CREATING AN
INTEGRATED MARKETING SYSTEM

An Accountable, Results Driven Approach

BONSAi

CREATING AN INTEGRATED
INTERNET MARKETING SYSTEM
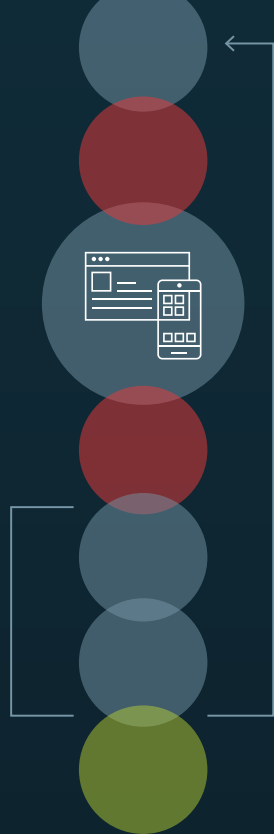
OVERVIEW

Who is John Wanamaker and Why Should I Care?

Are you weary of spending money on marketing because you're not sure if it really works? Well, you're not the only one! John Wanamaker, a marketing pioneer, complained of wasted advertising budgets back in the 1800's. But, in his time Wanamaker leveraged accountability into his marketing and advertising strategies with direct response coupons. His coupons would read something like, "get 15% off with coupon code GX123." This method of tagging specific offers was very innovative. It quickly allowed Wanamaker to understand which coupons worked and which did not, how to make better coupons, and eventually, how to generate more sales. Accountability, or the ability for a strategy to be understood and then modified, is a principle that modern marketers rely on heavily today.

However, these days coupons and codes aren't realistic for many businesses, most likely not for yours. Plus, you've probably got more nuanced questions about your business and your customers, like how did they find you, and what product or service are they interested in. Fortunately, today's technologies allow us to be much more detailed with our accountability than Wanamaker's coupon offers ever could have achieved. So much so, that almost every aspect of how customers interact with your business online is quickly and easily understood, with less hassle than drafting a coupon. This sort of knowledge allows you to implement and test various accountable marketing strategies, which can then be optimized to increase sales and attract more customers.

> **"Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted; trouble is I don't know which half."**
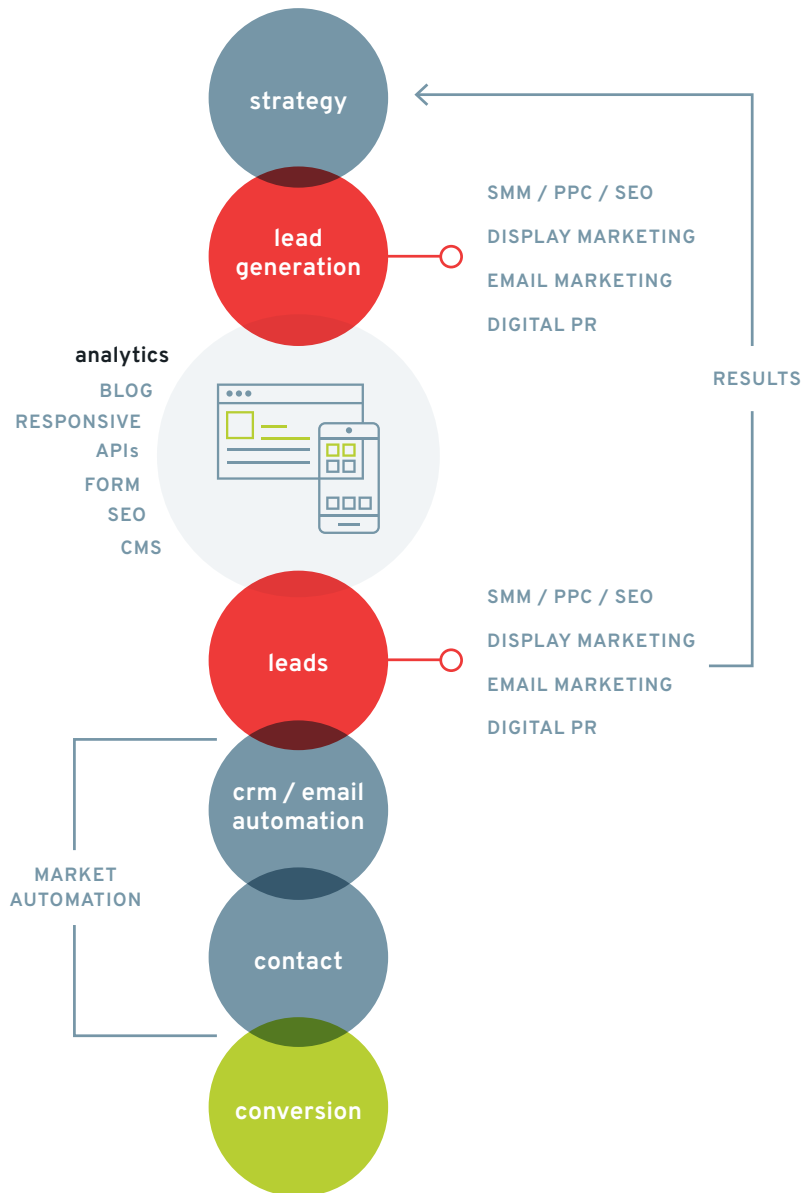>
> JOHN WANAMAKER

WHY BONSAI?

Bonsai's system employs accountable strategies that are trackable across multiple integrated platforms to provide you the knowledge to market to your target audience more effectively. With Bonsai's Online Integrated Marketing System, you can keep track of multiple sources of information while automating much of your sales and marketing processes. This allows you to streamline your business and generate more leads and sales, from online and elsewhere. Many businesses have leveraged strategies or tools that are similar to those employed in Bonsai's system, but very few successfully integrate multiple tactics into a single cohesive marketing strategy. Our system provides the tools that allow you to speak to your target market more effectively, while also aligning your marketing and sales efforts to drive more results.

> **In the following chapters, we'll walk you through each component of Bonsai's online marketing system, how it works, and why it's necessary to better your marketing strategies and goals.**

The What and Why of Bonsai's Online Marketing System

strategy

lead generation

SMM / PPC / SEO

DISPLAY MARKETING

EMAIL MARKETING

DIGITAL PR

RESULTS

analytics

BLOG

RESPONSIVE

APIs

FORM

SEO

CMS

leads

SMM / PPC / SEO

DISPLAY MARKETING

EMAIL MARKETING

DIGITAL PR

crm / email automation

MARKET AUTOMATION

contact

conversion

Bonsai's integrated online marketing system is a collection of interconnected principles, strategies, and components that help you track your efforts, track your budget, learn about your customers, and drive more sales. It begins with your strategy for Lead Generation, which draws potential customers to your website. From your website you can analyze incoming traffic, tracking your leads and conversions and all of their attributes. This information provides you with the feedback you need to better your marketing strategy and efforts, generating more leads, more feedback, and more sales.

