

*Insights gleaned working with America's leading brands*

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GETTING  
YOUR  
BUYERS TO  
APPRECIATE  
YOUR  
PRODUCT'S  
VALUE

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*A Fractional CMO's  
Perspective*

BY RON SHULKIN

**Hope you find our white paper of value.**

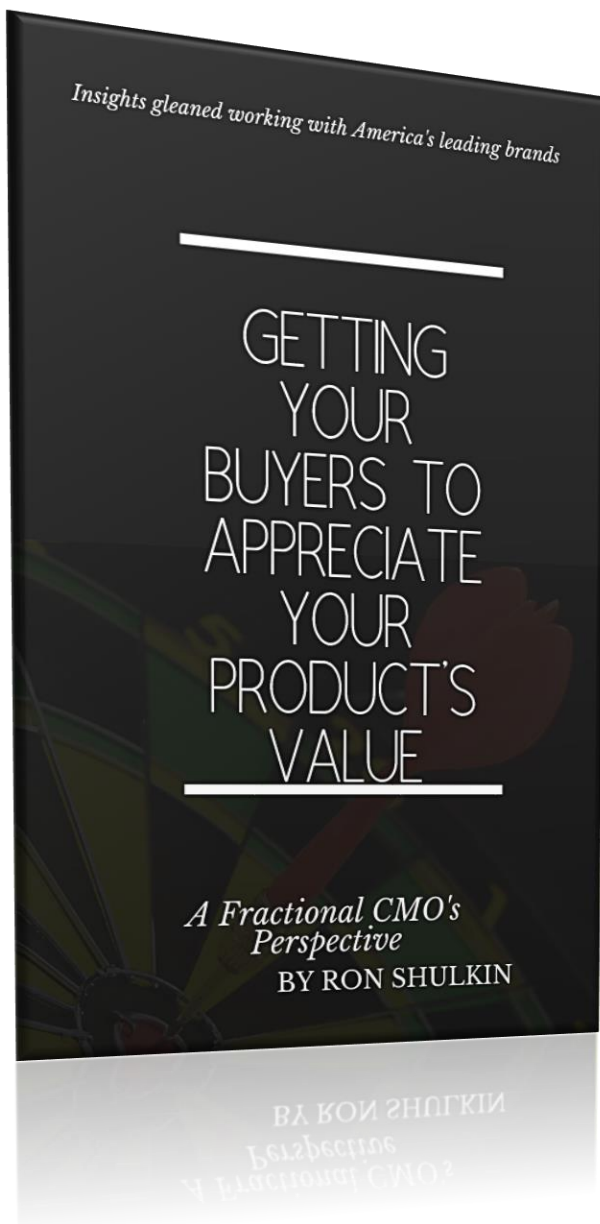
Solve the Puzzle of Filling the Missing Piece in Your Business Plan!



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Ron Shulkin

Founder of  
FRACTIONAL CMO GROUP LLC



# Slow Down! Get A Map Before You Drive Down Marketing Tactics Street

## Cart Before The Horse Territory



High-Energy Entrepreneurs  
Are Driven To Share Their  
Enthusiasm

When you have a great  
idea (or new product, or  
service, or company)  
you're anxious to tell the  
world about it. Your pride,  
your enthusiasm, inspires  
you to "get the show on

the road". From where you sit, "Everyone needs to know about this!"

### **But, wait!**

Before you wade into the battle  
swinging your sword...It is a good  
idea to think through what's in  
your message. Your outreach's  
success is improved when you  
refine and test your messaging  
first.

### **Develop Your Go-To-Marketing Strategy (First)**

At the heart of your message you'll  
find your marketing strategy. This  
strategy serves as the foundation for  
the tactics you later put into play.

**The backbone of a successful  
product launch**

***Is great content!***

***(Your strategy is the brain)***

*Having an in-depth, intimate,  
understanding of your offering's  
purpose and a description of how your  
breakthrough will change the world,  
can inform all the marketing tactics and  
messaging you later push out into the  
universe.*

## The Marketing Tactics Smorgasbord (Can Wait Just One Minute)

Before any tactical marketing elements are put into place. Before content creation.

