



# How an Integrated Marketing System can Strengthen Your Business in 2009

Improving all round marketing performance through better integration

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## Executive Summary

What does **marketing** mean to you? To many it is a strange animal made up of advertising, branding, direct mail, websites, email marketing, and so on. It's always hungry and costs a lot of money to keep fed; it's also not very well disciplined and pulls in many different directions. When you look at it, it's often hard to see if it's doing any work for you...

As we find ourselves in a time of increased economic uncertainty, the vision of marketing pictured above, which may well have got you by in more bountiful times, will no longer cut the mustard.

What is required now is a more integrated approach to marketing your products and services: one that brings the myriad of marketing channels available together with a co-ordinated voice, delivering the right message to the right customer at the right time; a cycle that is continually improved through appropriate analytics and reviews.

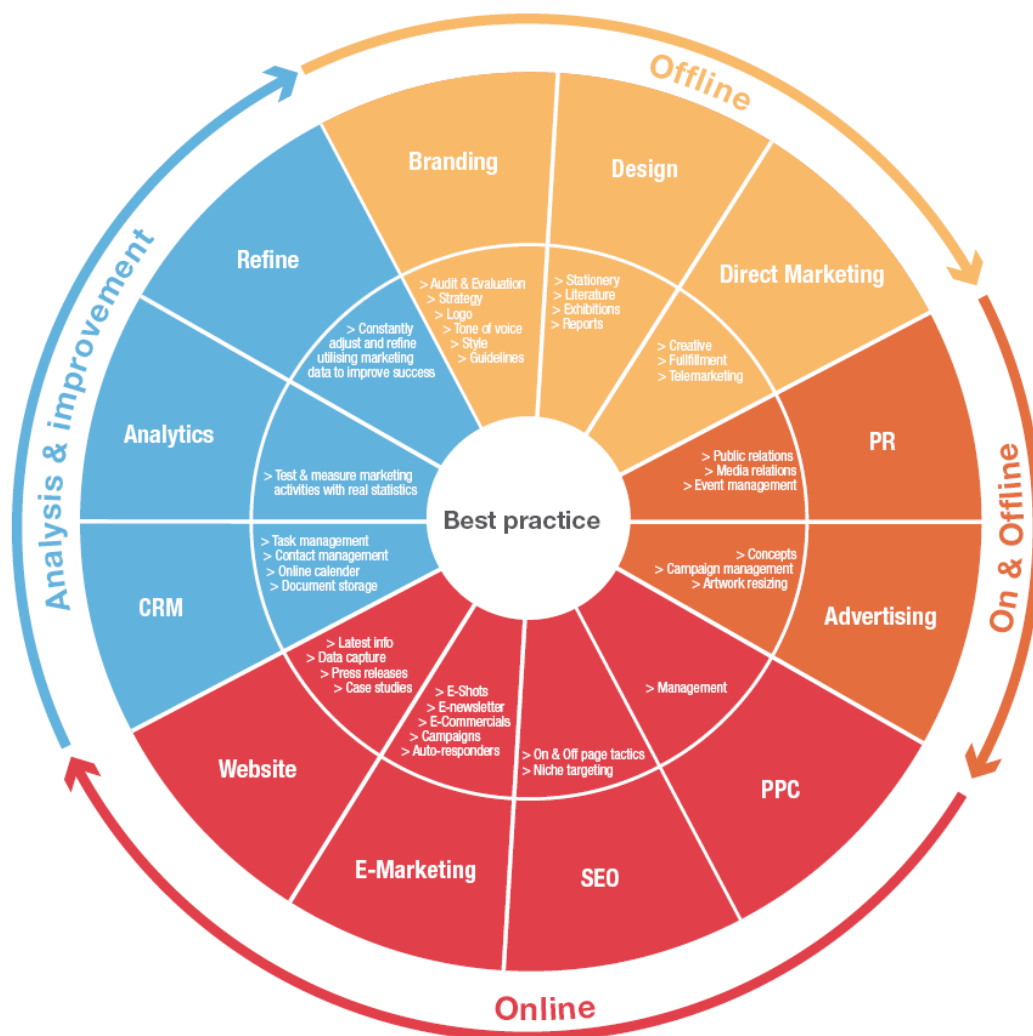
If this definition of marketing sounds interesting to you then read on. We have built you a step by step guide on how to generate sales across multiple channels whilst ensuring you get the best return on investment from every marketing pound you spend.

### Work Out What it is You Actually Sell

Before you can build an integrated marketing

system, it's imperative that you *really* understand what it is you are selling. It may sound odd that we're telling you that you don't know what you sell - but bear with us for a second and all will become clear.

Many businesses spend so much time talking about themselves that there is very little time to communicate what they actually do for their customers, or what problems they solve.



