



OMNI-CHANNEL MARKETING

Top 9 Questions

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INTRODUCTION

Ready or not, omni-channel marketing is the next challenge for today's marketing pros. Consumers are each on their own digital engagement path as they travel across the web — from Google search, to website, to video, to blog, to social media, and back again. On their journey, they may open an email, read a newsletter or white paper, or click on an ad. They may even visit a store or showroom. This multi-touch journey raises the bar for marketers, who must now create consistent and integrated consumer experiences no matter where their customers are.

The days of siloed marketing efforts in which campaigns are launched and measured on separate channels are waning. These individual, one-off tactics can lead to inconsistency in brand messaging, unpredictable results, and poorly spent marketing dollars. It's time to start thinking about your brand, product, or service in the context of each customer's digital engagement path.

Effective omni-channel marketing maximizes performance across SEO, paid search, display, content marketing, and social media through a holistic cross-channel analytics "information hub." Omni-channel enables marketers to see the whole picture instead of individual silos. This allows for strategic optimization of an entire channel mix to best meet audience needs and marketing objectives.



TOP 9 QUESTIONS

The best omni-channel strategy delivers a well-defined media mix that takes target audiences on a journey through paid, owned, and earned media. This strategy will increase consumer engagement and loyalty, provide better insights into consumer behavior, multiply the effects of earned media, and improve ROI.

But this approach creates fresh challenges for marketers. Many brands find it difficult to adapt to this new world. To help you get the best results from this powerful evolution of marketing strategy, here are answers to the Top 9 Omni-Channel Marketing questions we hear at Geary LSF.

- 1 How does omni-channel differ from multi-channel marketing?
- 2 Why is an omni-channel strategy critical?
- 3 What are the elements of an omni-channel strategy?
- 4 How does it work?
- 5 How do I get started?
- 6 How do I ensure consistent branding across channels?
- 7 How do I connect with mobile customers?
- 8 How does omni-channel improve ROI?
- 9 What kind of tools will I need?

HOW DOES OMNI-CHANNEL DIFFER FROM MULTI-CHANNEL MARKETING?

Multi-channel marketing means leveraging channels separately and using the best channel for a particular audience or campaign. Many brands are great at multi-channel promotions. For example, launching a campaign on Facebook, a website, and in print. While this approach can yield strong results on some channels over others, it doesn't take the consumer phenomena of cross-channel interaction into account; its view of the marketing ecosystem is limited. As a result, the ability of marketers to maximize value from the consumer experience is limited. Omni-channel means creating consistent, optimized campaigns across paid, owned and earned channels, with integrated performance analytics from each.

B-to-B and B-to-C marketers in all industries must leverage multiple channels and use a holistic approach that connects each critical touch point. The brands that engage audiences on multiple screens with great content and leverage a variety of channels will reach new prospects, convert and retain customers, and transform current buyers to brand enthusiasts.

WHY IS AN OMNI-CHANNEL STRATEGY CRITICAL?

This approach is essential to attract, engage, convert and retain today's customer. Consumers are moving back and forth between devices, from smartphones to desktops, and from laptops to tablets to TVs. They are approaching your brand experience from multiple angles -- and marketers need to as well.

Your customers are consuming brand information and assigning brand value in a variety of ways. If you are not using an omni-channel approach, customers that see your brand in one place won't see it – or recognize it – when they move to another channel. You've created brand awareness and interest, but if you're not following up, this creates discontinuity in your message. Another brand can easily step in to pick up on that interest, then follow up and convert a customer primed for purchase by your marketing efforts.

By practicing a holistic approach to digital marketing, your business will be represented across critical purchasing touch points with a clear, consistent and controlled voice, leading to more conversions and overall revenue.



WHAT ARE THE ELEMENTS OF AN OMNI-CHANNEL STRATEGY?

The core components of digital omni-channel marketing can be grouped into three categories: paid, owned, and earned. Paid media is online advertising you pay for – think display, banners, and paid search. Owned media is your creative assets – mobile site, video, rich media, social media pages and branded content such as white papers, featured articles, and infographics. Earned media is publicity gained through promotional efforts other than advertising. SEO, local search, content marketing, and social media all comprise important elements of earned media.