At a high level, Bonsai's online marketing system
is made up of four major pieces:

STRATEGY FOR LEAD GENERATION

WEBSITE

ANALYTICS PLATFORM

CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT TOOL

We'll go into greater detail on each of these components in subsequent chapters, but for now just think of each of these bigger pieces as part of a single, cohesive plan for driving more sales. Each component integrates with the others to keep the structure of your campaign cohesive wherever your ads or efforts may appear. That's not to say that all of your marketing messaging needs to be completely homogenous. In fact, a common tactic is to A/B test different ads against one another to see which is most effective, but we'll get to that later. Keeping your campaign consistent means that your marketing efforts always have the foremost goal of driving more sales. Having an accountable marketing system means you can test and optimize different tactics to see which is best for achieving that goal.

But How?

To reiterate, Accountability is the crux of Bonsai's Online Marketing System. Through tracking and analytics, and the use of your Customer Relationship Management Tool (CRM), you're able to account for all of your efforts and all of your customer's behavior. At the end of the month, you can look at a complete breakdown of your conversion rates and cross-reference that with the information from each of your leads. This helps you to answer a lot of helpful questions: What marketing channel generated the most leads? What type of lead converted most often? Where did the most leads come from? Who made the sale? Did they buy directly from your site? How did they find your website? How long did they spend on a given page? Which services interested them? Answering questions like these gives you the sort of perpetual feedback you need to improve your strategies for both marketers and salespeople. With better strategies, you can generate more leads, convert more leads, drive more sales, get more feedback and so on...

Lead Generation

Your Lead Generation strategy is the driving force of your marketing system, the engine. It involves the means by which you generate interest in your business, like SEO, PPC ads, and more. As illustrated in our diagram, each bigger component is designed to feed back into your strategy for Lead Generation, thus bettering the system as a whole.

Website

Your website is the linchpin of your online presence, the piece that allows all the other components to operate as designed. All of your marketing materials, regardless of format, online or elsewhere, should ALWAYS lead back to your website and vice versa. Your website is the main way your customers will interact with your business. It's here that you're able to track the behavior of your leads, and the way the interact with your business, to generate the feedback.

Analytics Platform

Analytics enables you to track those leads/conversions, to see where they came from, how they found your site, what aspect of your campaign connected with them, and more. We call these details Lead Attributes, and there are tons of parameters for attributing different, useful information to leads. Your website is the place where leads can be tracked, your analytics platform consists of applications that do the tracking.

Customer Relationship Management Tool

Your CRM is where you house and study all the feedback you've generated. Here, you're able to see every lead attribute, the hard data by which you judge your efforts. With the help of certain API's, some of the interactions between these components are automated so lead attributes are instantly accounted for in your CRM. More than that, you can even automate certain marketing and sales processes to streamline your entire system, but we'll discuss that further in our next section.

Every successful campaign begins with a strong strategy. It's the foundation, the engine that drives the whole machine forward.

THE CORE COMPONENTS

Building a Strategy for Lead Generation

First things first, you need a strategy. Without a strategy for Lead Generation, you don't have a campaign, period. Generating any attention around your company will require a plan of attack. Even if your marketing campaign isn't meant to directly improve conversions or sales, you still need a strategy that contains a specific, trackable goal. Even if your campaign is only concerned with brand identity or awareness, the strategy and principles for generating attention are the same.

How to Develop a Marketing Strategy

Determine the Goal of Your Campaign

What is it you hope to achieve with your marketing campaign? Do you want to sell a product, create return customers, or build a subscription base? Whatever your goal may be, it's most important to specifically determine what you want out of your campaign.

Create a Specific Hypothesis and Detail How to Achieve It

Your hypothesis should have a 'number-based' goal, a specific strategy for how to achieve that goal, and the tools you plan to use. For example: "We're going to increase our conversions for our online subscription plan by implementing a 'first three months free' campaign by leveraging social media marketing, PPC ads, and SEO." This is an accountable goal; you have tactics and strategies that can be tested and optimized in order to achieve a specific goal.

Convey Less, Say More

You should build your strategy for generating leads around a concise message, a niche, a hook in your marketing scheme. We call this the value proposition. It's the specific piece of information that gives your campaign value. People are inundated with thousands of marketing messages every day, so make sure your value proposition is to the point and effective. A good guideline: "Convey more, Say Less."

Check Your Hypothesis, Re-check, Adjust, Re-check, and Adjust Again

Once you've got your strategy and your campaign up and running, it's important to check your hypothesis against your analytics platform and your CRM over and over again. This is the importance of accountability! Bonsai's Integrated Online Marketing System is meant to be correctable. Because you can attribute all sorts of information to every lead, you're able to check your actual results against your hypothesis to see if you're meeting your goal. If not, there's always room to adjust your strategy and tactics.

Your strategy for generating attention around your brand is the vehicle that takes you on the journey through your campaign. In the following chapters, we'll go through each of the landmarks on that map, the goals you hope to achieve, and the tools that'll get you there.

Social Media Marketing (SMM)

Social Media represents an advertising opportunity for just about any company or business because it's everywhere and everyone uses it. Did you know that over **70% of US online adults use some form of social media networking**, and **72% of all internet users are now active on social media**?

There's just no reason your business should go without a social media presence. It's an opportunity for you to connect with your target audience, market products, establish brand identity, and entice new customers. Yes, that's right. The most popular Social Media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Linkedin) offer targeted advertising platforms that allow you to take advantage of an enormous viable customer base.

Create and engage in meaningful relationships by leveraging social media, building awareness and hyper-targeting your perfect customer. Bonsai will work with you to develop creative strategies for fitting into the social networking culture.
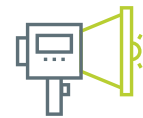
How Does Social Media Fit in the Corporate Culture?

Senior Level

"I am an opinion leader with a robust knowledge base, I want to raise awareness."

SOLUTIONS

Create a Blog | Twitter

Marketing

"I need channels to place our content, and therefore build traffic."

SOLUTIONS

Digg | Reddit | Newsvine | StumbleUpon | YouTube

Public Relations

"I want to know and respond to what the public is saying about our products and services."

SOLUTIONS

Technorati | Amazon

COMMENT ON

Digg | Reddit | Newsvine | StumbleUpon | YouTube

Sales / HR

"I want networking tools to create new business and locate new employees."

SOLUTIONS

LinkedIn | Facebook

Here's how it works. Marketing on Social is broken down into organic and paid advertising.

Organic

With Organic SMM, your business is a real world person, and they are networking to become more popular in their online space. How does one go about that? By 'friending' or 'following' influential members of your industry who are active on social and actively networking with them. Re-posting, commenting, 'liking' content are small, yet effective, means of getting noticed by your peers on social media, but that's not the only way. Organic SMM often involves networking with bloggers, journalists, users, a complementary (non-competitive) business, or other like-minded individuals and getting them to vouch for your brand. Linkedin, Facebook, Twitter, and Google+ are all great places to start. Aside from general social networking, your social profile is a great place to generate and promote content in the form of pictures, blogs, posts, or links that lead to your company's website. Organic Social Media advertising may seem overwhelming compared to traditional marketing methods. At the outset, your approach will need to be pretty granular, performing small steps to build long lasting online relationships. But once you generate a small following, it only grows from there. Social networks are merely a line of communication that lets you get the word out, and there are a lot of potential listeners. Plus, if you have trouble generating buzz with organic SMM, there are other routes you can take to get noticed on social media, like paid advertising.

