10 Key Metrics for Marketing Success in 2013
Planning your marketing strategy for 2013 requires more than just anticipating the latest trends and tools. To plan marketing campaigns that support your overall business strategy, analyze your 2012 results with these key performance indicators and adjust your tactical mix accordingly.

What are your business goals this year? A move into new markets? Better customer retention? To become the biggest player in your region?

To tailor your marketing strategy to support these business goals, you need to know your strengths and weaknesses in each area. Understand them by assessing last year’s results through key performance indicators (KPIs).

KPIs are quantifiable metrics tied to organizational goals, usually involving long-term considerations. They may change as your strategy evolves. Determining which numbers truly indicate success is difficult. After all, a modern marketing campaign yields lots of metrics, not all of which are created equal. Some data reports can disrupt your 2013 planning unless you know what impacts your business goals.

To help you better support your organization’s goals, we’ve compiled a list of ten key metrics, or KPIs, to give you an all-round view of your current strengths and weaknesses based on 2012 performance. We’ve also provided some tactical and best-practice guidance for strengthening your performance in each area.

Just as your marketing tactics work together and strengthen each other, a stronger performance in just one or two of these KPIs can boost your results across the board.

Paying attention to them all together will make 2013 your best year yet.

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1. **Social media referrals to website**

   * **What it is:** Visitors who arrive at your site through links on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and other social networks.

   * **Why it matters:** Social media referrals indicate your social media reach and influence and whether your social media content and engagement are working.

   * **How to measure:** A good, free tool is Google Analytics. In case you haven’t used it, it’s a comprehensive set of analytics tools that generates detailed statistics about how people get to and use your website.

   * **Ways to improve in 2013:**
     - **Engage influencers.** Within your industry, there are experts and commentators whose networks are larger than your own. By engaging with them through conversation and shared content, you can become a trusted source of information. In turn, you will be cited in blogs and on social networks, and your site will benefit from inbound traffic. Influencer relations is a long-term strategy, but a few minutes of engagement every day will pay off when your influencers begin sharing your links and referring people to your website.
     - **Expand your networks.** Monitor which social networks are driving the most traffic to thank customers for good reviews, respond to questions, remedy negative feelings, and encourage customers to leave feedback. Expand your presence in the most valuable ones. If you don’t have the time to search social media all day, marketing software can help. The Vocus Marketing Suite monitors Facebook and Twitter constantly, delivering conversations about your business to a convenient dashboard.
     - **Provide value.** Social networks are not the place for overt marketing messages. Rather, people use them to share great stories and exchange useful information and advice. The content you publish on your website and social networks needs to be helpful, interesting, sharable and stimulating. Rather than sales pitches, publish expert advice, tips, lists, infographics, videos and other content that helps your customers with their pain points. Help and entertain your social media followers and the referrals will follow.
10 Key Metrics for Marketing Success in 2013

2 Search engine ranking

* What it is: Your website’s position on a search engine page when people type in a specific term.

* Why it matters: You want customers to see you when they use search engines to shop. Search ranking has a direct impact on your bottom line.

* How to measure: Google Analytics provides free, comprehensive tools you can use to measure SEO success.

* Ways to improve in 2013:

  ° Publish content. These days many companies improve their SEO by doubling as a publisher. Create a blog that gives readers a meaningful experience, either through valuable information or entertaining content. Don’t worry about publishing daily content: start small and build up to it. You can get even more search visibility with online news releases. The great thing about publishing content is that it stays there, meaning that you’ll reap the search benefits throughout 2013 and beyond.

  ° Earn links. Inbound links are critical for your search rankings, as links from high-quality websites are seen as “votes of confidence” by search engines. The best way to earn new links is to publish unique content that resonates with your target audience. You can make your content work even harder by including social sharing buttons in your posts and pages, which encourage readers to share with their networks and link directly to your content.

  ° Optimize your website. A reflection of your search and social media campaigns, your search ranking drives traffic. As you work to improve your ranking, it’s vital to work with your web designer or web hosting provider to optimize your website for SEO. If you’re building or improving your own website, this step-by-step guide from SEOmoz will help.

