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The Role Of Digital Marketing Is More Important In 2024 Than Ever Before.

For as long as I've been writing about marketing, I've talked about how critical a practical marketing strategy is to ensure the future health of your business. After all, marketing plays a huge role in determining the future demand for your offering. And when demand for your offering is low, so too are your sales and profit.

While the pandemic is far behind us, as marketers, we are faced with new challenges we must navigate this year; the growing uncertainty around attribution, privacy and data challenges, the continued integration (and sometimes threat) of AI and machine learning. Add to that the ever-present need to ensure we have our marketing mix 'right'.

History has proven that those who market their businesses aggressively during tough times will reap the benefits during good times in the form of increased market share.

To those who were unable to maintain or increase their marketing spend over the past year, all is not lost. Now is the time to start chasing down those of your competitors who used marketing to break away from the pack in the past 12 months. It's never too late to get moving.

I encourage you as a marketer or a business owner to continue learning from history. You need to keep your marketing efforts front and center while navigating your way through what has become a very unpredictable world.

All the best,

James Lawrence



Chapter 1

Australian Marketing Strategy and the Big Picture in 2024



Digital Marketing Strategy Foundations

Surprisingly, the term 'strategy' is one of the most overused and misunderstood words in the marketing world. Simply running ads on Google or writing blog articles without any thought or clear objectives is not a strategy. It's important to have a clear grasp of what digital strategy is and what steps you need to take in order to build an effective one for your business.

What is a digital marketing strategy?

A digital marketing strategy involves a plan to achieve clear marketing objectives or business goals using clearly defined marketing channels within a set period. Typically, an effective end-to-end marketing strategy defines your target audience, positioning, messaging and includes channels like SEO, Google Ads, social media platforms like LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram, email etc, all of which will be discussed in depth in this guide.

For a business building their digital marketing strategy in Australia, the marketing goals and activities essentially need to be aligned to the overall business objective; which in most cases is to drive revenue. Whether you're a local FMCG company, or an international B2B SaaS business, you need a strong and clearly defined marketing strategy that will help you generate leads, sales, and customers.





What's the difference between a digital strategy and digital tactics?

A strategy shouldn't be confused with the tactics themselves; though it commonly is. Think of 'strategy' as your overall goal or plan, and the tactics are the actions you take to bring your plan to life. For example, your strategy shouldn't be to "do SEO". Rather, a key goal in your strategy could be to increase organic traffic to your website, and optimising your website pages could be the SEO tactic that makes this actionable.

What are the 7 Ps of Marketing?

The 7 Ps of marketing, otherwise referred to as the 'marketing mix', are commonly used to identify the strengths, as well as the gaps and opportunities for improvement within a marketing strategy. What's more, they help find ways for your business to remain competitive in the marketplace.

The 7 Ps include:

- ➤ **Product**: features, design, quality, and packaging of the product/service
- Price: pricing strategy, discounts, and payment options
- ➤ **Promotion:** marketing and public relations opportunities
- ➤ **Place:** channels of distribution, inventory management, and logistics

- ➤ **People:** hiring, training, and management of employees
- ➤ **Packaging:** design, labelling, and branding of the product/service
- ➤ **Process:** procedures, systems, and technologies used

You cannot form effective digital marketing strategies without having a clear understanding of your business's 7 Ps.

What are the steps to create a digital marketing plan?

There is no set template or cookie-cutter approach to creating a 'successful' digital marketing plan. However, there are key steps you can take to ensuring you are creating a strategy that speaks to your target audience, uses resources and budget wisely, and ultimately generates revenue.

Marketing thought-leader, **Mark Ritson**, explains how you can create an effective digital marketing plan in three key phases:

- · Diagnose the situation or problem
- · Develop a clear strategy
- Plan the tactics you will use to deliver this strategy

Diagnose the situation

Start by reviewing your previous marketing plan; did you meet your previous goals and objectives?

What performed well? What were the key challenges you faced? Your new marketing plan should not be built entirely from scratch. It's important to analyse previous data and findings to determine your metrics for success.

You then need to conduct research - but you need to know what you're researching. If your results from the previous period were not favourable and you are struggling to meet your key metrics, then **in-depth market research** should be your next step. On the other hand, a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) can give a great indication of the position of the business and where to grow.

What should follow is market segmentation. These should be the 3-5 best audience segments that are perfect for your product or service. Remember, it's not about your company, it's about your **audience**.

Develop a clear marketing strategy

From these segments, you can then determine your target audience. Will you target previous customers who have stopped purchasing from you? Current leads who have shown interest, but haven't made a purchase yet? Or, will you target new customers who don't even know that your brand/product/service exists yet? What level of the funnel will you be targeting?

Now you can start getting into the nitty gritty! What does your target audience look like? In what part of the marketing funnel do they sit? What behaviours do they exhibit? Why do they want to purchase your product? A **buyer persona grid** is a fantastic tool to collect this information in a logical, concise manner.

It's now time to set SMART goals and objectives. This is the key part of your strategy! Your SMART goals should be; specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely.

Plan the marketing tactics

What tactics are going to help you achieve your SMART goals? This will look very different depending on your type of business; whether you are B2B or B2C, if you're an eCommerce company, or if you see FMCGs v SaaS services.

Your budget is also going to significantly impact the tactics you should consider implementing. This should be thought out very carefully - what tactics are going to get you the best outcomes, and how much do you need to invest for the tactics to see tangible results?

Examples of tactics include implementing a certain bid strategy for your search ads on Google, launching new webpages with relevant content to boost your organic traffic or running a webinar to engage your database.



What are the top qualities of a digital marketer?

The top qualities of a digital marketer include being able to problem solve, having a strong ability to communicate well with others, to think strategically and analytically, as well as to work collaboratively with a fast-paced team.

Of course, how you exercise these qualities will change depending on your individual role. For example, if you work at an agency managing clients, then strong organisational and task management skills are imperative. If you are a digital marketing specialist, you might place more emphasis on analysing data and making critical decisions promptly on accounts. On the other hand, if you're an in-house marketer, you need to be able to prioritise tasks effectively, and focus more on strategy and problem-solving.

2

If You're Relying On Data For "Every" Decision You're Setting Yourself Up For Failure



The rise of digital brought with it a belief that all marketing activities could now be measured. Gone is the saying; "Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted, the trouble is I don't know which half". With this came an obsession with hard metrics like cost per click, cost per lead, and cost per sale. For some marketers, things have moved so far that they won't invest in activities they cannot measure.

Today, it's important to understand that the buyer's journey has evolved into a complex web of online interactions and multiple touchpoints, making it a challenge to measure attribution accurately. Making decisions purely based on a dollar-in-dollar-out analysis is no longer viable. It's safe to say that we have reached peak immeasurability.

