STRATEGIZE TO SUCCEED

How Research and Strategy Are the Keys to Effective Marketing

AUTHORS:
John Jantsch
Kristi Hines
Greg Meyer
Michael Ferrari
Mark Z. Fortune
Lucjan Kierczak

PUBLISHED IN CONJUNCTION WITH
ducttapemarketing.com  facebook.com/ducttapemarketing  twitter.com/ducttape
Strategy Before Tactics – If you’ve followed Duct Tape Marketing for any amount of time, then I’m sure you’ve heard this statement. I think it is the most important thing about marketing I can tell you. Without strategy, you’re wasting your money spinning your wheels with the latest tactic-of-the-day. You won’t even know whether or not your tactic is effective without a plan.

A strategy is important, but a strategy built upon sound research and planning is the true key to success. Within the pages of this eBook, you’ll learn how to build that strategy around strong competitive research, setting you up for success in your future marketing endeavors. Specifically, you’ll find out how to:

- Build a successful marketing strategy
- Do research on your competitors and their social strategy
- Use this research to build your strategy
- Find out how your competitors are ranking on Google
- How to improve your marketing in the coming year

Enjoy!
Marketing Without Strategy is the Noise Before Failure

By John Jantsch

Anyone that’s heard me speak or read my books knows that I believe marketing strategy is far more important to the small business than marketing tactics.

Any yet, the tactical idea of the week gets most of the mind share of the business owner.

Strategy and tactics must go hand in hand in order for a business to achieve a measure of true momentum, but an effective strategy must be in place before any set of tactics make sense.

This Sun Tzu quote, borrowed from the *Art of War* and adapted for the title of this post, pretty much sums up my feeling on the subject - “Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory. Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat.”

The reason strategy gets mostly lip service when it comes to marketing planning is because most people misunderstand what a marketing strategy really is.

So, let me start with what it’s not. Strategy is not a wish list, set of goals, mission statement, or litany of objectives.

How not what

A marketing strategy is a clear explanation of how you’re going to get there, not where or what there is. An effective marketing strategy is a concise explanation of your stated plan of execution to reach your objectives

To become the market leader is not a strategy - it’s an objective. To serve our customers with honor and dignity is not a strategy – it’s mission. To double the number of new customers is not a strategy – it’s a goal.

Goals and missions and objectives are nice, but how you plan to achieve them – otherwise known as strategy paired with a logical set of tactics – is the surest route to victory.
To become a market leader you may find that an effective strategy is to carve out one very narrow market niche and dominate it. To serve your customers with honor and dignity you may find that an effective marketing strategy starts somewhere in your hiring process. To double the number of new customers you may find that an effective marketing strategy is to build a formal network of strategic referral partners.

Now each of these strategies will have a corresponding list of tactics and action steps, but the action plans and campaigns will all have your stated strategy as a filter for decision making and planning.

After working with thousands of small business owners I’ve developed a bit of a 3-step process for developing a marketing strategy. I must warn you though that market conditions, competitive environments and trending opportunities all play wild card roles in the process.

A company considering a marketing strategy in a mature market with entrenched players will have a much different view of things than a company trying to bring a new technology to a market with no proven purchase habit.

I wrote a post titled 5 Attributes of a Sure Fire Start-up that might shed more light on the start-up view.

When developing a marketing strategy for your business the following steps come into play.

**Who matters**

For any strategy and corresponding set of tactics to work they must appeal to someone. The first element, and in some cases the primary element, is who. Develop your marketing strategy around a narrowly defined ideal client above all. This post titled How to Discover and Attract More of Your Ideal Client goes deeply into this process.

As stated before this step alone may actually prove to be your strategy – to get good at serving a niche market.

Using your ideal client profile as the basis of your strategy also allows you to think very personally about how you serve them and how you use your tactics to attract them. Without this concentration on an ideal segment your marketing strategy will often lack focus.
Be different

After developing a profile of an ideal client it’s time to find a way to appeal to this group. In my experience the only sure way to do this is discovering or creating an approach, product, or service that clearly differentiates you from the rest of the market.