3 Social media comments and questions

* What it is: The feedback you receive from your customers via your brand’s social channels—posted to your Facebook page or tweeted at your company handle, for example.

* Why it matters: Interaction via social channels builds your online presence and provides direct insight into what your customers like. It also helps you become more visible to your followers’ and influencers’ own networks.

* How to measure: Tools like Hootsuite, Twitter analytics, and Facebook analytics can provide insights about your social pages, such as demographic information about your audience and how people are responding to your posts.

* Ways to improve in 2013:

  ° Track and respond. Create a process for tracking and responding to customer queries to make sure no comment or question goes unanswered, such as checking in every day at 10 a.m., 1 p.m. and 6 p.m., for example. Other customers will see this and be encouraged to leave feedback of their own or share with others.

  ° Give people what they want! Measure and keep track of what drives the most conversations on your social channels and use the data to give customers more of what they want. People will be more likely to comment on and share your brand’s content if they’re interested in what you’re saying.

  ° Be proactive. Don’t just wait for people to post comments or questions on your brand’s social network channels. The word “social” implies it’s a conversation between many people! Comment on others’ profiles. Stimulate conversation by posing questions to your audience and encouraging responses. Contests and giveaways that challenge customers to...
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Geoff Livingston is a marketing expert, consultant and author. In 2013, he says, marketers and businesses should watch out for these four key trends.

1. Social networks stabilize

Last year saw significant disruption in social media marketing with the rise of Pinterest and Instagram, the strengthening of LinkedIn and Google+, Facebook’s IPO, and Twitter’s stabilization.

Expect stabilization and strengthening next year, with these networks owning specific functions and media access points. For example, Instagram and Twitter will continue to strengthen in the mobile marketplace.

Marketers will be able to focus on the two or three networks that are most important for their business.

2. Content Marketing Fatigue

Content marketing was the big marketing trend of 2012. Unfortunately, we’re already seeing folks burning out from the pressure of mass content creation. Winning businesses will develop methods to consistently produce regular quality content. The others will fade away, unable to maintain the pace, creating winners and losers.

3. Buying Signals

As technology advances, and businesses demand better financial results from social media, marketers who want to succeed will use automation tools to harvest new customers. Buying signals are key phrases and behaviors that can be tracked using algorithms that provide opportunities and leads in an automated stream. Automation cannot replace the emotional creative brain, but it can use algorithms to help market more effectively and with speed. Without automation, it’s almost impossible

4. Email list size

*What it is:* The number of opt-in subscribers you have for your email campaigns

*Why it matters:* Email is the best marketing channel to convert social leads and retain existing customers, but its success depends on having a list of active, engaged subscribers.

*How to measure:* Automated services like iContact email software help you build, manage and measure your list.

*Ways to improve in 2013:*

○ **Start fresh.** In order to make sure your emails reach the most relevant people, start off 2013 with an audit of your current lists and make sure they’re up to date. Are all of the addresses on your list valid? Are they categorized and organized appropriately into prospects, customers, location, types of products and interests, and more? Maintaining good lists will be essential as your business and email lists continue to grow.

○ **Grow your list.** As you look to grow your email list in 2013, revisit your most successful list-building achievements from 2012. Did you see a substantial increase to your list size from social networks or your company website? Did you encourage customers to enter their email addresses for a contest or giveaway, via value-added content, or while completing a purchase? Don’t forget to collect email addresses from customers in your brick-and-mortar storefronts and on your social media landing page. Keep using the techniques your customers prefer, while trying new ones.

○ **Encourage sharing.** Customers trust people within their personal networks for advice and opinions on purchases. Encourage customers who currently subscribe to your emails to share them with their friends and other connections by providing valuable, share-worthy content.

Also consider incentives; for example, 10% off your next purchase for every person who subscribes. Customers are more likely to opt into your emails if the recommendation comes from someone they trust.
for a brand or individual voice to succeed and stay relevant in today’s marketing world.