Paid

With Paid SMM, you supplement your networking efforts with paid advertising. One way to quickly gain traction with paid SMM involves promoting or 'boosting' posts. 'Boosting' (Facebook) or promoting (Twitter) a post simply means that you can pay for that post to appear to more users. Certain parameters allow you to garner more impressions (views) depending on how much you spend. You can post a number of things (a blog, a picture, a link) each of which can lead to your website, or wherever you'd like a user to go.

Another method of tapping into the customer base on Social involves targeted advertising. With Ad Targeting, Paid SMM can get very interesting. As the bigger Social Media companies attempt to generate more revenue, their ad platforms continue to become more nuanced and functional, allowing you to target your ads to specific users. You're able to send out ads based on users' profiles. You can market to people in a specific area, within a specific age group or gender, or within a certain industry. Using targeted ads is enormously effective in SMM; you not only speak to your target market, but to that market's precise needs. Don't worry, there's little reason to be weary of social ads as they affect the user; advertising via social media is something users are quite familiar with at this point. Social users are happy to have products or services that they're interested in marketed to them, but they don't want to see things that lie outside of those interests.

Additionally, Social-based ad platforms come loaded with analytics features that allow you to optimize your social ad campaigns rather easily. You can keep track of your ad spends, adjust spending any which way, and keep track of every penny that goes into SMM. Furthermore, many social platforms allow for Pay-Per-Click ads (which we'll discuss more in our next chapter), which enables you to measure engagement and return on ad spends with unparalleled precision, so you can improve your conversion and rate while lowering your cost-per-acquisition via social significantly. With paid SMM, you're ensuring that an entire group of interested users, your fans, followers or just those interested in the type of service you provide, will see your content.

You can get very granular with your approach to Social Media Marketing, which can be a cause for alarm for some marketers. But, because the user base is so vast on many social platforms, nuance is necessary to yield results. Fortunately, many platforms are well aware of the advertising opportunity they present to businesses, which means they make it very easy to set-up and manage a paid ad campaign. Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, LinkedIn, Instagram, Foursquare, and many more to come, all offer an easy-to-use PPC ad or promoted post platform that a well regarded.

Pay-Per-Click Advertising (PPC)

Truth be told, we could write an entire book on Pay-Per-Click advertising. It's an enormous part of online marketing these days, and there are a number of facets to a PPC ad campaign that you need to master in order to see success. But before we get there, let's first dig into what exactly PPC is and how it works.

Pay-Per-Click advertising is, in many ways, exactly what it sounds like. You pay every time your ad is clicked on. It's basically a way of buying visits to your site, as opposed to enticing users through organic marketing methods. Search engine advertising is perhaps the most utilized and popular form of PPC advertising. With this method, your ad is featured in a search engine's sponsored results, like these results for the search "seattle apartments":

Ad · www.rentcafe.com/WA/Seattle

Apartments for Rent in Seattle | Over 1,150 Rentals Available | RENTCafe.com
View Apartments in Seattle (WA) with Up-to-Date Rental Pricing & Availability. See Photos, Floor...

| 1 Bedroom Apartments | 2 Bedroom Apartments |

Ad · www.apartments.com/

Seattle Apartments | Search Homes in Your
Tour the Stunning Nearby Mountains, Parks & Lush Forests. Choose a Local Apartment Now. Home to a Booming Tech Industry with Iconic...

| 1 Bedroom Apartments | 2 Bedroom Apartments |

Ad · www.theshelby.com/apartments/seattle

Apts for Rent in Seattle, WA | Centrally Located Apartments | theshelby.com
Offering the Best in Studio, One, and Two Bed Apartments. Tour Now! Come Home to The...

Ad · www.via6seattle.com/Belltown/Apartments

Seattle Apartments for Rent | Via6 Apts in Belltown | via6seattle.com
Modern, Excellent, Walkable Community in Seattle. Schedule Your Tour! Pet friendly.

There's a lot to consider for a search engine based PPC ad campaign, like keywords, landing pages, Cost-Per-Clicks, Click-Thru-Rate, Quality Score, and more. But we'll dig into each here to show you how PPC works and how it can work for you.

Keywords

A search engine based PPC ad campaign is built entirely around Keywords. As user's search for a given term, a search engine will serve them text-based ads that correspond to that term. Keywords are fundamental to Search Engine Marketing, be it SEO or PPC, so your PPC ad campaign needs to start with some rigorous Keyword research. Find what Keywords your target audience is searching for, then create ad campaigns that are organized by Keyword to serve that audience. Make sure your KW's are relevant to your business or industry. This is important for two reason, the first being that relevance is a big factor in your Quality Score (which we'll cover later), the second being that you're paying-per-click. Ideally, you'd only want to pay for clicks from customers that are likely to convert, i.e. those that are interested in your business. You don't want to pay for traffic that isn't likely to convert, which is why you need to keep your ads relevant to specific KW's.

Landing Pages

So, once a user clicks on your ad, where are they taken to? To a landing page! In most cases, a PPC ad campaign is specifically aimed at conversions, so you want to craft a PPC landing page that makes converting (or buying your product or service) extremely easy. This means relevance, usability, and user satisfaction are all hugely important. The effectiveness of your landing page affects the Quality Score of your ad, which affects how often your ad will be served to users, but we'll cover more on that later. For now, we move on to Cost-Per-Click.

Cost-Per-Click

Cost-Per-Click (CPC) is exactly what it sounds like, the cost of each click, or visit, to your site via a PPC ad. For Google Adwords, the most popular PPC ad platform by far, your CPC is determined with the following formula:

$$\text{Your price} = \text{The ad rank of the person below you} / \text{Your quality score} + \$0.01$$

There's no set value for exactly what you should be paying per click. The important part is that you see a return on your advertising spends via PPC. So, if you have what seems like a high CPC, but your product or service offering comes with a high price-tag, then it may worth it to be paying more for clicks. Likewise, even if you're paying a fraction of a cent per click, it is still a loss if no one converts. Remember, search engines award better ad ranks and a lower CPC to ads with a better Quality Score.

Quality Score

Quality Score is AdWords' rating of the quality and relevance of both your keywords and PPC ads. Your quality score determines your cost-per-click and your ad rank when you bid on clicks for a particular Keyword. There are a number of factors that impact your ad's quality score, and they are:

Keyword Relevance

Quality of Landing Page and User Satisfaction

Ad Text

Click-Thru-Rate (which we'll cover later)

Obtaining a high quality score for your ad really comes down to running a well-organized and efficient PPC ad campaign that benefits your business and the Customer. However, if you're having trouble getting traction with your ad campaign, and you're weary of upping your CPC, there are a few things you can do to up your Quality Score:

Keyword Research

Discovering new KW's for your ad campaign can give you a competitive edge and improve the relevance of your Ad.

Organizing Keywords

Segmented your KW's into organized groups for a more focused ad campaign can help your score by serving ads to very specific search queries.