The market needs a way to compare and differ and if you don’t give them one they’ll default to price comparison.

You need to dig in and find that way of doing things that your customers truly value, what’s going on your industry that frustrates people or how to turn the way people have always done it into an opportunity for innovation. This post titled 5 Questions You Should Ask Every Customer unveils the best way to discover what your customers really value.

In some cases you may be doing something truly unique, you just aren’t communicating as your core marketing message.

If you don’t take this step seriously everything else you do in terms of marketing will be far less effective. That’s how serious being different is.

Connect the dots

The final step in the marketing strategy game is to take what we’ve done previously – defining an ideal client and creating a core differentiator – and turning it into your stated strategy.

When I created Duct Tape Marketing my stated strategy was to create a recognizable small business marketing brand by turning marketing for small business into a system and product. This strategy contained a narrowly defined ideal client and a clear point of differentiation.

Our mission was to radically change the way small business owners think about marketing and our “marketing as system” strategy became how we would do that.

Like most effective strategy the gap in current offerings and positioning was what offered the clear opportunity. Connecting your strategy will also include careful study of the competitive environment and that of other unrelated industries in order to fill a need with your innovation or differentiation.
Let me return once again to Sun Tzu and *The Art of War* – “All men can see these tactics whereby I conquer, but what none can see is the strategy out of which victory is evolved.

Now, before you determine whether Facebook is better for your business than LinkedIn or if direct mail is still an effective way to generate leads, start at the point where you will ultimately create the greatest possible impact – strategy!
Marketing Competitive Analysis using Google and Rival IQ

By Greg Meyer

Whether you deliver marketing insights to clients or internally within your organization, you need a quick way to identify, analyze, strategize and report on your top competitors. I know you’re saying, wait? I have to be an expert on my competition, too? Yep, marketing competitive analysis is not just a nice to have. Your clients and executives want and need competitive context, and your marketing needs to not only be great for your focus company, product or brand, but also great when compared to the market overall.

But what about when you are launching a new product or entering a new market or pitching a brand new client if you’re an agency?

This is the perfect time to start early identifying, benchmarking and tracking your competition. Luckily, there are two easy tools to help: Rival IQ and Google. Think of Google as your research arm, and Rival IQ as your strategy hub, where you create your competitive Market Landscape and start building your strategy for social media, SEO, content marketing and more.

How do you define your Top Competitors?

I’m sure you know some of your competitors already. However, at a time when companies are springing up right and left, it is easy to miss a few. Fortunately, we have mastered an easy trick to help you find competitors you might have missed using Google Search and Rival IQ. Let’s get started!

**Step 1:** Select a “featured company”, probably you or your client. Let’s assume we are building a landscape for Email Marketing companies, and your focus company is MailChimp.
Step 2: Search for your selected company within Google. In this case, MailChimp.

The secret weapon here is a feature you may have seen within Google Search and not used in a systematic way: the display of related websites based on what other people have searched when they tried to find your focus company.
Step 3: Many companies will have a “View 10+ more” link created by Google. Go ahead and click it! It should yield you this view.

Our working assumption is that if people search in Google, the results in Google should show us companies based on how much they are searched — in the order of most to least searched. Therefore, using Google Search gives us a filter or proxy for brand awareness.

Step 4: Start adding these companies to your Rival IQ Landscape.
Step 5: Back on Google, click on the first company’s link. In this case, the first company listed is **Constant Contact**. Once you do so, you will see other related companies.

Cheers to more competitors!
Step 6: Add these companies to your Landscape. Once done, visit SEO Keywords in Common within Rival IQ. This will show you what keywords these companies are ranking on.

Using SEO keywords within Rival IQ, I found a few terms I hadn't thought of before. I used “email newsletter templates” and found a few more competitors in Email marketing that were new to me (Email on Acid, Litmus, and Cakemail).