One of the scariest things we hear when speaking to clients is that they intend to make all of their decisions based on data. That's because digital marketing has a dirty little secret: marketing

data has serious issues and limitations, and if used poorly will deliver us far less than we think. Sometimes, it will do as much harm as good.

If you take anything away from this digital marketing guide, it is that in 2024 you have a responsibility to be data informed, not data driven. We don't recommend that you should blatantly disregard all marketing data and metrics. Rather that data shouldn't be the only source of truth that you rely upon to make serious marketing and business decisions.

Let's dive into why this is the case.

Attribution Confusion

Even if you understand attribution models, I encourage you to read this short section. Getting this step right is critical to knowing how effective your marketing is. Even more importantly, it's critical to understand how to allocate your marketing effort and budget.

One of the scariest things we hear when speaking to clients is that they intend to make all of their decisions based on data.

What is marketing attribution?

Attribution, simply explained, is how you credit separate channels, or touchpoints within those channels, for the role they play in a prospect's path to purchase or goal completion. If people visit your site a single time and then either convert or leave for good, attribution would be simple. The channel that drove them to the site, let's say that's Google Ads, would be correctly attributed to the full value of the purchase or goal.

But what happens in the real world, where most paths to purchase are complex and involve multiple site visits via likely multiple devices? Which channel deserves credit? Is it the one that drove them to you in the first place (known as first-click attribution)? Or is it the channel that delivered them to you when they finally reached the goal (known as last-click attribution)? Alternatively, does it make more sense for you to equally value all the channels that drove a particular person to your site before they converted (linear attribution)? These are only three of many ways to attribute credit to different marketing channels whenever a goal is reached.

Attribution is a critical part of making decisions but you need to know what attribution means for you, keeping the full buyer journey in perspective. Chances are that your marketing analytics platform is defaulting to a last-click attribution model.

ASK YOURSELF:

How complex is your buyer's journey? How likely is it that this model undervalues the earlier stages in the buyer journey and overvalues the final stage? How is this affecting the way you judge the performance of each channel? What impact is this having on how you set budgets and select future channels? Attribution is a critical part of making decisions but you need to know what attribution means for you, keeping the full buyer journey in perspective.

The Dawn of Google Analytics 4

While we know there are many activities and interactions with brands that remain impossible to measure (word of mouth, reviews etc.), we like to think that at least the data we do see is 100% accurate.

In mid-2023, Universal Analytics (UA) was sunsetted to make way for Google Analytics 4 (GA4). This move promises to combine both AI and machine learning with data tracking which enables seamless tracking of user activity across multiple devices and platforms, providing a comprehensive view of a user's digital journey.

While GA4 has it's benefits and is clearly the way ahead, the switch from UA has posed a series of challenges for marketers. Firstly, businesses that left the move to GA4 to the last minute have faced difficulty comparing year-on-year data. Secondly, several key metrics in GA4 are measured differently than they were in Universal Analytics, specifically; users, page views, bounce rates and sessions, once again making year-on-year comparisons inaccurate.

While we like to think that Google Analytics can accurately measure everything, it simply can't. It is simply an estimate (but, a good one) on what Google believes is happening online.

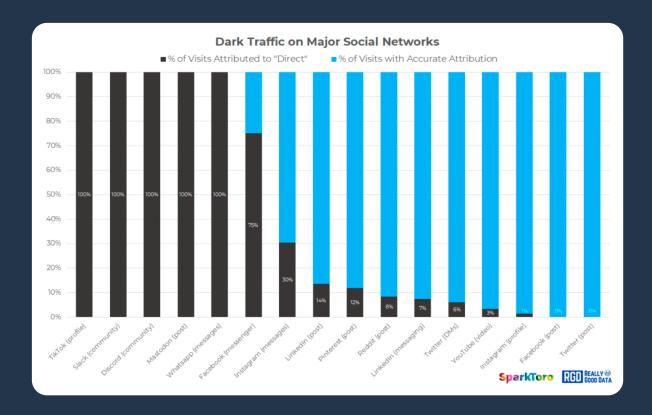
It's our job as marketers to educate senior stakeholders and our C-suite that our view on reports and dashboards on Google Analytics, as well as other analytics tools does not tell the whole story.

Dark Social

The concept of 'Dark Social', for most marketers is both shocking and intriguing. In essence, it refers to legitimate visits to your website by users originating from social and messaging platforms such as TikTok, Slack, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, and YouTube that is reported as 'direct traffic' on platforms such as Google Analytics, instead of being attributed to 'organic social' or 'referral'.

What this means, is that your efforts on organic social media platforms are potentially undervalued from a reporting and analytics perspective.

Consider the graph below; in a 2023 study done by Sparktoro where they tested 1000+ website visits across 11 major social networks, an alarming percentage of traffic was reported as 'direct' rather than the correct social media platform.



One speculation for why this occurs is that it leads us as marketers to overstate the impact of paid social activities, where perhaps we feel we need to be investing more. Tying back into the idea of attribution, especially in a multi-touchpoint, complex buyer journey, we cannot underestimate the impact that word-of-mouth, referrals and overall brand presence online has on our customer's decision-making.



Tune into Smarter Marketer:
Podcast EP 49 - Dark Social
and Attribution Challenges with
Rand Fishkin

The Response of BigTech Companies To Data Privacy Concerns

Globally, well-deserved attention is being paid to protecting the privacy of individuals. Australia has passed privacy laws to protect consumers against data breaches. As more users become conscious and concerned about their data, the bigtech companies are actively placing greater measures to protect user privacy. This shift poses a formidable challenge for us as marketers not only trying to reach the right audience but also our ability to gauge campaign success.

A key example is that of Apple; since its iOS 14 update, Apple's data restrictions have hindered Meta's in-depth targeting capabilities. This has left a number of businesses confused and struggling to adapt to the change, with results fluctuating and ad costs steadily rising. Apple's privacy protection features for Apple Mail stop marketers from tracking IP addresses, email opens and forwards, time stamps, geolocation, device type and browsers.

Another example is that of Google; 1% of Chrome users will have third-party cookies disabled in 2024, with this number only expected to rise. Limited access to third-party cookies means tracking user behaviour across different websites becomes challenging. Overall, it will limit enhanced targeting options, and may limit the extent of 'personalised' ads and messaging that you can serve your audience.

In short, access to data will only get worse, not better.

Importance of Collecting First-Party Data

There are three different types of data:

- First-party data refers to the information that a company collects directly from its own customers or users through interactions with its owned channels or touchpoints.
- **Second-party data** refers to data obtained directly from another company or organisation.
- Third-party data refers to data that is collected by external entities that are separate from the company using the data.

With the turn away from third-party data and the ongoing tightening of privacy regulations, **it's now more important than ever to collect first-party data** for your marketing efforts.