Optimize Your Landing Pages

Make it easy for users to convert by creating a cohesive experience for them, from the initial search to finding and buying your product or service.

Utilized Negative Keywords

A negative KW is a search term that you tell adwords your DO NOT want to rank for. Then if a user searches for that term, your ad is not served, which helps relevance and lowers CPC.

Improve Your Ad Text

Create ad copy that's more specific for individual ad groups. Better ads have a higher Click-Thru-Rate, which is important for Quality Score.

There are a number of different venues for PPC ads and they come in a variety of forms. You have:

Text Ads
Think of the ads that pop up next to search results on Google. Those are text ads; they are simple, straightforward, and are generated based on the search query.

Display Ads
The same principal as a text ad, but with an image or graphic. They are often displayed on Social Media sites and elsewhere.

Rich Media Ads
Same principal, but here you can have a dynamic, animated ad that is more likely to capture the eye of the user.

In this book, we've been discussing PPC as it operates in Google AdWords, the most widely utilized PPC ad platform. Adwords' prominence comes from the fact that it's easy to use, it's backed up with fantastic analytics to help you easily understand the efficacy of your ads, and it's proven successful for business big and small, far and wide. However, there are plenty of other PPC ad platforms that are in use, like that of Bing, Facebook, Twitter, Linkedin, and others. All in all, PPC is pretty straightforward; you display your ad via a given display network, like Google, or other search engines and social media sites, and you pay each time a user clicks your ad to be directed to your site. The problem is that so many have seen success with PPC ads which makes ad space highly competitive. But, if you follow the principles and practices we've outline for you here, PPC will undoubtedly become a viable aspect of your Lead Generation strategy, thus improving upon your entire Online Marketing System.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

SEO is a tried and true method for Lead Generation.

When someone wants to find out about something, where do they go? You guessed it: Search Engines!

In fact, 93% of online experiences begin with a Search Engine (Imforza.com). That means that if you want to grow your business online, then you've got to have effective SEO strategies in place. Search Engine Optimization ensures those searching for your products or services online can easily find you. If you do it right, you'll see an increase in your search engine rankings, your site's inbound traffic, leads, conversions, and revenue.

How?

First, you've got to rank well. Your SEO ranking determines where you'll appear within a list of search results. **It's estimated that 33% of clicks from organic search results go to the top listing, or 1st ranking search result, on Google.** (www.business2community.com). So, obviously you'd like to rank as high as possible. The problem is that there are likely competitors within your industry who are equally aware of SEO's value, and they're vying for the top position as well. Search Engines assign rank based on the relevance of a search term to a result. To rank for a given term, your page has to be relevant to that term. How do search engines determine relevance? A whole host of ways: keywords, your website's structure, the structure of individual pages, on page text, page titles, meta-descriptions, image-alt text, customer reviews, inbound links, and more. Your SEO strategy has to include tactics that address each of these factors, or else you could miss out big time. But before we dig into these tactics, first we've got to distinguish between On-page and off-page SEO.

On-Page SEO

On page SEO is exactly what it sounds like; you optimize the pages on your website with keywords that a customer is likely to associate with your business. That way, when a customer enters that term into a search engine, you're likely to appear in the results. On-page SEO strategies involve these site attributes:
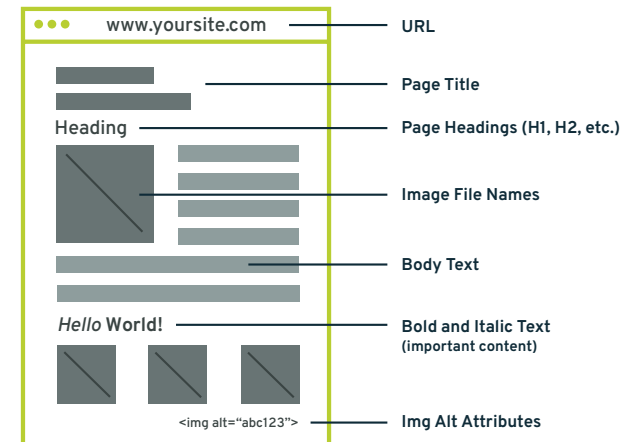
When a search engine bot crawls your site's data, it focuses on these select areas to determine if that page is relevant to the user's search term. That's why we focus on these areas when optimizing a page; it gives the search engine the best possible indicators of what's there.

On-Page SEO   **Off-Page SEO**
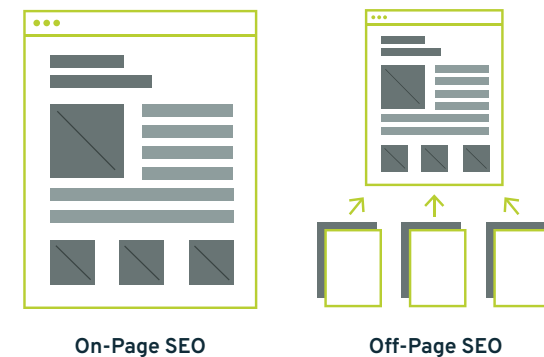
Off-Page SEO

Many outside factors contribute to the searchability of your website.

DIRECTORY SUBMISSION

LINK BELT

BLOGGING

LINKABLE CONTENT

COMPETITIVE LINK ANALYSIS

DIGITAL PR

RELATIONSHIPS WITH TRADE ORGANIZATIONS

ARTICLES

INTERNAL LINK OPTIMIZATION

SOCIAL BOOKMARKING

VIDEO

RECIPROCAL LINKING

SOCIAL NETWORKING AND PROFILE PAGES

Off-page SEO is the exactly complementary to on-page. It involves optimizing different pieces of content so that they'll be easily found by search engines, and then having that content lead back to your website. Off-page SEO focuses on the following:

» Directory Link Submission
» Link bait
» Blogging
» Linkable content
» Competitive link analysis
» Digital PR

» Articles
» Internal Link optimization
» Social Bookmarking
» Video
» Reciprocal Linking
» Social Networking

Each of these off-page focus areas represents an opportunity to rank for a given keyword and to link the user back to your website, where you can track their behavior and, hopefully make the sale. But what keywords should you try to rank for?

Keyword Research

Keyword research is exactly what it sounds like; researching the keywords your potential customers are likely to search for so you can optimize content and site structure to accommodate those terms. This aspect of SEO is most crucial. Without researching and utilizing keywords, your competitors will leave you in the dust. Here are a few steps for conducting Keyword Research:

Think

Think about what you'd search for if you were looking for your products or services. Do those keywords relate to your business?

Analyze the Structure of Your Website

How is your website organized? Is it easy to navigate? Do you have landing pages for each of your services? Remember, each of these factors affects the way your site is crawled, and thus, your rankings.

Analyze the Competition

Industry competitors are a great place to look for help with keyword research. Has a competitor seen success with a certain keyword? Have they cornered a keyword's SEO territory? Are there keywords left untouched that would be good for you to rank for?

Content Creation and Promotion

Use Tools

There are plenty of tools that you can use to determine the value of a particular keyword.

