

Integrated Marketing Discussion Document

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Introduction

You may be wondering why this document is not entitled “Company Website Strategy 2010” like the “Google Adwords” and “Instructor Pages” strategy documents that preceded it and the “Social Media” that will follow. The answer is simple; a website that forms a corner stone to a company’s success, or failure, cannot be considered in isolation.

Before we can consider the development of a new website, and by this I do not mean the technical structure it sits on, we must first answer some vital questions. The reason for changing the current website is not the technology that it sits upon but because “a cow pat with a cherry on is still as cow pat” so the last thing we want to do is build another cow pat and simply recreate the current website on a new technology.

A Christmas Carol

Dickens’ story of Scrooge looked at the past (what was history), looked at the present (where he was now) and looked at a possible future (misery and death). The possible future made him change, had the future been rosier would he have changed?

The Past

Company has a past; the company has been going for over 21 years, in its present guise. As with all things there have been good times and bad, one assumes the good outweigh the bad or the company wouldn’t be as strong as it is today.

The past is a place for reflection, what worked? What didn’t work? If we had our time over again what would we do the same? What wouldn’t we do at all? And what would we do differently?

Einstein defined madness as “doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result”.

The proverb says “if at first you don’t succeed try, try and try again”. What it should say is “try - reflect, adjust, try again - reflect, adjust, try again – reflect; did it work? Will it ever work? Persevere? Abandon? Try something else?”

So we can look back; if something worked how can we make it better? If something didn’t work should we try it again in a different guise? What is different today that means it might work? Or no matter what the circumstances it’ll never fly so make a note and move on.

The Present

That miniscule moment between past and future, this is the time to do what we do, what we planned to do before we reflect and get ready for the future.

The Future

The only thing we know about the future is that it is uncertain! The only things that we can do to affect the future is to change and reflect, we can only change ourselves and our organisation no matter how hard we try we cannot get our competitors to stop competing and we cannot force the public to buy from us.

USP or RIP

This point needs to be raised now although it should, and will, form the repeated question throughout this document.

What is our Unique Selling Proposition?

Despite the abundance of price comparison websites; price, fortunately, is not the only deciding factor in the buying decision process, or we would all be eating Tesco Value or Asda Smart Price driving a Skoda and drinking 99p wine from a plastic container.

So our “mission statement” and not some fluffy “to be the greatest driving school in the world” (although an excellent target) must be to define and for everyone to know our USP or USPs.

The alternative is RIP Company!

Why Integrated Marketing?

There are businesses that are able to make a healthy living focussing on one niche, targeting it in a particular way and selling to it. But these companies are the exception not the rule.

First Principles – AIDA

I mentioned in the introduction that reflecting on the past is a good exercise and so it is also a good idea to return at times to first principles. Remember the way to build a house is to lay the foundation, build the walls, put the roof on and then do the finishing touches.

The same is true for marketing, traditional or internet or integrated.

We are not a fledgling business, we have products (or services), we have a target market, and most importantly we have a product that people want to buy – great news!

So we must now follow the four simple steps to continue building and growing a thriving and profitable business.

AIDA – Attract, Inform, Desire, Action. There will be micro AIDAs, one’s where the whole process happens in an instant and other where you can smell the “wood burning”.

A – Attract

We have multiple ways of attracting people to our company.

Branding

Our new branding is a micro AIDA; it clearly says “what we do on the tin” so it has attracted and informed in one step, its professional so it has informed and set a desire, and both the name “Company” the telephone numbers and the website are clear “Calls to Action”. Job Done ✓

Search Engines – Google, Bing etc.

The Internet Browsers (Explorer, FireFox) are a misnomer, until very recently the one thing you could not do was browse, you needed to know where you were going www.mydestination.com or know what you wanted “red shoes”.