**Before you work on...** *Market Awareness, or a Lead Generation Program, populate prospect databases, marketing automation support systems, webinar programs, a social presence, marketplace credibility cultivation, white paper publishing (blog posts), speaking engagements at industry events, industry analyst outreach, content moving buyers through the stages of their sales journey, testimonials, infographics, videos, slide presentations, live events, SlideShare, emails, newsletters, white papers, surveys, workbooks, e-books, product centric assets designed to be delivered by sales team members, live demos, product one-pagers, FAQ's, spec sheets, talking points, demo scripts, value propositions, internal product training, rfp templates, pricing guides, ROI calculators, competitive differentiators, or case studies...*

## Strategies Inform Tactics

Consider first being able to clearly state your team's purpose.

*Make sure you can define a breakthrough that is responsive to current market demand dynamics; to the changing competitive landscape; and to the major trends currently defining your targeted audience.*




### Messaging

Think through what words describe what you do (and what words don't). Gather your best stories, ones that are memorable and that capture the essence of what you're offering.

Research what industry or segment make up the most likely buyers for what you're selling. Compose a memorable story that captures the essence of your message. One that best describes how you can help your buyers address their challenges; help solve their problems.

## What's Your Breakthrough?

**Pizza**



Take the pizza. Each brand is selling something different. Lou Malnati's (said in my Chicago accent) sells quality, and a unique (deep dish) experience. Little Caesar's sells on price. Domino's sells on service (30 minutes or less!). Expert marketers working for all these companies have answers for those 6 questions.

When the lightbulb goes off over your head and you get the million-dollar idea that stirs your passions (and inspires your willingness to live in your parent's basement while you get it ready for market), you still have a few steps left before you can prove your value to customers.

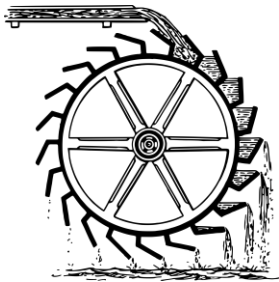
It is so much easier to explain what you do and why someone should buy your offering to potential customers if you take a few minutes and clearly state a few things...

# Water

OK, now take water. *The highly competitive (and lucrative) water bottle market brands want us to think of their products like this*



*But some of us think bottled water and see this image in our heads:*



This water “container” (as opposed to bottle) communicates their message clearly. We can see their purpose, we appreciate their breakthrough, we get their message)



The boxes; the containers, ship flat to the manufacturing plant where they're filled, so they have a smaller carbon footprint. The materials are from recycled or sustainable elements. I don't know about you, but I just look at the box and I think, “genius”.

If you're ecologically minded (who isn't?) and you're always thirsty (is that just me?), it truly maps well to your thinking.

## **Define your existential purpose; your company's philosophical heartbeat**

State your breakthrough; what are you offering that no one else is? What makes you different and special?

What words describe you? What words don't apply to you, your team or your offering?