Assign Keywords to a Landing Page

Now that you know what keywords you want to use, assign each keyword to a particular landing page and inundate that page with the term so that Search engines can easily find it.

SEO and Content

SEO factors in heavily to Content Generation and Promotion (which we'll cover in the next chapter). Optimizing your content (blogs, social posts, PR, etc.) with keywords is an example of off-page SEO that's highly effective. If done correctly, a user will search for a term, find your content, and then link back to your site, which is right where you want them. Remember, most online experiences begin with a Search Engine. So every bit of content you write, regardless of where it may appear, should be optimized with keywords.

If done correctly, a user will search for a term, find your content, and then link back to your site, which is right where you want them.

Content Creation

Generate Content Monthly Based on Your Pillars

BLOG

PR

SOCIAL MEDIA

PAPERS
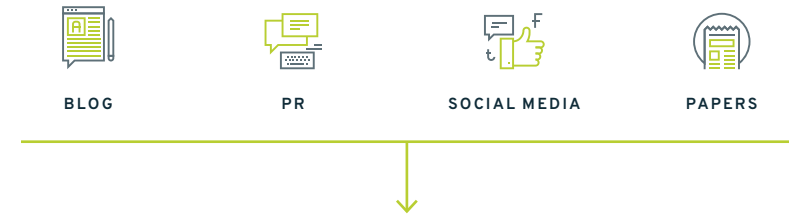
Promotion

Promote Your Content on Publication Monthly On:

BLOG

JOURNALIST

SOCIAL MEDIA

MAGAZINE

Links and Mentions Get You Leads

Win the Internet

Promotion Content on High-Traffic Websites Will Increase:

ANALYTICS

VIEWS

TIME ON SITE

CONVERSIONS

Content generation and promotion is a huge part of online marketing because, after all, content is king! Creating and promoting shareable content is a great way to engage users, advertise products and services, and establish yourself as an authority within your industry, each of which go a long way towards increasing online sales and revenue. As illustrated in our infographic, there are four main steps to generating and promoting content, and they are:

1. **Establish your company's content pillars**
2. **Create a content calendar to schedule due dates and publish dates for content and posts**
3. **Create great, shareable content that's relevant to your business**
4. **Promote content via social media, blogger outreach, and other outlets**

A step-by-step program like this is a sure-fired way to make content generation and promotion work for your business. If you create shareable, authoritative content, and promote it via the correct channels, there's no doubt you'll see an increase in leads, conversions, and revenue. With that in mind, let's dig into each step to detail exactly how they're done:

Establishing Your Company's Content Pillars

Your content pillars are in place so there's never a lack of themes or topics on which to base your content. Your content pillars can be based upon a number of things, the only rule is that your pillars should be relevant to your company and/or industry. If you're unsure what topics would work well for your company, we've got a few good places for you to start:

News and Trends Within Your Industry

Creating content based around news and trends within your industry is a good way to establish yourself as a resource for information and to build credibility. Attach a few good shares to some authoritative content and your credibility will rise through the roof. Credibility is important because customers are more likely to buy your products and services if they can trust your knowledge and your company.

Your Products and Services

Creating content that's based on your products and services is a marketing resource that, if done correctly, can yield big results. However, you've got to be careful. If you're blog post is purely an advertising pitch for one of your products, it will likely be shunned by users. Remember, people are inundated with thousands of marketing messages every day, which means your typical user can see an ad coming from a mile away. In this regard, if you're creating content based on your products or services, it's best to avoid sales pitch lingo and instead explain why a product or service like yours is necessary/convenient/useful for the layperson. If you're talking about one of your products in a post or blog, why should the typical reader be interested? Your content should answer this question.

Company Culture

Since the advent of social media, more and more companies are using social platforms to share their inner workings, employee lifestyles, and company culture. Content based on the culture of your company is great for putting a real-world face to your business. Typical user's are all too happy to interact with products and businesses via social media and blogs, but only if they feel that they are interacting with a real person. Company culture content also helps credibility; if users get a glimpse at your company's culture, they're more likely to trust you.

Others

As we said earlier, there are no rules for what your content pillars should or shouldn't be; they are heavily dependent on your business. That being said, like the three example categories we just listed, your content pillars should be relevant to your business, but they should also be interesting and enticing to the user. Remember, your content pillars are there so you never run out of ideas for content.

Create a Content Calendar

A content calendar is extremely helpful for scheduling and planning your content generation and promotion strategies. The best way to ensure that you see results with content promotion is to hone your efforts into a cohesive, workable system. That means setting a schedule and adhering to it. Aside from relevance and shareability of content, frequency is another big factor. Spotty, infrequent posting is ineffective. Frequent, shareable posts establish your company, and the places where you post, as resources for salient, worthwhile information that users will want to return to.

A content calendar makes sure that your users are never wanting for new content or posts. It also help your team to stay accountable with internal content generation processes by keeping them on track for what to post and when to post it. For example, if you want to post one blog per week, with three supporting social posts, each post should occupy a task within your content calendar.

Create Great Content

Of course, the real trick is to write content that people want to read. Whether it's a Blog, a Social Media post, or a PPC Ad, the content you produce online should be thought-provoking and shareable. That means that it needs to be perfectly saddled between your content pillars and whatever people in your industry are looking for, so that it speaks to both, your brand and a typical user's interests. There are a number of tools to discern what topics are currently trending, like:

- » Google Trends
- » BuzzSumo
- » Q&A sites (Quora, or Yahoo Answers)
- » Social Networks (Facebook trends, Twitter Trends, etc.)

Using tools like these can help you to determine exactly what people are searching for. Then, based on your content pillars, you can create content that speaks to those interests while also advertising your brand and linking users to your site.

Through social media and online sharing, generating interesting content that people want to read is the most tried and true method of generating word of mouth buzz around your business. Focus on breadth and depth of content, make it something that people will be compelled to share, and make it mean something. For example, if you've got a content pillar focused on company culture, don't just write about your office party last month, write about how that party illustrates your company culture and how it sets you apart from others in your industry. Always think of the bigger picture.

Establishing Your Company's Content Pillars

Now that you've generated some solid content, it's time to get it out there. There are a number of ways to successfully promote your content, but mostly it involves reaching out like minded individuals within your industry, as well as others who will help share and promote your content. That means blogs, social media, online publications, etc. Anywhere people within your industry area also generating and reading great content is where you want to be. Here are a few tools you can use to promote your content:

- » BuzzStream
- » Social Media Management tools (example: Hootesuite)
- » Social Networks (examples: Google+, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc.)
- » PR Web
- » Blogger Outreach
- » Native Advertising on Online Publications and Blogs relevant to your industry (example: getting content featured on techcrunch.com, if you're business is in the tech industry)

If utilized correctly, these promo methods can get your content out there and in front of the right audience. Remember, Content promotion is just as important as generation, if not more so.