Investing in a well-maintained CRM in particular will assist in future-proofing your business to some extent. In this case, building up your database legitimately and keeping your CRM database clean will give you better marketing opportunities. This contact database gives you a solid foundation to run email marketing campaigns. Plus, you can feed your first-party data into ad platforms like Google, Facebook and LinkedIn to present your ads to warm audiences, and as a result, stay top-of-the buyer's mind. You can do this even when some contacts unsubscribe from emails.

No One Channel to Rule Them All

As we've seen thus far, switching on a single set of ads is unlikely to move the needle on the number of quality leads and sales that engage with your business.

There's no real silver bullet to developing and changing your digital strategy overnight, and any one tactic alone won't work. A winning strategy will include the main channels used by your prospects as part of their buyer journey. For many prospects this includes a combination of organic search, paid search, social, email marketing and display.

Performance channels along with variables such as your brand's reputation in the market, online reviews, public relations quotient, pricing and the like will ultimately all impact the success of your marketing campaigns.



Businesses That Invest in Brand Make More Money

In a bid to drive leads and sales in a short period, businesses often turn to performance-based activities to target their bottom-of-funnel audiences. Many view it as a way to get quicker, more tangible results. However, there is a strong argument that marketers need to increase the time and effort spent on activities that introduce people to their brand and support them in the early and middle stages of the buyer journey. Essentially, aligning marketing efforts (and measurement) with the real-world actions of ideal buyers.

The rule of thumb is:

Marketers should be spending **60% of their budget on brand-building** activities, and **40% on performance/activation-based activities** for maximum effectiveness.

While this exact figure differs depending on your customer life-cycle and industry, if at the end of the day, if you're not investing in your brand, you're doing your business a huge disservice.

Long-term vs Short-term Marketing

Binet and Field's work titled; 'The Long and the Short of It' dives into the crucial balance that businesses need to maintain between brandbuilding activities and performance marketing. The study explains the two different forms of marketing; long-term marketing vs short-term marketing, and how both are vital to driving sustainable marketing results.

Marketers should be spending 60% of their budget on brand-building activities, and 40% on performance/activation-based activities

Long-term marketing involves any activity designed to build a memorable link between a brand and a buyer for a future buying situation. It's otherwise known as brand marketing or "the long of it". Some great examples include; a leader from a Finance SaaS company speaking at a conference with CFOs in the audience, Commonwealth Bank sponsoring grassroots sport, or running an open-to-all webinar on key industry trends for your target audience, or applying for and winning industry awards.

Short-term marketing, on the other hand, is designed to drive an often immediate response from your audience. It's also known as performance marketing, demand generation, or 'the short of it'. It is basically any action that intends to drive action quickly. CTAs for short-term ads are typically the likes of 'visit our website', 'buy our new burger', 'test drive our latest car', or 'download our demo'.



Consider the diagram below. When only focussing on short-term activities, sales will increase sporadically while ultimately dipping again when budgets are lowered, or activities cease. This means that when faced with budget cuts, or more macro challenges like a drop in spend in the economy, your sales will ultimately drop as a result.

Long-term marketing activities, as evident below, typically lead to sustainable growth over an extended period of time, and your profits become less susceptible to environmental factors. It pays off as your brand becomes more recognisable and trusted within your market.

Short-term impact on profit

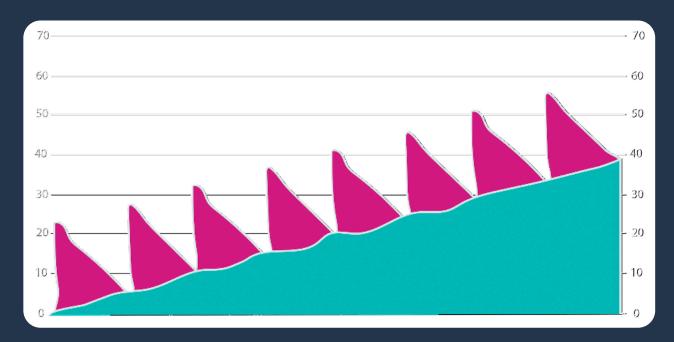


Long-term impact on profit



A key takeaway - when you combine both short-term and long-term marketing activities, and are strategically targeting your audience throughout the funnel, you will reap the benefits of immediate wins as well as sustained business growth.

Combined activities effect of short-term and long-term marketing on profit



The 95/5 Rule

One of the reasons why the 60/40 split on brand vs performance activities is effective, is because there is a high chance that 95% of your target audience is not currently in the market for your product or service.

In reality, only 5% of your market is ready to purchase - and you need to share this 5% with all of your direct and indirect competitors. If you are hitting audiences with your ads by the time they're in your market, and they've never heard of you, getting them to convert becomes undeniably

difficult. Especially if we're talking about high-intent, high-involvement purchases.

This is one of the core reasons why BMW markets to 20-year-olds now. It's why XERO invests so much in content marketing and selling to business owners of the future

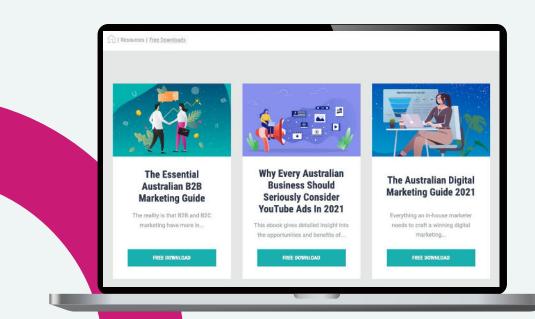
When most marketing dollars are being spent on the 5%, not the 95%, you'll find yourself stuck in a cycle of bottom-of-funnel activities, and playing catch-up with your competitors.

Good Content Marketing = Great Leads and Sales

As part of your 2024 marketing strategy, you should be implementing activities that will nurture the 95% of the market who are not ready to buy today.

Let's face it, most of these people are probably not aware you exist or possibly not even aware that solutions like yours could add value to them now or in the future. These people won't be interested in your search ads and are highly unlikely to see the value in your paid social or display ads.

Often the best way to deal with these top and middle-of-funnel audiences is implementing a considered and well-planned content marketing strategy.



What Is Content Marketing?

Content marketing involves creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain an audience. It can take the form of videos, blog articles, eBooks, webinars, emails and more. Ultimately, it provides value to specific personas so that when they are ready to purchase, your business makes it to the consideration list as a trusted authority that's also top-of-mind.