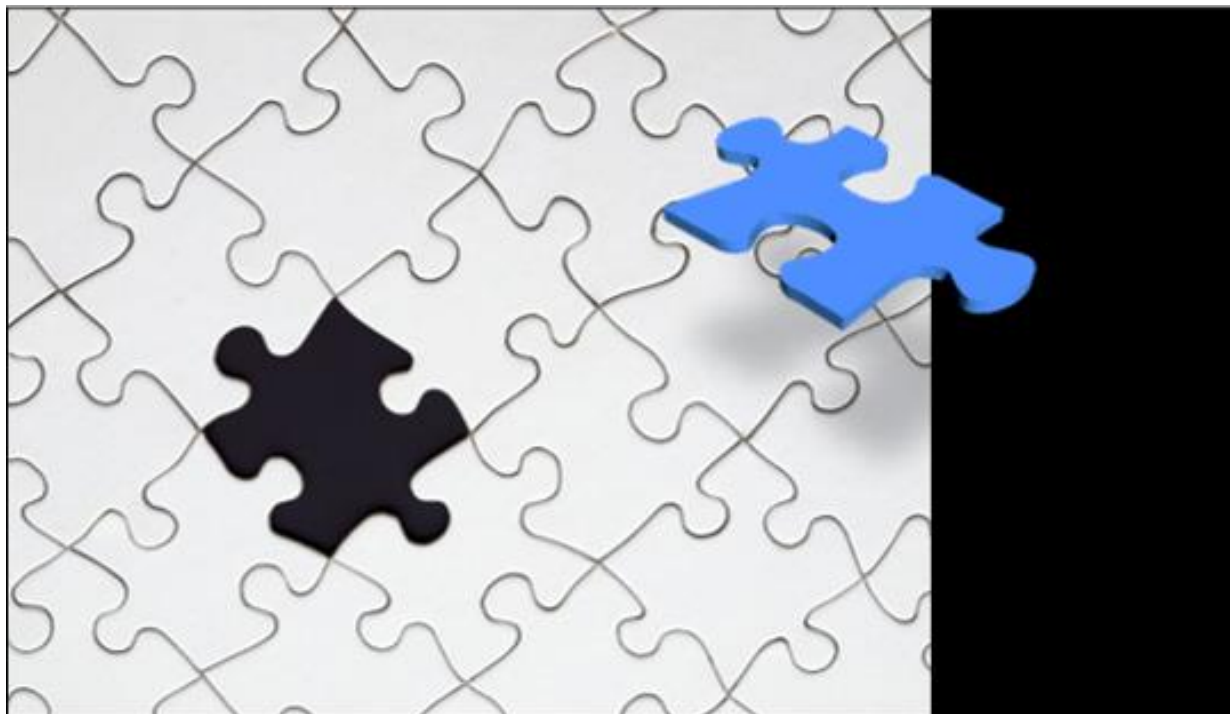
How can you tell a memorable story that captures the essence of your message? How can you make it easy for your future customers to understand and remember you?

How do you define your market? What group of people are facing challenges your offering can address?

## **How can you frame your service or product 's message?**

**(so your markets can appreciate your value?)**

These steps (and others) define your strategic Go-to-Marketing Plan. Tactics ensue based on the foundation this exercise produces.



## Pop Quiz

It's great you and your team believe in the product you're working on. This quiz is offered to see if you are adequately seeking out the opinion of people who look like your future buyers. And to help you ensure your market can appreciate your product's value.



## Feedback Loops

Answer these questions to learn if your upcoming product launch is using a roadmap that any marketer would approve.

*Input From A Marketer on The Team:* Conducting interviews with buyers, trying out different messaging and then tweaking your offering should be an ongoing process before, during and after product roll outs.

### 1. **Are You Patient Enough to Listen, Even After You Think The Meeting is Over? (or...Exploiting The Columbo Effect)**

I'm often the marketing team member in product launch collaborative efforts. I find every discussion of a product with buyers to be revelatory. Often their feedback during these interviews is invaluable. We pick up points of view that sends everyone on our team home scratching their heads to figure out how to tweak the offering.

“Just one  
more thing”



For some reason, no matter how hard you try to relax those you're speaking with, it is only when they think the questions are over that they relax enough and open up the most.

The most valuable bit of market research feedback gleaned during early user testing comes in those last few minutes after they think the meeting is over, yet we haven't yet parted.

These are the “one more thing” list of insights Columbo always delivered from the doorway as he was just about to leave.

## 2. **Are You Confident Enough to be Humble?**

It is hard to critique your own work. I find it hard to edit my writing. The problem is I think everything I write is wonderful. I just wrote it after all. I often ask others for their feedback before publishing. This bit of humility always results with an improved deliverable.