Step 7: Once you have identified your keywords, search for them in Google. This will help you find other relevant companies to track in your landscape. (As a bonus, this should also be showing you what keywords you need to optimize for as you build out content for this new product or brand!)
5 Steps to Researching Your Competitor’s Social Media Strategy

By Kristi Hines

One area that many businesses struggle with in online marketing is coming up with a social media strategy. Everything from creating social profiles to a social content strategy can be daunting. Fortunately, your business doesn’t have to reinvent the wheel. Chances are, you can gain a good understanding simply by reviewing your competitor’s strategy. In this post, we’re going to look at how you can scope out your competitors and apply their best tactics to your social media strategy.

Create Your Own Social Media Strategy

Step 1: Identify Your Competitors

Your first step in creating a competitive social media strategy is selecting your competitors. You will want to find businesses similar to yours, but not limit your analysis to competitors of a specific size. For example, you may have a small local marketing agency, but you will want to include other small local agencies along with larger ones that offer similar services in your competitive analysis.

If you have a Rival IQ account, you can add your competitors to your profile. This will help you with your initial research and future monitoring. Also, here is an easy way to use both Rival IQ and Google to find competitors you might have missed!
Step 2: Choose Your Social Networks

Next, you will need to choose which social networks to analyze. Most businesses will find that they want to start with the main social networks first: Twitter and Facebook. If you need to confirm whether a social network will be beneficial to your business, answer the following questions:

- Are your competitors on that particular network? If they are active and have a good following, then you need to be there.
- Are your target customers on that particular network? You can find out in a variety of ways including using the network’s search or outside services like Followerwonk to search Twitter bios. You can also create a test advertisement on that social network to see the size of an audience that fits your target customer demographic.

Having the answers to these questions can confirm your need to invest in social media marketing and help you convince the c-level executives in your company that you need it too.
Step 3: Analyze Competitor Profiles

A great social media campaign starts with solid social profiles and pages. Here are some things you will want to analyze to see how your competitors have set up their social presence.

What wording do your competitors use in their social bios?

Since you usually have less than 200 characters to describe your business to a first time page visitor, you will want it to be great. See what your competitors have to say about their business, particularly noting keywords they include. And regardless of what your competitors do, be sure to squeeze your URL into your description to increase the traffic potential from those networks (*Note: This doesn’t work on Instagram). Especially on Twitter, as you will only see the URL in your profile in some areas of the site like search results.

What images do your competitors use?

Social networks are putting more emphasis on images. Twitter gives you the option to add a background image and header image. Facebook gives you the Timeline Cover Photo. Google+ gives you a cover photo. LinkedIn gives you banner images on your main company page and within the Products & Services section. All of these images can go a long way towards branding your social media presence. See how your competitors use images and find a creative way to brand your own profiles.

What products & services do your competitors focus on?

LinkedIn company pages have an entire tab where you can list your individual products
and services. See what items your competitors highlight and make sure you have them on your page as well. People who are researching businesses on social media may choose yours over your competitors’ based on what you have listed. Also see what products your competitors are promoting on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.

**Step 4: Analyze Competitor Content**

Once you have a great profile, you will need to create content for your social media updates. Here are some things to note about your competitors social content strategy.

Do your competitors share their own content and/or content from other industry news sites and blogs?

Businesses use social media in a variety of ways. Some use social media as a way to share the latest industry news and updates with their audience by posting links to content on a regular basis. The content may be a mixture of their own and off-site articles. If your competitors are sharing a mixture, see which updates are receiving the most engagement (replies, likes, shares, etc.) to decide on what approach will be best for your business.
Do your competitors use images, video, or other media in their updates?

Photos bring in the most engagement on Facebook, and other social networks are capitalizing on the trend by putting more emphasis on the way they display images as well as video within users’ updates. See how competitors’ media enriched updates perform to determine whether your target audience would be interested.

![Average of All Tweets per Day](image)

How often do your competitors post updates?

A key component of social media content is timing. If your business is after a local audience, your updates should be posted when that audience is likely to be online. If your business is after a worldwide audience, then you will need to do some experimentation on when your updates receive the most traction. You can refer to the Science of Social Timing Infographic created by KISSmetrics and Dan Zarrella that shows the most popular time zones for targeting social media updates. You can also use Rival IQ to see how many updates your competitors are posting within a specific time frame.
How often do your competitors engage with others?