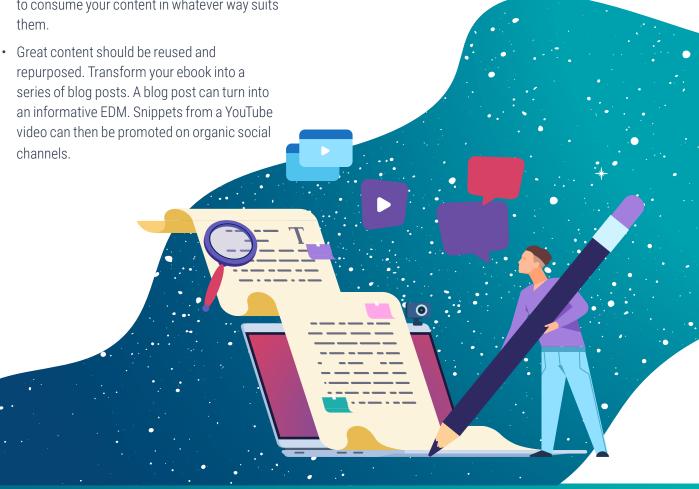
Here are the main points to consider when developing your content marketing strategy:

- You need to have a deep understanding of your target personas and their problems.
- · The content should be highly targeted and solve a specific and timely problem.
- Where possible, you should exchange your content for a user's email address, either through a downloadable ebook or webinar, so that you can add the contact to your database.
- Branch out with your format of content not everyone will find value from blogs. Webinars, podcasts, or video content allows your users to consume your content in whatever way suits them.

repurposed. Transform your ebook into a series of blog posts. A blog post can turn into an informative EDM. Snippets from a YouTube video can then be promoted on organic social channels.

Nowadays, average content is everywhere. Slapping together a 500-word blog article that tip-toes around actual advice isn't serving anyone. Marketers should focus resources on creating genuinely useful and quality pieces of content.

A time and resource-effective approach to this, is taking previously successful and high-performing content pieces, updating them for today and republishing them on the basis of creating evergreen content. This is known as the Hollywood vs Newspaper approach to content marketing.



Marrying Brand with Actionable Digital Marketing

Overall, you don't need to overhaul your entire brand to make a profitable change to your digital marketing strategy. One could argue that there is scope to include a range of relatively low-budget, high-return 'brand-based' campaigns that are 'always-on'.

Examples include a brand-focused, value-based display retargeting campaign, via the Google Display Network, targeted towards website visitors. Another one is a brand-focused Google Ads display campaign.

The question about whether it's worth paying for people searching for your brand via paid ads is a long-standing one. At Rocket, we are big fans of these brand campaigns and time and again we've seen them deliver strong results. The advantages of such campaigns are:

- You can control the message searchers see in an ad (as opposed to the generic organic results listing).
- An ad can direct searchers to a landing page of your choosing.
- An ad allows you to maintain top position even when competitors are bidding on your brand.
- Running brand ads allows you to dominate the search engine results page (SERP). (This is particularly true on mobile).

Anecdotally, as well as in tests we have run, when branded search has been turned off, the uplift in organic results plus the savings in the cost of branded search does not equate to the revenue that has been lost.

Running brand ads allows you to dominate the search engine results page

TASK:

Review your marketing budget for 2024 with fresh eyes. Separate media budget you spend on brand campaigns vs other bottom-of-the-funnel campaigns. Remember, brand campaigns will always be cheaper and generate a stronger ROI than regular campaigns. This is OK though; the regular campaigns are valuable in introducing new people to your offering and these are the people who in the future will possibly be running brand searches. Ideally, you should be running both types of campaigns.

Embrace AI and Automation

With the overwhelming surge of generative AI including the likes of ChatGPT, Google Bard and Adobe's Firefly, there's an overwhelming degree of fear and uncertainty spreading around the industry. Will AI take over my job? Am I cheating or being dishonest if I use AI to help me with my tasks? Does using AI mean I need to start charging less for my services?

Artificial Intelligence (AI) takes time-consuming, repetitive tasks and works to find patterns more effectively than a single person can to produce solid solutions. However, while it has proven itself in many areas of ad management, it has in no way dispatched the need for a digital marketing specialist to manage ad campaigns.

The biggest impact of AI in the short-term will be how it is rolled out on tools we already use; Google Suite, Google Ads, HubSpot, Salesforce and Microsoft. While it's good to be abreast of all the new changes and AI features, it's not advisable to be chasing every shiny new toy. As Rand Fishkin said; 'What is happening in the marketing world is generally less important than what's happening in your world'. Focus on what you can control and what is going to directly impact your business over the next twelve months.

Use ChatGPT as a Research Tool, not as a Substitute Copywriter

ChatGPT has taken leaps and shaken up the world with surprisingly accurate and conversational text. Like most AI softwares, ChatGPT accesses extensive databases to answer simple or complex questions by generating clear, conversational copy.

The trick to using AI tools such as ChatGPT effectively, is to treat it as a helpful guide versus accepting it's output as the final product or solution.

When used efficiently, the software can be great for providing a foundation for copywriting tasks

including blog posts, landing pages, FAQs, social media captions or even meta descriptions for your website pages. Its breadth of knowledge - while not being able to cover niche and brand -related topics, is extensive enough to offer fantastic copywriting support.

Teams should be using AI to boost productivity and in some areas increase effectiveness. However, as a marketer, you should never forget that standing out from your competitors is the key to success, and this will not be achieved if you just use AI. It should never (and will never) be as simple as copy



rocketagency.com.au

Boost Creativity with AI-Driven Design

Al-driven design tools such as Midjourney, Jasper and even Canva are opening up new opportunities for designers and businesses alike, to spark creativity and complete design tasks quicker and more efficiently. Design automation can reduce time on tedious and often repetitive tasks by automating image classification, colour palette selection and layout generation, meaning that designers can spend more time on the creative/strategic aspects of their work rather than the technical details.

Design algorithms are also a fantastic tool to spark inspiration by providing a template/sample of creative concepts. There are multiple tools/software platforms online that can generate logos, website layouts, social posts, slide decks or other creative designs. This is a convenient and often time-efficient solution for completing basic designs where you don't want to put too much energy/focus, or you are trying to minimise a lengthy concept creation process.

Great Use Cases of Al

If you're hesitant to use AI, or are doubting its efficiency, the best next step is to test it. Spend half a day playing around with the software, testing its capabilities and its responses to your typical work requests.

There are excellent resources online on how to write the best prompts, and how you can get the most out of each platform.



Here's a list of great use cases for AI software:

- · Controlling budget pacing
- · Building an organic social media calendar
- Design inspiration
- Reduce character count for ad copy
- Top-level competitor research
- Content ideation for blog articles, podcasts or webinars. This can include heading suggestions, title tags, descriptions and a body content outline
- Editing your work after completion for continuity, tone of voice and grammatical/ spelling mistakes
- · Writing schema mark-up scripts
- · Keyword analysis and ideation

Don't Leave Everything to Automation

The big players like Google and Meta will continue to push marketers into using their suite of automation options when running paid campaigns. The challenge will be to determine when this works in your business' interest and when it doesn't. There is no doubt that over the long term, automation will bring many benefits to the lives of marketers, but the question in the short term is when this will be the case and when it won't.