As a startup you're already comfortable having big ideas. Those startups who produce winning products couple good ideas with technical skill and perseverance; only resting when a quality product is produced.



We all want our leaders to be confident. I think the best founders are confident in their beliefs the way you want your brain surgeon to be...or the attorney representing you in court. But I'm most impressed when they're open to input from others.

## 3. **Are You An Intentional Learner?**

The very best founders are also driven by curiosity. They foster a constant state of learning, good vibes, and strong opinions (only loosely held). Winners at the

product roll out game constantly reevaluate past decisions to divine an even better path forward.

## **So...are you really listening?**

### **4. Are You Testing Your Premise Before Your Roll Out?**

Don't wait until your product is perfect. In fact, do continuous testing early with every iteration, and as you accumulate feedback. Identify people who match your various target market personas. They should be the type of prospects you would use as references if they were customers.

*This is your chance to validate your hypothesis that the product you're developing is as desirable as you thought.*

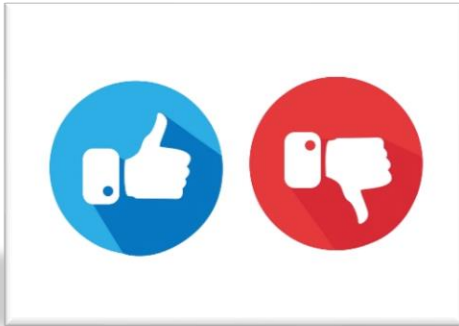
You can gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and the motivations people harbor for buying your offering.

Ask what they hope to get out of your product. Ask them what they think their lives will look like a year after they became a customer. Yes, ask them why they're considering to buy your offering. But also ask them what they hope to get out it.

Take these aspirational tidbits and apply any changes indicated to the product before your official roll out.



## 5. Are You Open To Criticism (Can You Take Your Medicine Like a Big Boy or Girl)?



You may be prepared to tweak your offering. Just don't be afraid to pivot if that's what the feedback is telling you. Remember you're asking for feedback to make sure your initial premise is correct. In other words, don't fall in love with a version of your product, thinking you know better than those who provide feedback.

## 6. Are You Using The Most Informed Buyers as Testers?

Many of us know we should let the Influencers our target markets respects be the first to use our offering. Yes, influencers will be tremendous help when your official launch date comes along; hopefully sharing their positive reviews with their followers.

Inviting influencers in as beta testers also works to test your offering with someone who really understands your market; someone who likely is the perfect example of the persona you've developed. Therefore, they're likely to give valuable insights.

*The moment influencers see you appreciate when they're candid, that you take their feedback seriously and apply it to enhancing the offering, they'll turn into loyal and avid supporters upon roll out.*

## 7. Are You Getting The Most Value From Discounts Offered to First Buyers?



I like to think we should treat our early buyers like our investors... or maybe a better metaphor is our grandmothers. In other words, we should smother these people with attention and respect. And, of course, highly available customer support.

Ideally, they will trade a willingness to respond to future questions or surveys for the first year in return for a sizeable purchase price discount. As you continue to receive each wave of survey responses, and then improve the

product in response, you can tailor the subsequent surveys accordingly.

*Input From A Marketer on The Team: Make sure you do this thorough bit of research for each target market's audience.*

## **8. Are You Operating As A Team?**

My biggest successes as a marketer have been when the product people and I work collaboratively.



As a technologist, you can appreciate an agile approach. Teaming marketers and developers is the ideal way to join different disciplines and pit strong points of view against each other in order to blend them into a better deliverable.