4. Clicks and Mortar

The big digital media shift in 2013 will revolve around how brick and mortar businesses — and in particular stores and entertainment venues — integrate social media marketing into their physical brand experiences. Some folks dub this trend “clicks and mortar”, the integration of online into our everyday physical whereabouts. Businesses with physical locations will seek to leverage this burgeoning marketing trend.

5 Blog readership

* What it is: The amount of people reading your blog.

* Why it matters: Your blog is a way to share your expertise, develop inbound leads, generate search traffic, and showcase your products, services and customers. Readership is a key measure of its performance.

* How to measure: Many blog platforms, like Wordpress, offer free statistics tools to analyze your traffic, while Google Analytics lets you drill into the dates as deeply as you need to go.

* Ways to improve in 2013:

  o Shout it from the (social media) rooftops! Whenever a new blog post goes live, share it from your company and personal social network accounts. Send out social media alerts two or three times over the following week. With so much noise online, even loyal customers may forget to check your blog for new posts. Sharing a great headline with a concise link to your post on social channels allows people to quickly determine whether or not to visit your site. By sharing your post more than once on Twitter, you can reach new readers checking their social feeds at different times throughout the day and week.

6 News and blog mentions

* What it is: How often your company is mentioned on news sites or blogs.

* Why it matters: Media coverage of your business lets countless new potential customers know about what you do and sell.

* How to measure: Google news alerts are easy to set up and help you monitor the web for mentions. Online news release services like PRWeb also help you monitor which outlets have picked up your news.

* Ways to improve in 2013:

  o Share your news. When your company has big news to share, prepare a news release and distribute it through an online distribution service like PRWeb. In addition to more news mentions, using an online distribution service can increase your online visibility. Use
10 Key Metrics for Marketing Success in 2013

the keywords you’ve identified for your business in your release and link them back to your website. You can also increase news mentions by building a list of relevant publications, blogs, and journalists to email when you have news. Do your research and communicate clearly why you think they should be interested.

○ **Use trends to publish and pitch.** Keep your eyes open for news stories and trends related to what your company does. This allows you to publish searchable content (or pitch journalists) offering an expert opinion on the story and showcasing your business in the process.

○ **Reverse the pitching process.** Thousands of journalists and bloggers use free Vocus service HARO (Help A Reporter Out) to find sources from the business community. HARO delivers current media queries directly to you, allowing you to respond to relevant inquiries with a quick pitch. If you’re not using it yet, you should be.

### 7 Positive online reviews

**What it is:** What your customers say about you on sites like Google Places and FourSquare.

**Why it matters:** Looking at online reviews is now a crucial part of how prospective customers assess your business.

**How to measure:** Stay on top of reviews by visiting the biggest reviews sites regularly. Specialist services like ReviewTrackers can also help.

**Ways to improve in 2013:**

○ **Be present.** In order to improve negative customer reviews, you need to know what’s being said about your brand. The Internet and social networks allow customers to post reviews quicker and more easily than ever before. Having a presence on review-specific networks like Yelp is essential to monitoring reviews and responding swiftly.

○ **Encourage feedback.** In addition to monitoring social networks and review aggregator sites, provide a feedback forum on your website or Facebook page. Make it clear that you’d like to receive both positive and negative feedback. Customers will appreciate the fact that you’re open to hearing what they have to say and make changes based on their suggestions.

○ **Be responsive.** Remember, if you’re encouraging customers to leave both positive and negative feedback, you must be ready and able to respond to negative things consumers might say. If a customer has a bad experience, demonstrate to them and other customers what you’re doing to make it right. The way you handle a bad review can lead to more good reviews. You should also acknowledge people who post positive reviews. Let them know you’re glad they enjoyed their experience, and they’ll be inclined to leave more positive reviews in the future.

### 8 Email opens

**What it is:** The rate at which your subscribers open your marketing emails.

**Why it matters:** If people aren’t opening your emails, they’re not receiving your message.

**How to measure:** A good email marketing solution like iContact will report your open rates for you, as well as other metrics like click-throughs, conversions, and unsubscribes.