Marketers need to be smart in determining when machines can do things more effectively and at a better level than humans. Most importantly, you need to use your judgement to identify the moments when technology won't understand the intricacies of a campaign and the nuances of your audience. This is where that human touch will still be needed.

Regardless, the truth of the matter remains - businesses, even small ones, can no longer succeed without a highly tailored approach to audience segmentation as prospects now expect more than generic correspondence. This can only be achieved at scale with automation.

Our prediction - businesses without marketing automation won't compete.



TASK:

Review all tasks you complete within a week, and consider which low-effort or time-consuming activities could benefit from Al assistance. Once you have found a rhythm and a brief that works for you, turn this into a template that you can edit and tweak for future tasks.

You need to use your judgement to identify the moments when technology won't understand the intricacies of a campaign and the nuances of your audience.



Everything You Need to Know About the Best Performing Digital Marketing Channels of 2024

What's Working in Google Ads, SEO, Paid Social, Email Marketing and Video Right Now

Take Google Ads to The Next Level in 2024

Google Ads is a platform that is constantly evolving. New ad types are being rolled out and new restrictions are being placed on existing ad types. Previously effective strategies are becoming less useful. Extra levels of automation mean less work, but they often go hand-in-hand with less transparency.

Despite the growing popularity of Amazon,
ChatGPT and social media search in Australia,
Google Ads will still continue to dominate as a
search engine in 2024. **Search ads alone made up 58.1% of Google's billion-dollar revenue** in 2022
- and this number doesn't seem to be budging. So,
it's likely that Google Ads, including Search Ads,
Display Ads, Shopping Ads and YouTube Ads, is a
core part of your marketing mix.

The foundational tactics for results-driven PPC campaigns have remained the same year-on-year - these include consistent messaging across ad placements, displaying engaging ad creative and implementing considered targeting. Below are the core updates to Google Ads in 2023 that all marketers need to be aware about. While you don't need to be an expert at running PPC campaigns, it's important to stay abreast of platform changes so that you can have more meaningful and valuable conversations with those executing your ad campaigns.

Google Launches Two New Campaign Types

Demand Gen Campaigns

Back in November 2023, all Discovery campaigns

on Google Ads were upgraded to the new "Demand Gen" ad campaign type.

Deemed the "next generation of Discovery campaigns", Demand Gen campaigns are likely to be one of the biggest changes to your Google Ads strategy in 2024. Powered by AI, Demand Gen campaigns are designed to target middle of funnel audiences with high performing video and image assets across YouTube, YouTube Shorts, Discovery and Gmail.

Google's representative, Vidhya Srinivasan, VP & GM in Google Ads said; "The way consumers discover products is shifting — decisions are made throughout the funnel. To keep up with this evolving media landscape, social advertisers need to adapt their strategies to deliver results." Demand Gen campaigns are ideal for brands that want to serve visually-appealing creatives across multiple formats by tapping on Google's most impactful surfaces available to any advertiser.

Some of the key features Demand Gen campaigns include:

- Using audience lists to tailor relevant creatives with brand-new lookalike segments. This could include your customer list, marketing database, past clients and the like.
- Setting up location targeting at the ad group level, rather than traditionally setting different ad campaigns to target different locations.
- Optimising your ads for conversions, as well as maximising clicks bidding to drive immediate action.

Video View Campaigns

Google's second new campaign type allows businesses to maximise views across in-stream, in-feed and YouTube Shorts, within a single campaign **(source)**. To count as a view, users must watch your video ad for at least 30 seconds or until the end of the ad if it's less than 30 seconds.

On average, Video View ad campaigns are expected to receive 40% more views and 30% lower cost per view than regular In-Stream Skippable campaigns.

This is an excellent option for businesses looking to drive brand awareness campaigns, as the objective is to reach as many people as possible within their target market.

Broad Match Brand Keyword Targeting

Change is the only constant at Google, and one of the changes is related to the keyword type used for Google Ads campaigns. Google has been encouraging advertisers to exclusively use 'Broad match keywords'. This keyword type uses Google's data to match relevant searchers with your ads, by using your keywords as an indication for relevance.

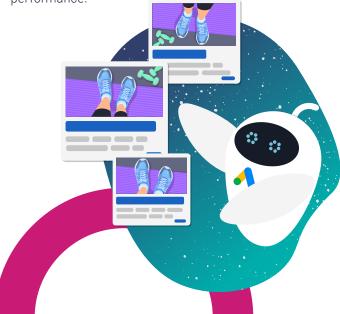
What this means is, the keywords you upload are used to zero-in on thier meaning or a particular topic, but not necessarily the exact keywords. However, unlike other keyword targeting options, the specific keyword doesn't need to be included in the user's search query. One of the key benefits of broad match targeting is that you're not limited to phrase and exact match keyword targeting, but you also won't be overlapping with generic search queries.

This would be best used for brand campaigns or performance max campaigns by setting your goal to either maximise conversions or maximise revenue. Adding a brand list is also an essential component of ensuring you will remain relevant to a broad spectrum of searches that are linked to your brand name or specific branded product titles.

Auto Generated Search Ads

While Auto Generated Search Ads have been around for nearly two years, it was previously a feature exclusive to Dynamic Search Ad campaigns. Now, Google offers automatically generated ad copy for any PMAX and search campaign, in its growing push towards AI integration.

Like all AI features, it can be a great tool to spark inspiration or for you to consider how Google would push your brand, products or services. However, one of the key limitations is that you don't have as much control over your copy or messaging. It is likely the results Google supplies will be average or generic, which in turn could negatively impact your overall ad performance.



Old News, Worth Repeating -Always Start with Competitor Research

Why reinvent the wheel when you can take inspiration from your competitors?
When it comes to Google Ads, treat your competitors less as rivals and more as friends or even mentors.

Use tools like SemRush and
SpyFu to identify the keywords
your top competitors are using
as the basis of their search
campaigns. You should also
review the ad copy they're using to
narrow down on the pain points of
your prospects. Plus, it's a good idea
to compare your landing pages and
promotions with your competitors and
identify opportunities for improvement.