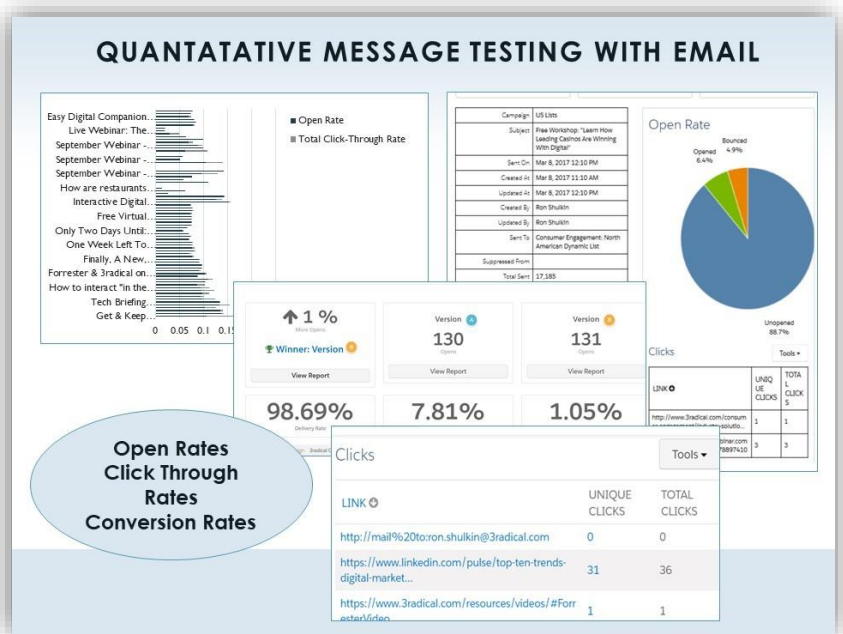
## 9. Are You Thinking Strategically?

As you glean responses from people, dissect the challenges this feedback brings down to their first-order issues and then prioritize them.

*Input From A Marketer on The Team: Make sure the marketing members of your collaborative effort can hold their own in your technical product discussions.*

## 10. Are You Also Testing Your Premise Quantitatively?

The most appealing messages we use to sell our offering are the ones describing how our product helps customers solve the problems they face that we've uncovered during interviews.



As you refine the words you use to describe your product, you can test your messaging in a more scientific way. As you push out marketing emails you can...

A/B test two subject lines to see which ones produce the most "opens"

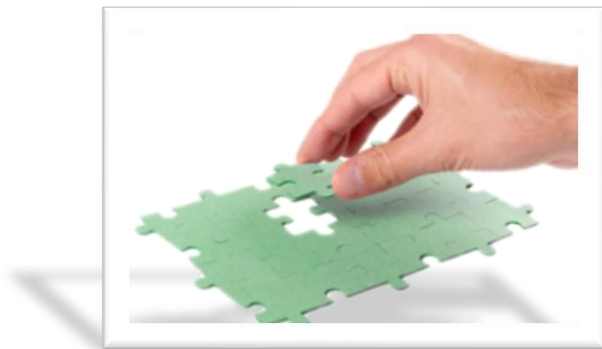
Test using the same split method with two different call-to-action links in those emails

A/B test the landing pages for those links to measure which messages produce the most conversions

*Input From A Marketer on The Team: The marketer's job is to define the target market personas, document what they care about and articulate the product's message in the language buyers use.*

## Wrap Up

Although framed as a quiz, these are just some of the questions I think about as



we assemble a product launch plan. Successful product roll outs require attention to a slew of details. Good listening skills fuel the feedback loops that lead to both a successful product, and the compelling descriptive messages that resonate with buyers.

## Every Sales & Marketing Plan is a Draft (Or What I Learned at my Last Meeting)

We've all heard that no battle plan survives the first contact with the enemy. It is a reasonable perspective when assembling a sales and marketing plan. The best version of a business plan is merely the latest draft.

### Sales Plans Live in a Real World

When we architect our outreach plan to launch a new product we need to operate under the same rules of those who embrace Agile Programming. We listen to those our plan impacts, use our skills to put our best compelling story

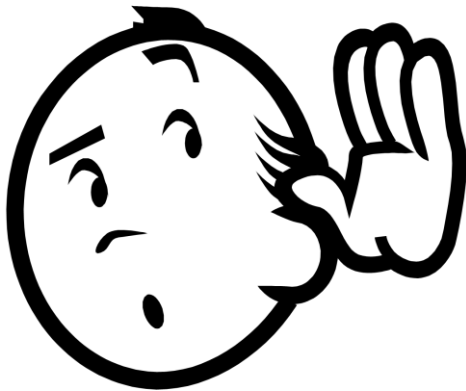
together and then bring it back to the end user (or in our case the buyer) to make sure we're on track. There are several sources of input we can rely on.