Hence the rise of the search engines, someone tells them what they “think” they want “driving lessons” and all the suppliers rush forward. The Gate Keepers (search engines) hold back the masses, assessed in the blink of an eye, and line up the most likely candidates to answer their “want”. They stand in a line with their advertising board and try to attract the searchers attention. Very few stands out from the crowd, the way to stand out is by differentiation. To **attract** you must stand out from the crowd and wave your USP flag.

The search engines more than any other organisations epitomise the AIDA principle in the few lines they show, organically or paid, you **must** attract, inform and raise desire – the call to action is already there.

Website and Printed Media

We’ll come to these later as they must fulfil AIDA is one or more steps.

Word of Mouth V1.0

Version 1.0 of word of mouth was precisely that. Someone would ask “I need a...”, “do you know a?”, “where can I buy?” and if the person you asked, and trusted the answer, then if you had a good reputation with that person you got the referral, another micro AIDA. But if you had a bad reputation then the counter was true. Indeed do a good job for someone and they might tell one person, do a bad job and they will tell everyone. We will revisit this later in Inform and Desire.

I – Inform and D - Desire

Once you have attracted someone to you then you can start to inform them. The information you give them should translate into a desire to want what you offer.

The **Golden Rule** is telling them, quickly, how what you do will benefit them. This might be the USP or it’ll be a statement backed up by the USP.

Website

When the website is promoted correctly through SEO, PPC or other medium you should have taken them to the page that answers their primary need. Confirm to them quickly they are in the right place, normally a title and a first sentence then start with the USP. One caveat, people search either by searching on their problem or more likely they know the solution e.g. “How can I rid my house of spiders?” or “spider repellent” So the start of the conversation is a “solution” statement.

As has been said people search for “driving lessons” – the solution but what they really want is to learn from scratch or improve.

Driving Lessons that let you become a great driver (benefit)

Our uniquely structured approach (USP) lets you achieve your goals blah blah blah

Printed Media

What works for the web should also be translated to print, once it’s been tried and tested and proven. Remember the wrong message or a spilling mistake on the web can be rectified in minutes on a 1,000 flyers that’s “bin fodder”.

Word of Mouth V2.0

Version 2.0 of word of mouth is the recommendation from one website to another or the testimonial or review. “Don’t believe our marketing” see what someone else said? The review is the type of thing you see on Amazon.

Word of Mouth V3.0 – Social Media

As the saying goes “this is where it’s at”.

Social Media, Facebook, Twitter, Blogs provide the supplier with a unique prospective on word of mouth, you can now listen to what other people are saying, both about you (good and bad) about the competition (good and bad) and about your marketplace. This can be a great source of information and desire for the potential customer.

You can also “test the water” start conversations, throw an idea into the melting pot.

The real strength is to be able to interact with your customers and potential customers. Imagine being in a restaurant and you over hear someone praising your company, you interrupt them at the right moment introduce yourself and thank them kindly – maybe buy them a drink.

Now imagine doing that on the web – your thanks and appreciation is there for all to see enhancing your reputation.

Now turn it around, imagine being in a restaurant and you over hear someone slating your company, you interrupt them punch them in the face.

Now imagine doing that on the web – your reaction is there for all to see destroying your reputation.

But what about - being in a restaurant and you over hear someone slating your company, you interrupt them at the right moment introduce yourself and express your concern. What can you do to rectify the situation? You rectify it and deliver the solution. A short time later you check that all is now OK.

Now imagine doing that on the web – need I say more?

A – Action

Doesn’t matter how good you were at all the other steps, if at the end you shake hands and say “very nice” then the time and effort was wasted. In all forms of marketing there **must** be a clear and concise call to action.

Word of Mouth – side note

Whatever the medium, being used, encouraging word of mouth is crucial. Referrals cost a fraction of any other form of marketing.

“Conversation” equals “Conversion”

The AIDA principle works on the simple premise, having a conversation.

Face to Face

Is the easiest; I ask you a question, I get the right answer we move on, I get a mixed answer, I rephrase the question and so we continue. The conversation continues I like your USP and I see the benefit – sign me up.

