marketing Trends in 2018

In 2018 there are key high-level digital trends that you need to aware of so you are not wasting your time, energy and effort doing things that are not so important. We've researched the web and have identified 8 key trends that have a major impact on writing a future proof digital marketing strategy in 2018. These are:-

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- Mobile First – the growth in mobile and smart phone usage, the importance of voice search, responsive website design and good user experience
- Voice search, SEO, content marketing and micro-moments
- The surge in the use of social messaging apps and chatbots
- Machine learning, artificial intelligence and marketing automation
- Digital transformation and using data to inform marketing strategies
- Integrating marketing activities into the customer lifecycle at different touch points and the importance of personalisation in marketing
- Having a robust customer engagement strategy
- The future of augmented reality in marketing

If you want to find out more about these trends see the latest research in [trends to shape your digital marketing plans for 2018](#) from Smart Insights.

Understand the most important [SEO tactics to focus on in 2018](#) in this guide from Backlinko. Find out predictions of how marketing on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Pinterest will change in the coming year at [Social Media Examiner](#).

## 7 Simple Steps For Creating a Digital Marketing Plan in 2018

The following steps show how you can create a simple, but effective **digital internet marketing plan** to build awareness & get going online. We've tried to cover everything in plain English without bamboozling you with the more in-depth intellectual debates about digital strategy, big data and advanced marketing jargon.

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Digital Marketing trends change fast so it's important to know what are the most important things you need to concentrate on in 2018 to make your marketing a success. Yes, it takes time to plan but in the long run its so worth it. Smart Insights have reported that shockingly **50% of UK businesses don't have an integrated Digital Marketing Strategy**. There's so much information available online its a challenge to know where to begin....

## Step 1: Know thy Target Audience intimately

Who are they? Where do they hang out? What do newspapers or trade journals they read? One way to define your target audience is to create **buyer personas**. A persona is a description of a specific person who might want to buy your services or products. The persona usually includes a fictitious buyer's demographic information, day in the life of, needs, motivations, preferences, biographical information, and a photo/image to make it real. Take Catarina for example....



- An introduction to personas and how to create them

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## Step 2: Spy on your Competitors (nicely)

Put together a spreadsheet of your top competitors and research them to see how they are using digital marketing channels to reach customers. Do a quick competitive analysis by checking out how your competitors (three is a good number) are performing on the SERPs and social media, as well as taking a good look at their websites.

Be a private detective, do a bit of mystery shopping, impersonate your customer to find your (and your competitor's) products or services online. Did you find theirs first, or yours? If you find theirs first, try to uncover what they are doing within the digital channel to make a connection online. Write down each connection you make in the spreadsheet.



The first tool in my competitor research toolbox is always [Screaming Frog Spider](#) from Dan Sharp the enigmatic founder & Director of Screaming Frog, a UK search marketing agency. Screaming Frog is as essential, well worth the small annual fee for limitless SEO audits.



I'd also check out [SEMrush](#) wonderful for Competitor Research, site audits and a whole lot more. I personally use SEMrush weekly. As a small business tool I now cannot do without it and customer service is always exceptional. SEO keyword rankings and website content marketing made easy and the SEMrush blog is one of the go-to sources for the latest SEO insights.



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If you haven't come across the amazeballs [Rival IQ](#) it saves so much time and hours of research. Social media analytics, meta descriptions and overall competitor landscapes give you a birds-eye feel for where you fit in your competitor landscape. This research will be used to prioritise your tactics in the next step. You can use premium SEO tools like Raven Tools and the ultimate [SEO Moz tools](#) to get to the nitty-gritty with your competitor's keywords & backlinks.

Looking at your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats is a good starting point for your marketing strategy. You might want to carry out a simple [SWOT or situational analysis](#) of the internal and external factors affecting your business. Gather information about your product, customers, price points and market share

## Step 3: Prioritise Your Digital Tactics & Channels

Look at each digital channel and think about how valuable or important the channel is to your organisation. e.g Do email campaigns drive web traffic or is it referrals (links) from directories or news sites. **Hint: check your referral traffic in Google Analytics.**

- email marketing
- referral traffic
- directory listings
- press
- social media like Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest for e-commerce or a combination.

Value can be defined as existing referrals, % of new visitors, no of new leads etc use your Google analytics data to see trends. Then, look at the effort required to implement your plan across each digital marketing channel. The value-effort score will show you which channels represent "quick wins". Think about the following options to narrow down the list:

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- **Company Goals** – What are the top priorities for the business to achieve? Brand Awareness, Education, Raw Traffic or Sales?
- **Budget** – How much do you have to spend on your marketing effort(s)?
- **Available resources** – What personnel or outsourced people do you have available to create or remarket content?
- **Available content** – What content do you have already, carry out a content audit to find out top performing content
- **Your website** – Check if it's content rich, responsive and designed for conversion optimisation.
- Does your site follow the **Google webmaster guidelines**?  
[Find out here.](#)

## Step 4: Quick wins

A variety of digital channels & tactics will be 'right' for your business depending on your business objectives & customers. For example, if you want to raise brand awareness & improve customer services social media marketing tactics will fit the bill. If you want to generate sales & web traffic a combination of Search Engine Marketing, Google+ & email marketing may be your best fit. In reality, most businesses have a variety of business objectives & audiences so take a 'pick 'n' mix approach, test effectiveness & monitor results.