An omni-channel strategy requires making connections between previously siloed aspects of your business. These connections are made and improved by industry research, marketing strategy, reputation management and conversion rate optimization, and they must be integrated around a central hub of analytics tied to your paid, owned, and earned marketing efforts. Tying multiple channels together allows you to maximize marketing spend around tactics that are working well. But doing so in a way that's customized and optimized for each medium takes significant planning, a smart digital strategy, strong execution and assistance from a knowledgeable agency partner.

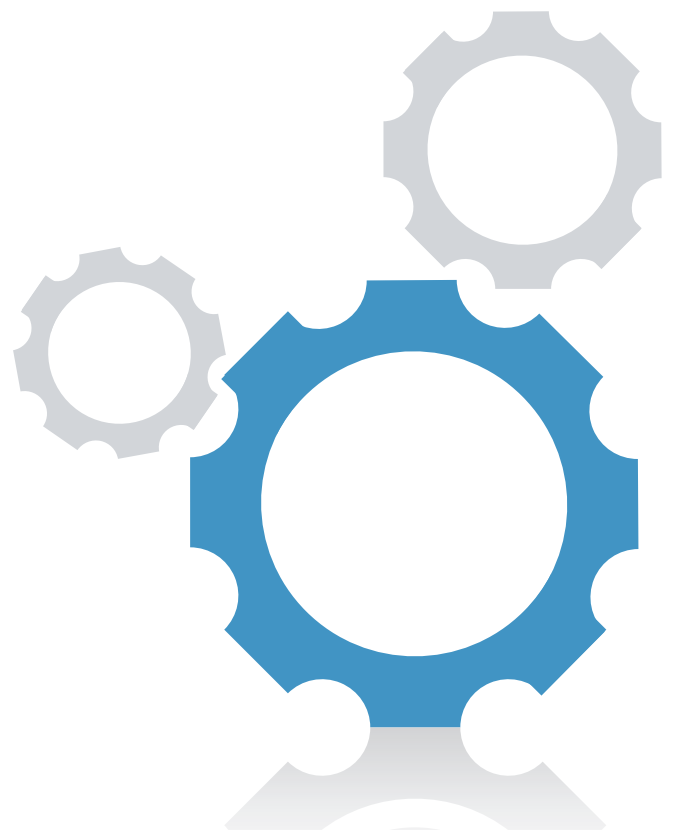
HOW DOES IT WORK?

Omni-channel is a process that begins with establishing controls for the inputs that deal with the performance of each channel and a strategy that creates a consistent experience for each customer.

Ensuring that your brand can engage and track potential and existing customers across channels is challenging. It requires an investment to convert that experience to revenue over time through the long-term loyalty of your customers. Doing so in a way that's customized and optimized for each channel takes planning, creativity, and good marketing instincts.

Before pursuing an omni-channel approach, take a look at your company's appetite for an integrated investment. You'll need to decide to run more than one campaign type at a time and look at how they're working. Then you'll need to analyze messages across channels to determine what is your message and where it belongs. This requires knowing your audience, where are they are, what they need, and how you can meet those needs, then fleshing out a strategy.

Your internal and agency teams need to recognize the connection between each initiative, and work together to create symbiotic relationships among the recommended tactics to achieve business goals.



HOW DO I GET STARTED?

Begin by defining your audience. Select how many personas you will target, define where each persona is in the acquisition funnel, and identify the appropriate communication medium and message for each level. Finally, select the optimal tactics for each audience, using integrated analytics to look at the whole picture and optimizing for performance.

For example, a physical therapy provider may identify three potential audiences it wants to reach to grow its business: patients, physicians, and staff. Each audience engages with the provider differently and is part of a unique funnel that requires dedicated tactics.

The first audience, patients, is a great source of referrals for new clients. They may be best reached with a combination of email follow up, social media, and a website coupon. The second audience, physicians, also refers patients but travels a different path to the provider. Research may prove they are best reached via search engine results linking to detailed, long-format content that highlights treatment efficacy, which is then followed up with display ads in medical journals or a opt-in drip email or newsletter campaign.

The third audience of qualified physical therapists follows another path. To recruit these professionals, the provider should tap into query-based interest and drive tactics around particular topics to get them to understand the brand and how it helps people improve their quality of life, such as native ads around wellness and LinkedIn ads.

In this example, all channels funnel into the provider. Each audience is being told a similar brand story but the tactics are customized to each audience and their level of awareness.