Print

This is harder you may even need to stimulate the conversation, “Want to learn to drive?” “Why not become a great driver? Our unique approach....”

Website

Slightly easier chances are they land on a page that has started the conversation they had with the search engine and the micro AIDA (organic / PPC). You reinforce the benefits, the use of appropriate on page buttons and other calls to action you guide them down the path to achieve their goals. If they are really struggling then step in with online chat (pseudo face to face) or encourage them to phone.

Measurement – “Knowing” not “Thinking”

Irrespective of the medium used it is imperative to find a means of measuring it.

Printed

For printed material adding unique references on posters the ADIs name / reference and a local code so they can trace back to which poster / flyer they handed out where.

If possible telephone numbers should also be unique to each medium. One number for cars, one for A3 posters, one for A4 poster number 1 and one for A5 flyers etc.

Internet and Website

The real power of the Internet is the ability to measure every last little detail. Statistics are provided by the search engines. Analytics in its basic form will provide some fantastic information. But once you start “tagging” items on the website the information can be invaluable. Do you have the same link to another page on one page of you website? By “tagging” the links you can see if people changed page because of a menu item, a button or picture or, if the link is in multiple parts of text, how far down the reader got before clicking.

The absolute power of the web is that it’s not a few people sitting round a table that define your Internet presence it’s a few people sitting round a table defining at least 2 options. The general public in there masses will tell you what does and does not work. Discard the loser and sit down and design another challenger – repeat forever!

Word of Mouth

If you offer incentives to people than you can even track word of mouth!

What We Know and What to Do With that Knowledge

We have a vast amount of data at our finger tips and we should check this before we do any activity.

The Google Adwords campaign has taught us that the people do not search for “driving lesson down my street” so we should not recreate the current website and all its multitude of pages.

We know that our business is as a marketing organisation for our accredited partners. So we should focus our primary website on fulfilling their needs, we should focus the site on the primary market “Companys”.

We do not abandon the other streams of revenue but they do not take equal prevalence on the site.

We can use the information from the call logging systems and by interviewing our “telesales” team to address the “conversations” we want to have with our site visitors. The conversation with the pupil will be different to the conversation we have with the parent.

The New Website(s)

No matter how “pretty” a new website might be, recreating the existing site and its content and data transfer processes **is not a worthwhile exercise**. “Gold plated cow pat with cherry”!

STEP ONE – Payment. If we wish to move to alternative payment methods we must instigate this from day one. Getting this all set up can take a small amount of time, but when it doesn’t run smoothly it can take months.

We must, using, the data we have define the goals of the site. These goals are primarily “what do we think the visitor wants to achieve from our site?”

From this we can map out the site and produce the “wire frames” of how the site will look (functionally not graphically).

We can look at the keywords and the conversations that we want to have with the visitor (and their persona). From these we can build guidelines for the creation of the pages and their human and non-human readers.

Consider whether to address content production ourselves or employ a copywriter with proven conversion architecture experience.

Produce variants that we may wish to trial.

We need to plan the implementation of the technical platform onto which the site will run.

Implementing the framework and adding any modules that we want to utilise, e.g. text editor, form creation, live chat, shopping and payment gateways should take no more than a day!

Configuring the modules may take longer, certainly interactive forms may take a while to configure as well as populating a backend database. We can also take the opportunity to streamline the transfer of data from the websites database to our own in house database.

The technology that we choose should also maximise the potential for “micro sites” this can be either of the format www.CompanyExeter.co.uk or better as sub-domains <http://exeter.Companyschools.co.uk> the latter being a free option. This will enable us to trial alternative strategies without compromising the primary site until the exercise is tested and ready to launch to the full site.

Correctly choosing the technology should also mean that additional sites or sub-sites have no financial cost to them.

Abraham Lincoln gave the following advice “if you have 8 hours in which to chop down a tree, spend 7 hours sharpening the axe”

“Let us sharpen our axe; there is a forest of pupils out there”

Dave Hassall, December 2009