Remember that social media is not a one-way broadcasting system. You will probably be able to see the difference in overall engagement between your competitors that are responding to their followers and fans vs. the ones that are not. Regardless of what your competitors are doing, you should always make it a point to engage with your social media audience by responding to mentions and direct messages on Twitter, replying to comments on your Facebook wall and Google+ posts, and replying to comments on posts within LinkedIn groups.

**Step 5: Monitor Your Competitors’ Changes**

While you will derive a lot of valuable information in your initial competitor research, you will want to make sure you are monitoring them on a regular basis to see if they are changing their strategies. Rival IQ can help you quickly see when a competitor’s approach to social media and their results are changing at a glance on the major social networks.

You can also find out when your competitors change specific things within their social media profiles such as their profile photos and descriptions.
Last, but not least, you can use Rival IQ to see your competitor’s information in one place when you are ready to make a change to your own social profiles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Twitter Bio</th>
<th>Length</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Tesla Motors" /></td>
<td>Tesla Motors</td>
<td>Always on insane-mode. Maker of electric cars and renewable energy storage. Join the rEvolution!</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Audi USA" /></td>
<td>Audi USA</td>
<td>Audi of America.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="BMW" /></td>
<td>BMW</td>
<td>Welcome to the official #BMW account. bmw.com/imprint</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Bentley Motors" /></td>
<td>Bentley Motors</td>
<td>Welcome to the official Twitter feed for Bentley Motors. Please direct enquiries to your local Bentley dealer. Our global network can be found on our website.</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Cadillac" /></td>
<td>Cadillac</td>
<td>“At Cadillac, we dare greatly. Only those who dare drive the world forward.”</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Chevrolet" /></td>
<td>Chevrolet</td>
<td>Talking Chevrolet one tweet at a time. #FindNewRoads.s.chey.com/PSD</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Chrysler" /></td>
<td>Chrysler</td>
<td>The official Twitter handle of Chrysler brand vehicles. For more: facebook.com/chrysler</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Dodge" /></td>
<td>Dodge</td>
<td>The official Twitter feed of Dodge. For more: facebook.com/dodge</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Ferrari" /></td>
<td>Ferrari</td>
<td>Official account of #Ferrari</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3 Free Tools to Use to Audit Your Competitors’ Content

By Michael Ferrari

- You can use Screaming Frog to crawl their entire site and give you a snapshot at what the pages looks like and how well they have been optimized.

- BuzzSumo gives a snapshot of your competitor’s main content pages and how well they’re performing socially (which we’ll cover more in a bit).

- Rival IQ enables you to look across multiple competitors at one time and view the top engaging content across six social networks, so you can see immediately what’s working for them.

The more you know about your competitors, the better off you are. Here are 3 more tools that can help you know everything they are doing, and best them.
How to Jumpstart Your Marketing Strategy This Year

By Mark Z. Fortune

It’s resolution time:

- You’ve already been to the gym this morning
- You haven’t eaten anything bad for you (but tastes so good!) in at least 24 hours
- You’re actively thinking about your Marketing Strategy right now

Great! Let’s build on that last one (I have a hard enough time with the other two myself…)

The New Year brings about a fervent desire to be better and do better. Directing these desires towards your business is always at the top of the list for small business owners. But where to start? So here are five tips that will help you create an effective marketing strategy for your business.

The good news is - a couple of hours of dedicated “think time” this week is all you need to get these down (write them down!) and then get to work - Resolution Kept!

1. Know your business’s goals

Ask yourself where you want the business to go. You know the answer here better than anyone - after all, the business is a reflection of you. What can you really achieve this year? What could you achieve through a focused, purposeful approach to growing your business this year? How will you communicate this and hold everyone (including you) accountable for achieving these goals? Keep them S.M.A.R.T. – Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely.