The next step is to use conversion rate optimization to maximize performance and post conversion nurturing via coupons, social engagement, or newsletters to promote long-term value and keep your brand top of mind.

HOW DO I ENSURE CONSISTENT BRANDING ACROSS CHANNELS?

A strong brand conveys the value of your products and differentiates them from the competitors'. Omni-channel strategy requires consistent branding and message strategy that support a seamless shopping journey across channels. It is essential to present a coherent brand that preserves and enhances your company's image and avoids alienating or confusing customers.

Understand how and where your customers engage with your brand -- what these touch points are, who interacts with them, where they fall in the decision-making cycle of your customer and what kind of impact they have in progressing customers closer to purchase. From here messaging and assets can be aligned to create a consistent experience as your customer moves across marketing channels and through the path to purchase.

An omni-channel strategy requires that your owned media -- digital assets such as images, text, video, and audio -- be synchronized with product information to deliver a consistent brand experience.

Mobile devices are the fuel of the omni-channel revolution and reaching those users is essential for long-term success. 59% of U.S. smartphone owners have used their devices to research an item before purchasing it, and 65% of tablet owners have (*Nielsen, 2014*). By 2018, mobile devices will account for 30% of global retail e-commerce spending, up from 15 percent in 2013 (*Juniper Research, 2014*).

In an increasingly competitive space, converting customers begins with making your mobile experience completely frictionless. This means implementing a responsive web design, which sizes the page, images and text to suit the device with which the consumer is accessing the site. Your mobile site needs to be easy to navigate using just the touchscreen; built with lightweight pages, and limited graphics; and optimized for the most popular mobile devices and platforms.

Depending on desired functionality you may also want to consider a mobile app. For many brands, this is a preferred option because it is an experience designed solely for mobile use. It's easier to control the content that consumers will see on the screen, and you can deliver messages based on their in-app activities. Apps drive frequent engagement since they reside on the devices that consumers carry with them, and allow brands to capture insightful consumer preference and behavior data.



HOW DOES OMNI-CHANNEL IMPROVE ROI?

Every marketer needs to move beyond guessing at cross-channel digital ROI and start building a holistic understanding of the consumer behavior path. Bottom line, you need to know who is generating your revenue. An omni-channel approach helps you learn how to convert more customers across many channels. You can then optimize that process to understand what's driving true value and increase ROI.

For example, Geary LSF recently launched an omni-channel campaign for a rapidly expanding national grocery store that involved web development, social media, email marketing, display advertising, and numerous other tactics across multiple channels. The integration of, and transparency into, the multiple tactics allowed for quick optimization efforts that resulted in record-breaking business metrics including a conversion rate of 40% from display, an 8% reduction in bounce rate from the newly designed mobile responsive website, and a 38% increase in time on site.

WHAT KINDS OF TOOLS WILL I NEED?

With omni-channel, SEO, PPC, content marketing, and social media are tied to a data hub of analytics and insights. Each channel has an awareness of the other and you have the ability to optimize each channel based on the performance of the overall mix. Preparing for this awareness may require an investment of both time and resources.

You may need to acquire the infrastructure and develop the capabilities to support an omni-channel experience. Your goal is to connect your brand ecosystem to enable greater insight and maximize ROI.

This requires the ability to collect customer data, create digital marketing assets, publish across channels, and reuse them throughout the digital engagement path. A skilled agency partner can provide expert advice on dynamic, integrated publishing, branding, message consistency, and development of creative such as banners, videos, text and images. Combine this with real-time information and analytics to complete the omni-channel tool kit.





BUSINESS RESULTS

TURNING DIGITAL AMBITIONS INTO BUSINESS RESULTS

It's no longer enough for your brand to have one great ad on the right channel, or even on multiple channels. The omni-channel strategy delivers a well-defined media mix that takes your target audience on a journey through paid, owned, and earned media. This strategy can significantly improve digital campaign performance while maximizing consumer insight, ROI and conversion volumes.

As the digital landscape and consumer purchase path evolve, Geary LSF recognizes the importance of audience-specific messaging strategy and performance optimization across all digital touch points. By understanding the relationship between paid, owned and earned media and translating those relationships into a comprehensive omni-channel marketing approach, Geary LSF is turning its clients' digital ambitions into business results.



To find out more about designing an omni-channel strategy for your brand, contact Geary LSF at: (877) 616-8226 or email sales@gearylsf.com