TASK:

- If you're looking to drive top-of-funnel brand awareness through video, consider the new YouTube Ads Video View Campaigns for driving brand awareness and scaling your audience reach at the top of the funnel.
- Test the new Demand Gen Campaigns with considered, engaging creative and a clear message for your audience. If you feel your creatives assets aren't driving results, get in touch. Our team of in-house designers have won awards for delivering high performing creative for our clients.
- Open your landing page and test what you see on these four key parameters, putting yourself in the searcher's shoes:
 - Am I in the right place? (This is what you do/offer)
 - Do they offer the service I need? (This is more detail on what you offer)
 - Is this service/product right for me? (These are your typical customers)
 - Why should I choose you? (This is why your business is perfect for the searcher)

6

Using Social Media Ads to Your Advantage in 2024

TikTok As Considerable Channel for B2C ECommerce

TikTok has become a major player in the social media space for businesses looking to drive both brand awareness, as well as sales, in particular for eCommerce businesses:

- 56% of TikTok users say that the ads encourage them to discover new products or brands
- 70% of TikTok users say it's easy to purchase products through the platform from the shopping-related ad they viewed

One key ad type that has strong cut through on the TikTok platform is user generated content (UGC) i.e. short-form videos created by consumers who share their reviews or common uses of products and services. This style of content is particularly successful, as it builds trust from referrals, and highlights practical product uses to drive desire. In fact, almost 80% of respondents in an eCommerce study said that user generated content influences their purchasing decisions (Source).

And while TikTok has potential to drive impressive results for all types of businesses, B2C eCommerce brands have found particular success through the platform. It positions itself as "home to a shopping culture", and uses in-built targeting and ad features to drive eCommerce sales. For this reason, in 2024 **TikTok will be introducing video shopping ads**; shoppable

videos that take users seamlessly from the For You page, straight to the checkout. While this is currently available for testing globally, there is great potential to shorten your buyer journey and increase sales made on platform. Something to keep an eye out for!



Performance Updates on Meta Ads

Facebook remains the most widely used platform and shares the top spot with Instagram in terms of return on investment (ROI) according to a **2024 HubSpot study**. It's no surprise that Meta advertising continues to be a critical advertising channel for B2B and B2C businesses alike.

Meta Ads have made changes to 'Ad Objectives' which will impact your Facebook Ads and Instagram Ads in 2024. Simply put, Meta has consolidated it's previous eleven ad objectives into six new ones:

- 1. Sales
- 2. Leads
- 3. Engagement
- 4. App Promotion
- 5. Traffic
- 6. Awareness

What's more, from January 2024, you will no longer have the ability to import or duplicate campaigns, ad sets and ads using the original objectives. And later in the year, the original objectives will not be available at all.



In order to stay on top of your Meta ad campaigns, especially with privacy and cookies impacting the ability to target niche audiences in the future, Meta encourages businesses to apply the 'Performance 5'; five key activities that will allow you to see improved results across your ads:

- **Simplified ad sets:** Consolidate your ad sets in order to increase conversions.
- Broad targeting: Instead of simply targeting by interest, broad targeting will allow you to reach bigger audiences with the aim to increase your traffic, leads and therefore sales.
- Mobile-friendly video: Reels and short form video content is the largest growing ad type for Meta. It's important that your video ads have been optimised for mobile to drive more conversions.
- Ad testing: A single ad creative and message could be great, but you'll never know if its the best option if you don't test it. A/B testing lets you refine your offer and learn what your audience is most engaged with.
- **Conversions API:** Connect the Conversions API to your Shopify or Wix in order to receive more accurate results for data and tracking.

There's is also opportunity to improve your ad performance through **Meta's integration with AI through Advantage+** targeting. When you select Advantage+, you are granting Meta the power to determine the best audience to receive your ads based on previous performance and user data. Though still in early stages, it's proving mostly effective for many businesses by increasing leads and lowering CPLs.



Spotify for Brand Awareness

Spotify ads are an excellent advertising option to drive brand awareness to new audiences by offering an immersive auditory ad experience. In July of 2023, Spotify launched ad analytics for brands to measure the impact of their audio ads across the platform in a more streamlined way. This, in combination with new Spotify Pixel capabilities, has improved conversion tracking and attribution across all Spotify ad formats for marketers.

In September, Spotify also introduced ads across music and podcasts. The main difference for advertisers, is that while a user will typically listen to music in the background as they complete other tasks, they pay more attention and show greater intent when listening to podcasts, making it a great opportunity to promote your brand to an engaged audience.

What's more, the number of listeners on the platform is rapidly increasing. In Spotify's Q223 performance review, they recorded that their global number of monthly active listeners increased by 27% YoY to over 551 million!



Tune into Smarter Marketer:
Podcast EP 37 - What Marketers
Need to Know About Spotify Ads
with the Head of SMB at Spotify
ANZ, Simon Connolly



eCommerce on Pinterest Made Easier

From food to fashion, travel guides to home decor...
Pinterest is the platform your audience turns
to for inspiration and new ideas (depending on
your industry). With nearly all top searches being
unbranded (**source**), Pinterest offers a fantastic
opportunity to reach new audiences by sharing
engaging, inspiring and relevant content.

What's more, 55% of Pinteresters use the platform to shop and purchase new products. For this reason, in September 2023, Pinterest announced a series of new platform updates to improve the marketing and sales experience for brands looking to leverage an engaged audience. These new features aims to drive action from users down the sales funnel; "from discovery, to decision, to do".

Pinterest has lauched Pinterest Businesses Manager, providing both businesses and marketers with better tools to target audiences, manage ad campaigns and measure results.

Key updates to consider for your Pinterest ads in 2024 include:

- The launch of showcase ads that display multiple Pins in one unit. In this
 particular ad set, every separate Pin can link to a different page on your site this is
 very effective for high intent clicks.
- Quiz Ads ask your users a specific question to gain insight into their personal preferences, and you can then provide specific product/service recommendations for different answers.
- Premiere Spotlight ad placements have been added to the Home feed, allowing you to maximise attention by being the first ad placement when a user opens the app.
- The addition of 'mobile deep links' takes users directly from your Pinterest ad to the relevant product page in your mobile app.

And while it hasn't launched yet, Pinterest has revealed its Creative Studio feature to be available in months to come. Pinterest discovered that **lifestyle images**, **on average**, **drive better Pinterest results than products shown with plain backgrounds**. Creative Studio aims to provide businesses with a quick and easy way to generate lifestyle imagery to create product pins, by offering a selection of background images that match a brand's products and services.













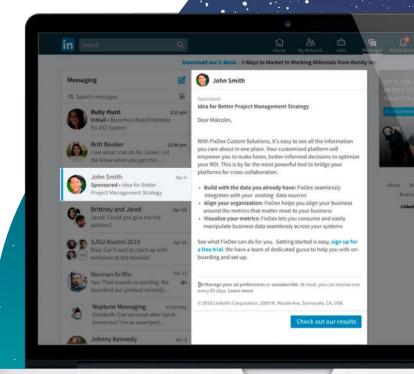
Despite its clunky ad interface and questionable user experience for marketers, LinkedIn stands strong as the obvious channel for B2B marketers. This is especially true for prospecting campaigns focused on lead generation.

Year on year, we've seen huge growth in LinkedIn, a network that now boasts over 12.7 million Australian members. Your prospects likely turn to LinkedIn to stay up to date with industry news, share information and job updates and follow thought leaders and companies that resonate.