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- Display Advertising
- Email Marketing
- Pay-Per-Click Advertising (PPC)
- Online Public Relations
- Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)
- Affiliate Marketing
- Social Media Marketing
- Viral Content Campaigns
- Conversion Rate Optimisation (CRO)
- Blogging
- Twitter advertising
- Facebook advertising
- Influencer/Blogger outreach
- Video marketing
- Local search marketing
- Mobile marketing
- Groupon/offer sites
- Corporate website
- Free content (eBooks, white papers, tools)
- Online communities/forums
- Webinars
- Podcasts
- Crowdfunding campaigns

Also, see SEOMoz – [which digital channels are right for my business?](#) and Convince and Converts [How to Choose the Right Social Channels to Reach Your Customers](#).

## Step 5: Measuring results

Create SMART performance indicators that are quantifiable and measurable. Examples include:-

- Increase online sales by 20% from x to y
- Increase natural search traffic by 20%
- Increase social media engagement on Facebook by 25% quarterly

Have a read of Avinash Kaushik's [Digital Marketing and Measurement Model](#). Digital marketing goes hand in glove with digital analytics. Ask yourself why are we undertaking this digital initiative? As Avinash says “pick [super awesome key performance indicators](#) that truly reveal success or failure. Hint: Think conversion rates, task completion rate.

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## Step 6: Is it working?

You can test whether your marketing campaigns are working by tracking your traffic, goals and conversions in Google Analytics and other metrics like Facebook Insights. You can also use [Clicktale](#) or [Crazyegg](#) to see where potential customers are exiting your sites.

[Heatmaps](#) are visual representations of where people are clicking on your site so its worth evaluating this to draw out insights. Monitoring & reporting enables you to see how well your digital marketing is performing and gives great insight into next actions. AB or split testing is essential, see [Google Content Experiments](#) and [Customer Journeys](#) for insights into customer buying journeys in your sector.

## Step 7: Monthly review

Take time out to review where your marketing tactics are driving results regularly and adapt your campaigns to take advantage of new opportunities. You can use a variety of tools for this see this cool list of [seo and social media tools](#) and pick a free or paid one to get going!

Your essential tools are [Google Search Console](#) previously known (like Prince) as Webmaster Tools and [Google Analytics](#). There are so many SEO tools out there to use but don't get bogged down by them. Choose one or two. I'd choose the above plus SEMrush and propriety analytics tools like Facebook Insights, Pinterest Analytics and say Iconosquare for Instagram. Other dashboards include Hootsuite, Buffer, Hubspot and Sproutsocial if you have the budget.

Take a holistic overview of metrics, for example in some cases directory referrals are huge traffic drivers, likewise an authority link from the Guardian, Money Saving Expert or Life Hacker can make or break a campaign.

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**\*New** – Check out [44 Social Media Tools Recommended by the Pros](#) from Social Media Examiner and the magnificent [marketer toolbox](#).



I'd recommend creating a simple two-page report that highlights key trends, wins and losses and next actions (tip: be honest if there are any issues, your client will respect your guidance if things are explained clearly and you have an effective solution)

## Digital marketing plan template



[Smartinsights](#) have shared a free to use [Digital marketing strategy and planning word template](#). You can check out the marketing planning template on the Smartinsights site. If you [join Smart Insights](#) as a Basic member (highly recommended) you can download the PDF!

Also highly recommended by Webyogi is the [ultimate seo tools checklist](#) from Annie Cushing's. Simply measured have some groovy [free social media report templates](#) but these may blow your client's minds as they are very detailed.

I'd also highly recommend a copy of [e-marketing excellence by PR Smith & Dave Chaffey](#) – my digital marketing bible. I was lucky enough to attend a conference where Dave shared insights into [using Google Analytics to improve business results](#) – very useful, so make sure you check this out as well. Finally, it's worth noting that a digital marketing plan needs integrating into your existing business and overall marketing plan and not be seen as a separate effort.

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## Digital marketing strategy planning tool



Looking for someone to [help you create your digital marketing plan](#)? We deliver bespoke SEO focused marketing training to small businesses, Universities, higher education colleges, creative industries and health and well-being businesses. View our full list of [training courses here](#) or contact us for a free mini digital marketing audit.

## Creating your Content Marketing Plan

The buzz term content marketing has become 'in vogue' and there's no shortage of guides like the recent Content Marketing Beginners Guide from Moz and QuickSprouts awesome evergreen Advanced guide to content marketing. But... back to basics, hasn't the web always been about quality content and dare i say it Content is Queen? No digital marketing plan in 2018 would complete without a content marketing strategy, content plan and editorial calendar. Check out the [Content Marketing Strategy checklist from Velocity](#).

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The Content Marketing Institute has compiled a range of DIY tool kit of checklists, templates, and resources that can help make running your content marketing program more manageable. Buffer have a guide on [“How to Write a Content Marketing Strategy Step-by-Step”](#) with a strategy template! You might be interested to check out Ahrefs [“noob”](#) guide to link building.

## New to SEO?

SEO for beginners begins with reading the official [Google Search Engine Starter Guide](#) which explains onsite search engine optimisation, signing up to [Google’s Official Webmaster Blog](#) and compulsory bedtime reading [Google’s Webmaster Guidelines](#). Hands up – have you actually read these golden nuggets?

Photo credit : [Tim Gouw](#)

Be sure to take a look at the impressive Noob guide to online marketing from Unbounce and the companion piece the Noob guide to Link Building. Still beautiful clear guides on how to get authority backlinks or more importantly earn them from a diverse range of resources. Finally check out Link Building: The Definitive Guide from Brian Dean at Backlinko the most comprehensive guide on the web.