## Listening To Buyers

Buyers inform our plan best. You might call this Qualitative Testing. Gathering what we learn on sales calls with buyers, we learn...

1. The language our buyers speak
2. Our buyers' challenges
3. How to map our offering and frame our story

Buyers provide anecdotal evidence of exactly how compelling we've crafted our story. They'll be the first trip wire to tell us we're on the wrong track.



## Team Collaboration

We're usually blessed by being surrounded by smart people. Our internal team can provide the multiple perspectives only enabled by looking at issues from the different disciplines they represent. Customer Success, Customer Support, the Development Team and others, offer a different way of looking at things. Collaborating with these folks can provide ideas marketers and sales professionals just might not have thought of.

## Testing Our Messaging

Using outbound emails into our various target markets delivers real metrics telling the marketing team whether our messaging is on track. Using A/B subject lines testing and reviewing click through rates on our Calls to Action, can tell us which message is resonating with which audience.

## Intuitive Leaps

Great ideas rarely happen in isolation. By absorbing the Qualitative, Quantitative and Collaborative inputs we gather, we have more data to inspire our creative thoughts.

*Embrace the notion of the input of your buyers, your market and your team. Don't settle for anything less than the latest, best version of your launch plan. Good luck!*

# Want to Embrace Digital Marketing?

Start by Asking Questions!

## Or...How To Conduct A Digital Marketing Readiness Assessment



Companies with great success selling their offering can overlook digital marketing if they've achieved their success without it. There may have not been a need or the time to pay attention to digital. When money is being left on the table it's time to dive in.

*The first step to assemble a digital marketing plan is to ask questions.*

Be curious like a detective or a reporter. The answers you get recommend where you should spend your budget. Every company is unique: You'll be led toward questions initially unknown.

### Step One: Start with The Basic Questions

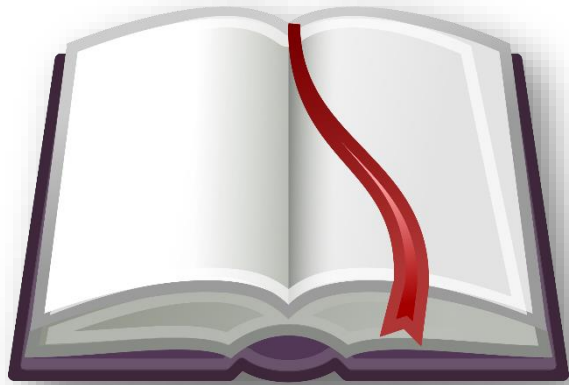
Describe the company in one sentence. Define the company's offerings (services or products). Describe how these offerings are produced. Tell the story of how the offering has gone through an evolutionary process from original inception to the form it takes today. How has market influences shaped the offering? How has the packaging changed? Define the markets for these offerings. Define the buyers. How have buyers changed during the company's history. Identify several current customers to interview. Ask them about their journey. Identify several prospects who engaged in the buying process yet made other selections. Ask them about their journey and why they went elsewhere.



## Define The Lead to Sales Cycle

Define how new business occurs. How do clients find our offering? How do they appear as leads? Define the process how they become customers. What form does the inquiry take. Does a "lead" come in via email; by phone call; by personal recommendation. Who on the team reaches out to these inquiries. What is the process like to turn these inquiries into "sales". How are long-term

clients nurtured from a pool of satisfied customers that came from leads.