Establishing Your Company's Content Pillars

It's important to remember that content generation and promotion isn't necessarily a step-by-step process. Rather, it's about coordinating each of these steps (content pillars, a content calendar, generation, and promotion) in a single plan of attack. Creating and promoting content in-house seems to throw many businesses for a loop; many consider it to be far too much work with not enough of a return. But in reality, it's the exact opposite. If you follow the system we've outline for you here, your content generation and promotion strategies can grow to be a vital component of your Online Marketing System. And, of course, the content that you generate and promote should be integrated into the rest of your online presence. Your content (blogs, social posts, etc.) should be outfitted with links back to your website, so that your readers will easily be led there. If your content generation and promotion is successfully integrated with your entire system, you can quickly and easily turn the buzz you've generated content into actual leads and conversions.

It's about coordinating each of these steps (content pillars, a content calendar, generation, and promotion) in a single plan of attack.

Other Lead Generation Tactics

Email Marketing

It's often forgotten or taken for granted, but in reality, Email Marketing has the highest conversion rates of any online marketing channel; up to 17%. There are two things that marketers often underestimate when they decide to run an email campaign:

1) Choosing a list of worthwhile recipients
2) Designing and specializing the email body and subject line.

If you fail to do both of these things in your Email campaign, it's highly unlikely that you'll see any results. You can expect low conversion rates from an email campaign that targets the wrong recipients, specifically, those who did not 'opt-in' to your email list in one form or another. Likewise, you'll get low open and click-thru (to your website) rates from an email campaign with a generic subject line and body copy. We've said it before and we'll say it again, but your typical customer can see an ad coming from a mile away. So, when it comes to email, it's particularly important to serve the right people with something that actually entices them. This is where value propositions come largely into play. Make it engaging and to the point; convey more, say less.

Make it engaging and to the point; convey more, say less.

Digital PR

Digital PR is just like PR but with an online focus. Typically, an agency will enlist people who have worked in news outlets to help them create stories for clients. Those people then pitch local news outlets to run their PR or story. Because Digital PR can work effectively alongside Social Media and SEO, our approach is typically to reach out to bloggers and other online news outlets. We're finding that PR people are looking to bloggers more often than they are traditional news outlets because the nature of blogging and social media is much more immediate.

Display Remarketing

If you draw a user your site, and they don't complete the desired action, you can use Display Remarketing. With this tactic, you can build rules into your website that can 'cookie' each user and attribute certain details to them, i.e. what pages on your site they visited, for how long, how they found your site, etc. Now, if that user visits other properties online, you can serve them an ad that speaks directly to their interests while also providing them the opportunity to complete your desired action again. Much of this can be programed and automated within your CRM. Display Remarketing can get really deep and very specific with the rules you establish within your site, making it a great way to bump up conversions.

Other Tactics

Of course, there are other, more traditional, Lead Generation Tactics (Billboards, Telemarketing, etc), that can be used in conjunction with your online marketing strategy. The main concern you should have with any marketing tactic, online or otherwise, is making sure that particular marketing channel leads back to your website. Your website is the nexus of your marketing efforts; it's where leads are converted into sales and where you're able to gain info on those conversions, which allows you to better your strategy overall.

The Website

The website is the core of your online presence, the linchpin of your conversion efforts. It's what shows up in search engine feeds, it determines your rankings in those feeds, and it's often a customer's first real impression of your company. Additionally, in today's market your site is expected to act as a business line application, not just a marketing brochure. It's a place where your customers can conduct the majority of their business. Although you may not feel this way, ultimately the look and functionality of your site is a clear indicator of your credibility to the customer.

User Experience

Many of the determining factors for a good website have to do with User Experience. Here are the top four UX qualities that all websites should utilize if they are to be competitive:

Site Navigation

For a good experience with your site, a user has to be able to easily navigate through it's pages. That means the hierarchy of your site (your homepage, service pages, sub-pages, contact pages, and so on) need to be clearly outlined with identifiable links. Just think of your own experience online. Do you ever waste any time on a site that's difficult to navigate? Is it at all likely that you'd buy a product from a such a site?

Responsive Design

Responsive Design is a tool that shrinks the webpage and rearranges the content depending on the type of screen the site is being viewed upon. Responsive design ensures that customers, regardless of the device they are using, are able to read and interact with your site. Responsive improves your rankings; the more customers are able to interact with your site, the higher the ranking.

SEO

In today's business world, you need solid Search Engine Optimization strategies in place, and optimized content present on your site in order to stand out, plain and simple. SEO ensures that your website will be found by those searching for your products or services, and it makes tracking leads on your site much easier, which makes your life easier.

Social Media

Your site should be entirely suffused with your social media presence. Social media goes a long way towards building a relationship with customers; they interact with you on their terms, and it helps you to establish brand identity. It's also a great place to advertise, as many larger social companies are switching over to a revenue model.

Page Load Optimization

It may sound obvious, but this one is actually often overlooked. It's crucial that your site loads quickly. A current statistic states that you lose, on average, 12.5% of your conversions per second of page load time. Two seconds, and ¼ of your conversions are gone!

Application Programming Interfaces

API's give your site its functionality. As your business grows, your customers are going to want to conduct more and more of their business on your site. So, your site needs to integrate directly with your accounting software, your CRM, your e-commerce platform (if necessary), social media, your analytics package, all of the components. They need to work together. The way you do that is with API's. They allow for the complex integration of multiple platforms and different softwares. Remember, your website is no longer a marketing brochure, it's now a business line application.

It cannot be understated, User Experience is hugely important for a well-functioning website. Much of the success your company will see with online marketing comes from the beneficial interactions potential customers will have with your brand. The #1 way that leads interact with you is via your site. So, you want to provide users with a beneficial, satisfactory online experience, not one that is bogged down by a poorly functioning, hard to use website.

User Experience is hugely important for a well-functioning website.

Your Site's Content

Aside from UX, your site should be set up to easily integrate with your content generation and promotion strategy. That, and your site should utilize a CMS for both your site's content and your social content to make updating, re-arranging, and posting content as quick and simple as possible.

Blog

Your blog is at the crux of your content generation and promotion strategy. It's not an extension of your site's content, it's the core of it, allowing you to create additional, supplementary content that can lead back to your blog post and the rest of your site. Your blog is your daily or weekly dialogue with your customer base. It helps to establish your credibility as a brand and it lives forever, unlike social media. Remember, your blog's content can and should be used to generate more content in other channels, like Social Media, Email Marketing, and others.

Content Management System

A CMS is an easy to use interface that allows you to update the content on your site (text, images, pages, etc.) after the site has been built. A CMS allows you to respond to changes in market much more quickly. If you find that people are searching for a certain term, you can optimize your site's copy to help your site to rank higher for that term, giving yourself a better shot at that lead. Likewise, if you find out a particular Keyword is no longer viable, you can get rid of it and quickly move on. Pay special attention to the breadth and depth of your content. This will increase your rankings. A CMS allows you to maintain content and keep it current, which is hugely important in online marketing today, but we'll go into more detail on this in a later chapter.

Analytics

Typical conversions rates on the web are 1-2%, with analytics and tracking we can get you to 12-15% in a few months. Analytics is the key to the online marketing system. This is what enables you to track goals and, ultimately, to see what is and isn't working. As our diagram shows, Analytics really encompasses your entire website.