In LinkedIn, prospects are attuned to learning something new and native sponsored content can successfully drive targeted traffic to your site. With sponsored Messaging (previously: sponsored InMails), you get twice the opportunity to catch the attention of your audience - one on the LinkedIn platform itself and again in your prospect's email inbox. Plus, there are notifications to support the InMail being sent.

LinkedIn has introduced a new ad type for businesses to build brand awareness and engagement on the platform by promoting thought leaders. It allows businesses that want to showcase their knowledge and expertise to promote an individual, or thought-provoking and educational content at a campaign level.

What's more, setting up the campaigns is pretty straightforward! Simply search for an employee associated with your company page, decide on a post you want to promote and request the poster's permission. This will become even more important on the content-sharing platform as LinkedIn announced from December onwards, there will be no such things as carousels.



In LinkedIn, prospects are attuned to learning something new and native sponsored content can successfully drive targeted traffic to your site.

TASK:

If you're keen to trial TikTok for your business, don't use the same content as other platforms expecting good results. Research trending topics and audio on the platform, and match it with your branding and messaging. Ensure that the tone of voice and messaging is central to your brand.

Curious about how you can drive brand awareness with audio advertising? Test Spotify ads for a minimum spend of \$250, and reach audiences in an engaging media environment.





SEO Is More Important Than Ever

In the digital landscape, SEO stands strong as a veteran. While many turn to paid channels for quick, measurable wins, the COVID-19 recession taught us that businesses that invested in their organic strategy continued to drive results, even when their marketing budgets were cut.

What's more, with organic visits driving over 50% of all traffic on the internet, and Google being responsible for 97% of searches, organic search should be a priority in your 2024 digital marketing strategy in Australia.

Google's "All New Search Engine"

Early in 2023, Google announced its latest (and perhaps greatest) development known as 'Project Magi'. Coined an "all new search engine" (source), it's predicted to combine AI integration and personalisation through a conversational, almost human-like interface.

The New York Times reported that the personalised search engine would attempt to "anticipate user's needs" in their searches, while Google announced it would allow searchers to "complete transactions, such as buying shoes or booking flights". Consider it like an intelligent AI assistant that should transform the way we interact with search and influence our purchasing habits.

While there's no clear timeline for the official launch, businesses should expect to respond to a brand-new Google interface and search experience. As with all major updates in the digital space, you

need to consider what you can do to equip your website and online presence now to succeed in the future.

If we have learned anything from how ChatGPT operates, it's that businesses and products that already have a strong digital footprint, and are heavily associated with branded keywords, are going to benefit from automated responses, especially as AI combines average and popular opinions across the internet.

Google's Gemini Sparks the "Al Arms Race"

If Project Magi wasn't enough, Google has thrown its hat into the ever-evolving AI arena with the announcement of 'Google Gemini.' This groundbreaking AI system is predicted to compete with heavyweights like OpenAI's ChatGPT, aiming to redefine the way we interact with AI.

Developed by a talented team of experts from Google Brain and DeepMind, as well as drawing from DeepMind's AlphaGo, known for its mastery of the complex game of Go, Gemini inherits problem-solving prowess and enhanced reasoning capabilities. It's designed to understand and process various types of data, from text and voice to imagery and more. This means you can input a diverse range of prompts and receive contextually relevant responses.

It's important to note that Gemini is an entirely different system from Bard, Google's conversational Al chatbot. Bard has now been rebranded to Gemini.

Google's CEO, Sundar Pichai, revealed during the 2023 Google I/O developer conference that systems like Bard are merely waypoints towards more advanced chatbots.

Pichai envisions Gemini and its future iterations as "incredible universal personal assistants" deeply integrated into people's daily lives, spanning across areas like travel, work, and entertainment. Google plans to gradually infuse Gemini into all its products, including the Chatbot feature and Google Workspace.

How will Gemini compare to ChatGPT?

While ChatGPT excels at text data tasks, Gemini's multi-modal intelligence network allows it to handle a diverse array of data types simultaneously, from text and images to audio, video, 3D models, and graphs. This makes Google Gemini a powerful and versatile contender in the AI space, possibly surpassing the likes of ChatGPT.



Content Continues to be King

Content continues to be instrumental for businesses, but long gone are the days of keyword stuffing and publishing content for the sake of it. A 500-word blog article that gives specific and detailed information for your audience is always valued more by search engines, and by your audience, than a 2000-word article with fluffy content.

For this reason, **Google is prioritising content based on the E-E-A-T structure**; experience,
expertise, authoritativeness and trustworthiness.
This determines if your website is sharing valuable
and insightful information that users will want to
engage with. Whether this includes blog articles,
case studies, free guides, FAQs or even podcast
episodes... your focus should be on quality over
quantity.

A great way to build up your E-E-A-T is to create 'author pages' for each of your team's content writers. The page should highlight who they are, their specialty, and their experiences that qualifies them to be writing this content, and specialising in their field. This is where you can add author schema to indicate the strength of the author to Google.

Secondly, user need should be the focus of any content that you are sharing online. At the end of the day, answering your target audience's most pressing problems is going to increase your website traffic, user engagement, and ultimately, higher-quality leads.

Reach Your Local Customers

Investing in a Local SEO strategy is a great and measurable way to improve the visibility and credibility of your website in geographically related searches. It drives local users directly to your business, whether they're searching for 'furniture stores near me' or 'family lawyers in Sydney'. This means you're targeting the users most likely to purchase from you.

A simple and practical win is to update your Google Business Profile (previously: Google My Business). Make sure your business name, address and phone number are all up to date. Add any relevant and high-quality images of your business, products, services or team members. Update business descriptions - this is a great opportunity to add in relevant keywords. Verify your profile.

Your focus should also be a review strategy where you're encouraging your customers to post a review, and potentially even upload a photo. Reviews are not only effective in showing Google that audiences are regularly engaging with you, but positive reviews are fantastic for enticing customers and promoting your offering in general. Finally, it's best to respond to all reviews, even poor ones, to highlight your engagement and responsiveness as a business.

Implementing a Local SEO Strategy for businesses that have a franchise model or multiple locations is essential to capture users from relevant geographical areas successfully.



TASK:

Review all content pieces on your website (blogs, free guides etc) and make a note of which pieces should be deleted, which should remain the same, and which should be refreshed with up-to-date information. This should then be implemented in a clear content plan for regular updates.

Create author pages for each of your content writers that explain their qualifications and experience in the industry. Then, link any piece of content that they write to their relevant page.



Video is for Winners

In 2024, platforms focused on video content such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube are projected to experience the most substantial growth, according to HubSpot's **2024 State of Marketing & Trends Report**. The same report revealed that Short-form video content specifically is predicted to yield the highest return on investment and is expected to receive more investment compared to all other formats.

Adding video to your digital marketing strategy is a no brainer for any business.