2. Identify your ideal target customers

Understanding whom you are selling to (and who you aren’t) is critically important
because it can save you a lot of time and energy. Let’s look at the example of a dental clinic. The target base for that business is not every single person who needs a dentist. Instead, it is the people who need a dentist with ready access to the clinic and have a specific need for a service you’re uniquely qualified to provide (e.g., implants or cosmetic dentistry). Firing unprofitable customers and not targeting unprofitable prospects is an important part of your marketing strategy. Think about whom your 10 best customers are and what you need to do to attract 10 more just like them!

3. Identify what the business is selling and what customers are really buying

Whatever your business is selling must be in line with your business values and goals. Sometimes this answer isn’t as clear as you might think. For example, if you own a dental clinic, the easy answer is you are selling dental care. However, you might also be selling some other things without realizing it. Ask your customers why they choose to do business with you. They might mention things like comfort or simplicity or convenience. For example, people like to go to clinics where they feel good about the experience more so than just the practical matter of dental care. Ask your best customers what they like most about doing business with you and why they keep doing business with you - the answers may surprise you and will get to the core of your reputation, which can be a unique competitive advantage for your business.

4. Look at the Competition

Looking at your competition can be incredibly motivating. It can also help you identify where your business is going wrong (or on the flip side, what it is excelling). Consider the ways in which your customer base, products/services, and goals compare to your competitors. Set Google Alerts for each of your competitors (or use a service like BuzzSumo) to help monitor what they are saying and doing and then consider how this could impact your marketing strategies. Do not assume that just because they are doing something different that they are better – keep in mind who you’re targeting and view your research in light of your strategies.

5. Understand the Necessary Investments

Creating and executing your marketing strategy is a matter of time and money. You should budget for both of these things. It is very important to have a marketing strategy.
but you also have to consider implementation. Do It Yourself Marketing is certainly a viable option, but also consider if partnering with a marketing expert for planning and execution while you run your business would be a faster path to success. While there are dozens (if not hundreds) of ways you can promote your business to your target market, choosing a path and then adjusting as results come in can be a time-consuming process that an outside expert can handle more smoothly.

With a couple of hours this week spent thinking through these five steps and putting a plan in place you can begin to deliver exciting growth for your business and stay on the path to profits that will outpace your competition. Happy New Year!

**Bonus Tip:** Block time (and follow through) on monitoring your strategy and plans each week (or at least every other week) throughout the year. If you’re dedicated to growing your business I can assure you that focused attention on your Marketing plan will be an area where your competition will give up long before you do – opening the door to growth.

*Mark Z. Fortune, founder of Fortune Marketing, LLC, advises small businesses on marketing strategies to ensure that sales and marketing investments return positive results. Mark is a Master Duct Tape Marketing Consultant who believes small business marketing challenges are not insurmountable; they can be met with a focused approach leveraging the principles of the Duct Tape Marketing System. He is also a co-author of the recent Amazon Bestseller The Small Business Owner’s Guide to Local Lead Generation. More information is available at [www.fortunemarketinginc.com](http://www.fortunemarketinginc.com) and [www.localleadgenbook.com](http://www.localleadgenbook.com)*
What Makes a Good Marketing Strategy?

By Lucjan Kierczak

Let’s begin with an answer to the question “What is marketing strategy?”. This popular expression tends to be mistaken with promotion or advertising strategy. Marketing strategy shows how you’re going to use your 4 Ps – product, promotion, price and place, to improve your business results. Your marketing strategy should answer these 4 questions: what you are going to sell, how you are going to price it, where potential customers will be able to find your products and how you are going to promote it. On the top of that, it should contain goals you want to achieve so that you’re able to see how effective your strategy is.

So how to build a good marketing strategy? I’ll walk you through all 4 elements of marketing mix, show you best practices and give a few tips. Following these guidelines will help you create a strong and effective marketing strategy with little effort.

4 Ps

1. Product

The first step is to define your product (or services). What do you sell? If you’ve been around for some time, look at the structure of your revenue. What do people buy the most frequently? Pareto rule probably works well and 20% of products secure 80% of revenue. Identifying them will help you promote them better.

Also, you can consider adding new products. Doing it blindly can be dangerous, this is why you can ask your visitors or customer what they would like you to offer.

Tip: take a look at this case study to learn how RaveNectar used surveys to find out what visitors want him to sell.