What Analytics Covers

A solid analytics platform should track at least these three areas of information:

Incoming Traffic to Your Site

Track the users coming to your site to see where they came from, what marketing channel connected with them, etc.

User's Behavior On Your Site

You can track all sorts of behavior; how long a user stayed on a given page, how many pages they viewed, and more.

Conversions

You should be keeping track of all your conversions in your CRM. Importantly, a conversion is not just a sale. In lead generation and goal tracking, a conversion is anything you're trying to get the user to do. Keeping track of when customers complete these desired actions can help you get really specific with your marketing strategies.

Setting Up Analytics

Many online marketers are well aware of analytics as a marketing tool, but most of them do not utilize it to it's full potential. Here are the steps you should take to get the most out of your analytics platform:

1. Installing Google analytics is not enough!!! Many think that you simply need to have your site signed up with Google analytics and you're good to go, but that's not the case. You need to do a proper set up!

2. You need make sure you're doing the correct tagging with your advertising! This way, Google analytics can attribute your leads accurately. Without the correct tags and the settings for those tags, your analytics platform doesn't know what to track.

3. You need to make sure your data is clean and accurate, correct tagging, correct parameters, with the proper distinctions between leads, conversions, and existing customers.

4. You need to have your conversion tracking in place, and not just for sales. Goal tracking is a HUGE part of analytics because, after all, not every business is trying to sell a product. Furthermore, sales are not always the perfect indicator of a campaign's efficacy. Goal Tracking is where analytics gets really interesting, because you can track for any goal, i.e. any desired action, like filling a form, clicking a link, or spending a certain amount of time on a page. This allows you to get really granular with your marketing strategies because you can pinpoint certain customers with precise messaging.

5. Tracking usually needs to be set up by a savvier person. Because your analytics platform is tracking bits of data, you need a person who understands and recognizes that data.

6. Likewise, when a marketer creates an ad, they need to make sure it's tagged properly so that Leads that interact with that ad are so attributed. Google URL builder, for example, allows marketers to create a url that's properly tagged and can easily be added to your Ad platform.

Ultimately, Analytics is one of the more important pieces of the system. Don't forget; your site is where you can track your lead's attributes, but an Analytics Platform is what does the tracking. At a high level, analytics provides you the feedback you need to better your strategy for lead generation and ultimately increase your revenue. It enables you to gauge the hypothesis that initially drove the strategy of your system and adjust if necessary. Without a well established Analytics package, you're in the dark.

Analytics provides you the feedback you need to better your strategy for lead generation and ultimately increase your revenue.

Customer Relationship Management Tool

Your CRM is where the sales and conversion process meets analytics. Your CRM houses all of the information pertaining to your leads, conversions, and existing customers in one place. Without a properly integrated CRM, it's impossible to get the feedback necessary to better your strategy for Lead Generation and thus drive more conversions. Here's what you need to know about the Customer Relationship Management Tool:

» Your CRM is what provides you that snapshot of your campaign. It catalogs all of the information pertaining to your campaign in a single location, giving you a snapshot of your campaign's performance.

» Because feedback is readily available, every member of your team is on the same page with your performance and if you're satisfying your initial Lead Generation hypothesis.

» With the use of API's, your CRM is integrated into your analytics platform. Once set up, this makes tracking lead attributes a total breeze Don't worry about keeping track of this info yourself, it's all part of the system.

» While typically a CRM is used to house information pertaining to leads and customers, a good portion of your interactions with existing customers can be automated via your CRM.

» Things like sales, technical support, and customer service can be greatly improved with the use of a CRM because it allows you to respond to a query much more quickly and effectively.

Your CRM is sort of like the brain of your Marketing System. It's where all the information is stored and where reflexive customer-relation actions are performed. It's where you learn what to do next with your campaign. Analytics is necessary because, like we said, you can't optimize what you don't track. Likewise, a CRM is necessary because you can't learn from information you don't keep track of.

THE BENEFITS

We've already touched upon the major appeal of the online marketing system in Chapter 1. The system gives you the ability to judge your marketing efforts with practical accuracy thus saving time and money. But really, there's much more to it than that. Here are each of the benefits of Bonsai's Online Marketing System, in detail:

Accountability

Maximum Automation

A Closed Feedback Loop

Alignment of Marketing and Sales Efforts

Accountability

What does it mean that Bonsai's Online Marketing system is beneficially accountable? Accountability, within the Online Marketing System, occurs in two separate sphere's: the efforts and dollars that your business puts forth, and the behavior of your lead/customer on your site. This is what makes Bonsai's system special and what distinguishes it from traditional marketing approaches; accountability is the power of insight. John Wanamaker did not have accountability as principal or benefit in his marketing efforts. With our system, everything is trackable via your analytics platform, every little bit of your campaign, every effort and every dollar, is accounted for from start to finish. Here's how:

1. A lead is generated and brought to your website. Your website has special rules built into it that automatically track and store that Lead's Attributes in your CRM. Everything from where the lead was generated, what marketing material that lead interacted with, how long they spent on a given page, what service of yours they're interested in, etc.

2. Now, if/when that lead is converted, you're able to see what exactly led to that conversion.

3. Was it a specific pitch on the part of your sales team? Did they see a particular ad that resonated with them? Did you have to hit 'em again with display remarketing?

4. Whatever you had to do, now you know, and now that you know, it'll be easier going forward.

To be sure, Accountability is a benefit, as it helps your sales and marketing teams to stay on the same page. But it's also a principle that's built into Bonsai's Online Marketing System, and one that allows the entire system to function properly. As a benefit, accountability helps your business; it allows you to streamline your efforts and become more efficient, in marketing and elsewhere. With our Online Integrated Marketing System, you'll be able to look at a month end report and account for all of your team's efforts. Then, you can create actionable strategies to generate more leads and drive more sales. The problem that Wanamaker lamented in his quote at the beginning of this book is based on lack of accountability. But with our system, there's no getting around accountability because it allows you to expand your marketing efforts while growing your business.

> **With our system, there's no getting around accountability because it allows you to expand your marketing efforts while growing your business.**

Maximum Automation

Automation is what allows for Accountability. As we mentioned earlier, with Bonsai's system, special rules are built into your site to track and attribute lead information. With a proper set up, the components of your system are integrated so this information is easily tracked and stored, allowing you to get an understanding of your campaign's performance rather quickly.

Using Web API's

Application Program Interfaces (API's) are what give your site it's nuanced functionality. With certain API's, you can track everything about your leads through proper URL tagging, proper Google analytics setup, call tracking, and goal tracking. By leveraging certain API's to track and then dump info into your CRM, you can monitor multiple, disparate sources of information, all at once. API's are the integration glue that binds your site and other components together. API's allow for functionality across your entire site, which we'll cover later.

