4-step plan to achieve marketing success in 2018

We are only four days into the new year, and there is plenty of time ahead to re-calibrate or re-focus your marketing efforts to achieve maximum success in 2018. You can also use this time and planning to create a completely new marketing strategy. To help you make the most of this opportunity, I am offering you four steps to get you on the right track.

Step 1: REVIEW

Look back at your marketing efforts in 2017. What did you do? Social media marketing? Content marketing? List all your marketing activities, such as newsletters, blog posts, video, social media promotions, advertising, etc. Be sure to include specifics, such as what vendors and technology you used (e.g., Constant Contact or MailChimp, Hootsuite or Tweetdeck, etc.) You may also want to incorporate how much these activities cost you, for example, how much you spent on subscription-based services, video production, content production, and so forth.

Step 2: BENCHMARK

How do you know how far you've come if you don't know where you started? Benchmarking at specific intervals or times of the year is a great way to measure your progress (or lack thereof). To do this, create a simple table in Excel or in Word. The first column will list the indicators you want to track. Input the numbers for the indicators you are tracking under a second column headed with the date you collected the information. Add another column for the next date you will revisit these numbers. You could do this on a quarterly, semi-annual, or annual basis, depending on your business plan.

To figure out what to benchmark, think about the different

components of your marketing plan you reviewed in the first step: content marketing, digital/social media marketing, print, etc. What are some key performance indicators (KPIs) within those components?

Some possible indicators are:

- Revenue
- Social media likes/followers (broken down by channel)
- Newsletter subscribers/open rates
- Website conversion rate
- Number of visitors to the website
- Number of customers/clients served

Step 3: ANALYZE AND ASSESS

Looking back at your efforts in 2017, where did you spend the most time and effort? What worked the best? What worked the least? Where was the biggest return on investment (ROI)? What vendors were worth it? Did you have trouble using certain technology? Is there a better way to do what you have been doing? In terms of social media/digital strategy, what tactics earned the most attention/engagement?

Your aim here is to recognize patterns, successes, and failures.

Step 4: CREATE YOUR 2018 ROADMAP

Now that you know what you did and whether it worked or not, you can decide what to continue and what to eliminate. Perhaps you want to add more budget/time to your email marketing. Perhaps you want to scale back your efforts on social media channels. Looking at your benchmarks, what numbers do you want to change? How will you get there? Perhaps you want to increase your website conversion rate. What activities will achieve the results you want? Are there areas you want to explore? Perhaps you've heard that voice search will be big in 2018 (it will). What do you need to do to make your SEO

responsive to these new challenges?

I’d love to hear what you are planning for 2018 and where you will be spending your marketing dollars. Please share in the comments or email me. I may include your responses in a future blog post.

Happy New Year and good luck with your 2018 planning!