YouTube Dynamic Lineups

YouTube is the world's second-largest search engine with over 34.6 billion monthly visits. In Australia, it's currently the second-most visited website. Millions of Australians watch YouTube on their TV screens each and every day.

The great thing about YouTube is that you don't have to be a big brand capable of spending millions creating an ad and buying media to promote it.

We've seen lots of awesome examples of YouTube ads shot on an iPhone with someone talking directly to the camera. The bottom line - if that person is giving genuine value to the audience then the right people will engage with it.

One major update to the YouTube platform is its new targeting feature; Dynamic Lineups. They allow you to target either video or music playlists with the same interest and intent-based targeting. The lineups are then aligned to moments, topics, relevance or popularity that blend the context of your audience and brand.

Google recommends this ad type specifically for the 18 to 24-year-old demographic, as this is the audience that consumes YouTube playlists the most.

Two key points to keep in mind with these new ad types is:

- The ads target CPM, and you can't choose to maximise conversions.
- You can't overlap YouTube Dynamic lineups with any other type of targeting and exclusion, which means you don't have control over any sensitive content.



Create Short-Form Video Content That Will Perform

If there's one thing you shouldn't do on Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts and TikTok, it's to chop up your existing YouTube Ads and TVCs and share them as short-form video content - audiences are just going to skip them! Any content that isn't purpose-led or feels unnatural is just a waste of time, energy and dollars.

Here are some tips to keep in mind when creating short-form video content:

- It takes Gen Z 8 seconds to decipher what content is interesting and what isn't worth their time (source). This means your video needs to get to the point quickly - leaving your core message to the end of the video runs the risk of audiences skipping it.
- Create something eye catching. Use bold colours, have a clear message, or make your offer stand out.
- Keep in mind that trends come and go quickly sometimes in a matter of days. If you take too
 long to make your mark, you might have just missed your chance.
- lo-fi, raw and real content works better on Reels and TikTok. Don't worry about making it
 polished and heavily edited audiences want relatable and entertaining content on these
 platforms.



Email Marketing

Will email marketing continue to deliver results in 2024? Yes. Positively. Definitely.

Email marketing is the strongest owned channel, giving you direct access to your prospects.

If implemented well, with the right segmentation, timing, content relevance and design, emails will certainly help move your buyers further down the marketing funnel. It's arguably the best channel to deliver the "right message at the right time to the right person".

Include User-Generated Content

Adopt social proof within your email content by including case studies, testimonials and reviews of your products and services within emails, where it makes sense.

As you share positive experiences of your customers, you'll ultimately increase your business' authenticity and credibility while reducing any uncertainty your audience has about your products and services.

Elevate Your Emails Further for Mobile Readers

Optimising your email design for mobile is standard practice over the past few years. In 2024, you need to take things one step further by ensuring your emails maintain their quality across dark and light modes.

The most common mistake marketers make is using png images with transparent backgrounds that render oddly on either of these modes. Be mindful of your choice of font colour and font size and more recently, font weight so prospects reading your emails on mobile are not having a poor experience.

Hot Tip: Make sure your email size is limited to 102kb. GMail clips all content that appears after that limit is reached, prompting users to 'View entire message'. Keeping this in mind, make sure the most important part of your message (including your CTA) is included at the beginning of your email vs the end.

Micro-segmentation in Email Lists Deliver Better Outcomes

Marketers who use segmented campaigns note as much as a 760% increase in revenue (**Source**). Marketers are moving away from sending blanket emails to their database. Instead, the trend is moving towards creating better segments based on demographic data like location and buying role along with behavioural data like page views, past email clicks and the like. Better segmentation will also enable strong personalisation opportunities.

The same email message can be easily duplicated and slightly tailored to different segments to make a bigger impact - a better open rate, click rate and read rate. You can find some detailed tips on segmentation tips in this blog article on improving **email marketing campaign results**.

Expect Inaccurate Email Engagement Stats

Since the launch of iOS 14+, Apple has made it nearly impossible for all email marketing tools including MailChimp, HubSpot and ActiveCampaign to report on a range of stats including email open rates.

With approximately 47% of Australians using iPhones (**Source**), we can assume close to 50% of your email marketing stats will be inaccurate.

Essentially, any email campaign relying solely on open rates as a measure of success may become unreliable. A/B tests based on open rates will also stand statistically insignificant. Automations based on email opens will become trickier to design.

While platforms like Hubspot have introduced 'adjusted open rates' to provide a more accurate snapshot of your email performance, there is no certainty in the data you're seeing.

Interactive Emails are Here and Here to Stay

As it is with any content, well-designed, dynamic, interactive emails are increasingly gaining attention from marketers who want to get cut-through in their prospect's mail-filled inboxes.

Interactive emails can include multiple features like GIFs, embedded surveys, slide-shows, roll-over effects on images or CTA buttons. Interactive emails don't require the recipient to open a link in a new tab to take action and thus, reduce the number of clicks required to get the result.

Such emails are bound to gain higher engagement rates. 2024 and beyond, we are bound to see email marketing platforms making it easier for marketers to build and send interactive emails.

TASK:

Review your email stats to check 'Opens by Email Client' which breaks down your 'opens' by Gmail, Chrome, Office, Yahoo Mail and the like. Accept that the opens from Apple Mail will be unreliable. Work with metrics other than open rate such as click rate, reply rate and unsubscribe rate. Adjust your automated email scripts so they make sense even if someone has not opened prior emails.



Time To Make It Happen

As we've covered, the buyer's journey has become more complex and touch points are increasingly unmeasurable across industries. But, as always, it is our responsibility as marketers to find the best ways to reach the right audience with the right message at the right time.

While data and attribution challenges will only increase, and AI will continue to improve in performance, we need to balance our short-term and long-term marketing efforts. This is the only way that as marketers, we can ensure that we're meeting leads and sales targets in the present, and building a foundation for sustainable results in the future.

More than ever, a winning digital marketing strategy will require businesses to dabble in multiple channels and with highly effective messaging and creative. Ironically, you'll have to invest in marketing activities without a simplistic dollar-in-dollar-out approach to maximise the impact of your marketing budget. Investing in your brand is likely to become the norm, capturing the attention of your prospects much before they are ready to buy. I urge you to consider what you can action in the next quarter or 6-18 month period to set your business up for success over the next three years.

Rocket Agency has helped scores of businesses drive genuine marketing results with our multi-award winning team. Our experts in SEO, PPC, Paid Social, Media Buying and Creative have proven their skills time and time again with tailored marketing strategies in Australia that directly link to business outcomes.

If there is anything the team at Rocket can do to help, or any question we can answer to help give you clarity, don't hesitate to be in touch at **rocketagency.com.au/contact** or **1300 059 620**.

Good luck in 2024 and beyond!

James Lawrence



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