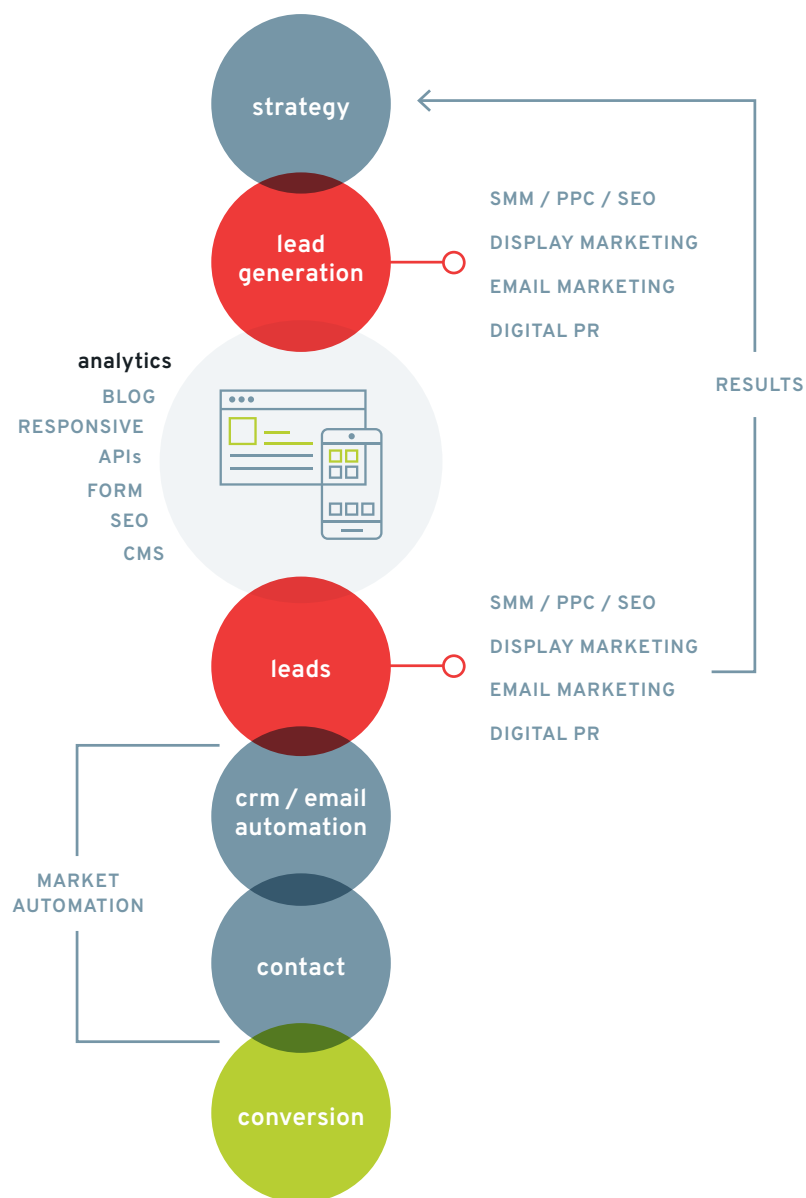**API's are the integration glue that binds your site and other components together.**

CRM

A very big part of the automation that takes place within your system occurs via your Customer Relationship Management system (CRM). Your CRM houses all of your client/lead attributes in one place. Here, you get a picture of both sides of your campaign, your efforts and the behavior of your leads/customers. You then use this feedback to better your strategy for generating leads. Because your CRM is integrated into your website, as well as your analytics platform, the information is automatically updated, giving you current, accurate information to work with. Additionally, much of your customer and support services can be automated with your CRM, which helps to ensure a positive customer experience for the duration of their time with your business.

Just like with Accountability, Automation is as much a benefit as it a principle of the marketing system. Because information is automatically stored in your CRM, you get the feedback you need to adjust your strategy when you need it. Additionally, automation allows you to respond to customer needs, on average, much more quickly than traditional approaches to customer service. Ultimately, automation allows you to streamline certain aspects of your business in order to focus on others.

A Closed Feedback Loop

A closed Feedback Loop is exactly what it sounds like; the results of your system feeding back into the strategy for lead generation. Just like our last two benefits, Feedback is a principle that allows for the system to improve upon itself, but as a benefit, it's created through accountability and automation.

Each component of your system is connected back to strategy for Lead Generation. This is the closed feedback loop in action.

strategy

lead generation

SMM / PPC / SEO

DISPLAY MARKETING

EMAIL MARKETING

DIGITAL PR

RESULTS

analytics
BLOG
RESPONSIVE
APIs
FORM
SEO
CMS

leads

SMM / PPC / SEO

DISPLAY MARKETING

EMAIL MARKETING

DIGITAL PR

crm / email automation

MARKET AUTOMATION

contact

conversion

The Alignment of Sales and Marketing

Here's how the closed feedback loop works, in detail. As we mentioned, your lead attributes and efforts are being automatically accounted for, so you have an instant understanding of your customer and your relationship with him/her within your CRM. With the rules built into your site, you're able to glean lead attributes with as high a level of detail as you want (where the lead came from, how long they spent on a given page, what service they're interested in, their profession, their demographic, etc.)

This information is then logged into your CRM, allowing you to determine which parts of your campaign are effective and which aren't. As your campaign continues, and you get more used to the workflow of the system, you'll be able to utilize this feedback more quickly. Ideally, the system will make all of the campaign's information so readily available that all members of your team will be the on same page with its performance, but we'll discuss this more in our next chapter.

The Alignment of Sales and Marketing is the premiere benefit of Bonsai's Online Marketing System. In many organizations, marketing and sales are completely separate teams, with separate goals and different means of executing those goals. This often leads to lag time, miscommunication, and general inefficiency. With Bonsai's integrated online marketing system, there's no room for sales and marketing to operate independently of each other.

Because there is constant feedback being automatically generated, both sales and marketing teams are on the same page throughout the campaign. You can get breakdowns of your conversion rates and how those line up with your lead attributes as often as you'd like. This allows you to create actionable strategies for both your sales and marketing teams. More specifically, marketers are able to see what type of lead is most often converted, and then tailor fit marketing messages and keywords to speak to those particular lead types. Conversely, the sales team will be made to understand who exactly the marketers are targeting, and then hone their efforts to generate more conversions and more feedback.

An instant understanding of your customer and your relationship with him/her within your CRM.

Both teams are able to provide feedback for the other in order to support each other's efforts. It is this type of support that allows the system to better itself, and subsequently improve upon your businesses' returns.

WRAPPING UP

Putting It All Together

Now that you understand all the disparate pieces of Bonsai's Online Marketing System you can begin to see how they work in tandem to truly produce results for you business. Integration is the term we use to refer to cohesive nature your marketing system should embody. John Wanamaker's quote touches on the lack of accountability suffered by traditional marketers. It would be pertinent for us to have another quote lamenting the separation between sales and marketing, but no such quote exists. Nevertheless, while the separation between marketing and sales is a real problem, it's one that's remedied through Bonsai's Marketing System. The system is self-integrated; each piece interacts with the others – sales and marketing, the CRM and Lead Generation, the Website and Analytics – they all work together to create an effective marketing campaign with a singular focus, to create attention around your business that will translate into real dollars.

They all work together to create an effective marketing campaign with a singular focus, to create attention around your business that will translate into real dollars.

BoNsai

Bonsai Media Group is a full-service digital marketing agency offering SEO, web design and development, social, and digital marketing services.

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