## Define the Team's Marketing Capabilities

What is the company doing today to market the offering? How many people spend time on marketing; what percent of their time is spent on it. Are the marketing efforts made in alignment or independently? As each customer engages with the

company, are there multiple touch points, each managed by a separate department. Are there processes in place to share information internally to ensure the customer has a positive customer experience? What are our Digital Marketing Competencies? What digital marketing efforts have been conducted to-date. What are we doing with our web sites; our social networks? How well does the team respond to new, unexpected marketing scenarios not previously encountered. Is everyone accountable. How is everyone's work measured. How are marketing efforts migrated toward best practices.

## Define the Audience's Interests

Do we want to embed social media capabilities into the marketing plan moving forward? What are the new skills the team must incorporate to become more effective digital marketers? Depending on what we learned about our customers, do we have a recommendation for digital ads. Should we invest in search engine optimization (so we're at the top of list when a purchaser conducts a Google search for our products?). Where does our market network socially. What networks. How often. What messages do they respond to. If we

roll out our digital marketing plan, do we have access to the personnel to staff those responsibilities.

## **Content**

Our digital efforts need to be a cohesive part of our overall marketing plan. We should be creating a seamless experience for customers across all touch points. What sort of content do we have access to in order to fuel our communications strategy? What are our capabilities for content development if we discover we need new content to achieve our goals. Can we re-purpose existing content to fit the bill.

## **Data Research**

Evaluating Analytics helps recommend appropriate business actions. Reliable customer data is the key to a personalized customer experiences synchronized across all touch points.



Do we have reliable data to explore? Can we get a base line confidence in the marketing and sales data at hand? Can we become progressive marketers and explore Predictive Analytics? Can we evaluate the past to help us predict where market are heading into the future so we're poised to address the needs of these changing markets? Do we have data about our customer to review. Is there sales data. Is there demographic data. How can we augment our knowledge of our

customer moving forward? How can we collect first party data?

What motivates our target buyers to make a purchasing decision? What is the best message to deliver to customers in order to influence their buying decisions? How do we lead them to our door as ready, willing and able buyers? What does their purchasing journey usually look like? Where do they "shop". What other choices are available? What literature do our customers read. To what associations do our customers belong. What magazines do they read?

What industry or professional journals do they track. To what social networks do they belong.

## **Digital Marketing Readiness Deliverable:**

### **Pro Forma Marketing Plan**

After all those questions are asked and answered (plus a bunch of questions we learn to ask along the way), the result is a digital marketing readiness assessment plan.

*Having learned the definition of the product offerings; a definition of the buyers; how buyers make their decisions, it becomes apparent how to exploit digital marketing.*

## **The next step will be an informed decision how to do the following:**



Fine tuning and modernizing the existing web and social presence, social media marketing program enhancements

How best to leverage Search Engine Optimization (so prospects can easily find us when they search)

Building a customer/prospects database

Conduct email marketing campaigns (with A/B testing) to those markets to surface leads

*A great next step is to have the team collaboratively gain consensus and propose a Prototype Marketing Plan. This new approach can be tested and revised.*

## Summary

Asking lots of questions, we define the products, markets, buyers, marketing team and customers. We gain insights into current brand awareness and the marketing capabilities of the team. The Deliverable for this effort is a Digital Marketing Readiness Report. A survey of digital marketing technology can provide a list of digital marketing options with estimated costs. We will have enough information to recommend a digital marketing strategy. Each recommended course of action listed in the report should be cost justified.

Using modern digital marketing efforts (increasing our position on Google Search, communicating with our audience in two way, digital conversations via social media), exploiting untapped markets, we can see dramatic revenue growth, beyond those successes experienced before digital marketing.

We want to keep everyone focused on the top level goals by monitoring our progress and assigning responsibility. This is all part of a culture of personal accountability. If something is not working properly, we'll diagnose, correct or drop the program as required.



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- ✓ multi-million-dollar enterprise technology deployments
- ✓ We begin with discovery sessions, external research and collaboration
- ✓ with our client's team
- ✓ The goal is to incorporate contributions from the multiple perspective of
- ✓ diverse disciplines
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