**Ways to improve in 2013:**

○ **Write better subject lines.** People decide whether or not to open your email based on only a few words. Make the most of your subject lines with a clear, short message. Creating a sense of urgency by encouraging people to act soon also generates more opens. Hint at value within, while keeping terms like “free” and “discount” to a minimum: they can make people think your message is spam.

○ **Test what’s best.** The day of the week and even the time of day you send emails can affect your open rates. Use split testing to find out which combination of external factors leads to the highest open rates for your audience. The most important variable of all is the subject line.
10 Key Metrics for Marketing Success in 2013

○ **Update your lists.** If your lists aren’t current and up-to-date, your open rate will reflect that. Update your email list now to make sure your information gets to the people who actually want it and are more likely to open your emails.

9 **Inbound media/blogger inquiries**

- **What it is:** Direct inquiries from journalists and bloggers asking for information about your business or industry.
- **Why it matters:** As well as being a great publicity channel, media inquiries are a good indicator that your search content is working.
- **How to measure:** Keep track of media inquiries and their outcome.
- **Ways to improve in 2013:**
  - **Create.** Content creation – blogging, tweeting, video publishing – is key to establishing yourself and your company as a “thought leader” and source for journalists. Consistently update your website, blog, and other social channels with relevant and timely expert information. Over time, journalists will learn to consider your company as a reliable source for information.
  - **Engage and add value.** Work to maintain relationships with members of the media even when you don’t have news to share. Some easy ways to do this include commenting on articles directly, and sharing those pieces on social networks. Once you begin to build personal relationships with journalists, you can even send them information relevant to their beat, even if it’s not a direct pitch for your company. By acting as a reliable source for information, you can become a trusted member of a journalist’s or bloggers’ Rolodex.
  - **Do your research.** To become a trusted media source, do your research to determine which outlets and journalists will be interested in what you have to say. Look up their most recent articles to find what they cover and how they cover it. Who are the local reporters that would cover your business? Don’t be afraid to reach out and introduce yourself and your company. Showing that you’ve done your research by identifying the most appropriate journalists for your company is the first step in positioning your business as a credible source of information.

10 **Online sales**

- **What it is:** Purchases made on your website.
- **Why it matters:** As well as being vital to your business, your online sales are a key indicator of how your entire marketing program is working.
- **How to measure:** Use web or e-commerce software to track which customers bought what, and when.
- **Ways to improve in 2013:**
  - **Focus on calls to action.** Make a customer’s life easy by including calls to action on every piece of content you produce. Emails should encourage people to click through to your website and social channels. Press releases and social media entries should link back to your website, putting them one step closer to conversion. Web pages should funnel people to conversion pages. When creating a call to action, use active language and encourage immediate action. It can be as simple as, “Register now!”
  - **Nurture with content.** Helpful content attracts and converts customers, especially when used to nurture your prospects through each stage of the buying process. The content you publish in 2013 should take a variety of formats, ranging from expert tips and guides (for attracting attention on search and social media) to customer case studies that help validate a new customer’s final buying decision.
Integrate your marketing. A marketing campaign isn’t complete until it integrates search, social media, email, publicity and other channels. Each single marketing channel has benefits for your business – but combining them and making them work together enhances their power. Try integrating social media with email, or amplifying your next publicity hit with a news release. A tool like the Vocus Marketing Suite makes integrated marketing easy.

About Vocus

Marketing has changed. The old model of advertising and direct marketing is being replaced by a new, customer-led buying cycle that starts online. Your prospects search for products with Google, ask their friends for recommendations on Facebook and Twitter, and look for news and reviews on websites.

Vocus Marketing Software takes the work out of generating marketing results, delivering leads, customers, and sales directly to you through powerful, responsive technology. Developed for small- and medium-sized businesses, it combines publicity with search marketing, social media and email to help you attract more customers and grow your business.

Sign up for a demo at www.vocus.com/marketing today.

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