2. Price
Now you know what you're selling. How to set prices to maximize your profit? Some would say ‘Rise prices – you will grow your margins’; some would say ‘Cut prices – you will attract more customers’. I won’t tell you which solution is the best for you. What you should do to find it out is to test. You can raise or cut prices of some products by a few percent and observe what happens.

It’s more difficult when you’re about to start a new business – you don’t have data to compare. What you can do is to analyze pricing strategies of your competitors and conduct a small market research.

Tip: if you want to know more about setting prices, take a look at this guide based on experience with pricing experiments.

3. Place

How are you going to reach buyers? It’s a tough question even for brick and mortar stores – there are hundreds of ways you can arrange products on shelves, you can even consider going online. You can also sell your products in your own store or offer it to resellers. There are many options you to consider.

If you already sell products in your online store, you can consider selling products on platforms like eBay or Amazon to reach even more customers.

4. Promotion

Products rarely sell themselves and promotion is a key to a successful business. You can offer great products for low prices in a fantastic store but you will quickly go broke if you have 0 customers. This can be the most complicated issue due to a number of possible options. You can advertise your business on social media, run AdWords or display campaigns, try marketing or content marketing, retargeting and a number of other online marketing techniques. On the top of that, there are all the techniques of offline and local marketing you can consider.

Tip: you can look for inspiration here.

To make your marketing strategy strong, you should focus on all points because only then they will fulfill each other. Example: cutting prices won’t bring satisfying results if you don’t promote discounts. On the other hand, raising prices won’t help neither if you don’t upgrade your store or a website to make it look more high-end or offer additional services.
Don’t forget about setting goals

Before you implement your marketing strategy, think about metrics you will use to track progress. It can be profit, revenue, a number of sold items or any other metric that will clearly show your progress. The next step is to prepare a detailed action plan. What and when are you going to do and what are the expected results? To make planning easier, you can use a technique of setting SMART goals. It means they should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bounding. More on this topic and a free template.

After implementing your marketing strategy, keep track of your progress. Did you want to double your revenue in 12 months but after 6 months there’s only 10% increase? Then you should go back to sketching board. Check which actions brought expected results and which didn’t work. Then think why it happened and how you can improve your performance. Implementing results of such analysis can lead you to significant gains and thus make goals more likely to be achieved.

Lucjan Kierczak is an inbound marketer at Survicate– an app that makes collecting feedback from customers easy and quick. Collected answers will show you what your visitors expect from you, what problems they face or what’s preventing them from buying. You can find Lucjan on Twitter or LinkedIn.
Monthly Favs

Every month I like to collect some of my favorite links and tools to help take your marketing efforts to the next level. Here are my monthly favs.

**Clearbit** - Tool that gives you information on contacts inside Gmail

**ContentMarketer** - Tool for content promotion and influencer outreach

**Grum** - Tool for posting and scheduling Instagram updates from your laptop

**Content Ideator** - Free blog content, topic and headline generator

**PicPlane** - Tool that allows you to republish your customer’s Instagram photos on your site

**Survicate** - Tool that allows you to collect survey data from website visitors

**dapulse** - Another take on project management software with a rather intuitive interface

**monitorbacklinks** - Very nice suite of tools to monitor your backlinks (and your competitors)

**RAPID** - Free Mini-Course for fast landing page creation

**ThriveLeads** - Robust form creation tool for smart pop-ups and lead capture

**Quuu Promote** - Service that allows you to automatically promote your content to influencers

---

**Featured Fav**

This month’s eBook is brought to you by our friends at RivalIQ. Analyze your performance, get key insights and beat the competition across social media, SEO keywords and website content – all with one easy tool. Start your free trial of RivalIQ today by visiting [https://www.rivaliq.com/](https://www.rivaliq.com/)
Landy - Tool that allows you to segment landing pages by type of visitor

visualping - Tool that send you an email alert when something changes on your website or any site you want to follow

Quuu - Hand-crafted social media update - pairs nicely with Buffer

clientsuccess - Tool to help you manage, grow and retain customers