Well here's the trouble: your prospects couldn't care less about who you are! They want to know what you can do for them and what problems you solve, and if you don't communicate this to them quickly, they will just ignore you and move on.



Working out what you actually sell is possibly the most important thing you'll ever do in business. Ask yourselves what **problem you solve** as this will help identify the main reasons why people buy from you. To illustrate this point, think about the simple examples below:

Product / Service	Actual Purchase
Ice cream for screaming child...	10 minutes peace and quiet for the parent
Electric guitar for teenager...	Dream of being a rock star
Distributor who provides timed deliveries...	10% reduction in warehousing costs for their customers
On-site company physiotherapy service...	Reduces absenteeism for their clients by 15%

You'll notice in the examples above that the value of the product or service increases dramatically when it moves from the left hand column to the right.

Once you work out what it is your customers are *really* buying – this will give you a clear guide to help align all the different marketing channels in your system.

### Offline – Branding, Design and Direct Marketing

Your integrated marketing system will fall at the first hurdle if your customers don't recognise and identify with your branding and design across all your channels. Getting this element right starts out with a voyage of discovery:

- Who are our customers?
- What are we really selling?/ What problem are we solving?
- What is our point of differentiation?
- What are the best ways to reach our potential customers?
- What is the best way for us to explain how we can solve their problems?
- Who are our key competitors?

Once you know the answers to these questions, you will be able to work with your design agency and create branding and design that clearly communicates for you over and over again.

### On & Offline – PR & Advertising

Traditionally, public / media relations and event management were offline channels, but with the advent of more online publications like social media, blogs, online forums and webinars, this is no longer the case. Taking press releases for example, traditional media coverage is still key for heightening awareness of your brand and generating enquiries, but when combined with online press it can get your message in front of a new audience and drive a significant amount of traffic directly to your website.

Another benefit of using online distribution for your press release is having more links to your website. This can help elevate your site's position in search engine's natural rankings, again increasing website traffic, enquiries and opportunities and is just one example of how aligning your multiple on and offline channels can bring hidden gain to your organisation.

### Online – Websites, Email Marketing, Search Marketing

Take a look at your current website and ask yourself:

- Is it clearly communicating the problem we solve for our customers?
- Does it have strong calls to action?
- Are we capturing data for future online marketing campaigns?
- Are enquiries flowing into a Customer Relationship Management system (CRM) to ensure they are all followed up?
- Does it clearly represent our brand?
- Is it being regularly updated with new content: blog posts, press releases and so on?



If you can answer ‘yes’ to all these questions - well done, you’re ahead of the curve! If on the other hand you answered ‘no’ to any of them, then you’re not maximising the potential benefit you could get from your website. It’s important you work with your web company to put things right **before** you start increasing traffic to your website, otherwise you risk wasting your money as visitors hit the ‘back button’ because they’re unsure whether you can help them or what to do next.

Once you have your website in order, there are lots of ways you can drive targeted traffic to it. A few of these channels include:

**Calibre Office Furniture**  
 Massive Range of Office Furniture  
 Showrooms Available Nationwide  
[www.Calibre-Furniture.co.uk](http://www.Calibre-Furniture.co.uk)

**Discount Office Furniture**  
 Huge selection of furniture  
 Free next day delivery orders >£30  
[www.eurooffice.co.uk/Furniture](http://www.eurooffice.co.uk/Furniture)

**UK Office Furniture Sale**  
 Free UK Mainland Delivery  
 Desks, Chairs and Filing Cabinets.  
[www.office-furniture4u.co.uk](http://www.office-furniture4u.co.uk)

- Pay per click (PPC) – paid for adverts that appear on the search engines when people type in a key phrase related to your business. You only pay when your advert is clicked.
- Search engine optimisation (SEO) – making sure your website is listed higher in natural search engine results for your keywords. This is achieved by using on-page and off-page strategies.
- Email marketing – nurturing prospects into customers using a steady, consistent stream of email marketing messages with soft and hard offers to build up trust.

### Analysis & Improvement

This brings us to the last stage in the cycle. Irrespective of the channel used to create the lead, all leads should be logged into your CRM program so you can track their progress as they develop from prospects into clients. This can normally be achieved automatically with your digital channels, but even with direct mail and telephone contacts, using enquiry codes or simply asking the prospect

how they found you can identify what channel created the lead.

Once you have collected all this data, it’s time to look back on the past period’s activities and measure each marketing tactic’s performance: sales figures, return on investments and other metrics that can be used to set benchmarks against which later projects will be measured and decisions made.

It’s also time to review any other monitoring systems you use: for example, programs like Google Analytics that provide valuable information on what is and isn’t working on your website and other digital channels.

Finally, using data gained through the recording and analytics processes outlined above will allow you to remove as much inefficiency from the marketing process as possible. This may even require you to revisit your branding and design...which conveniently brings us right back to the beginning of the cycle.





### **How Do You Implement and Maintain the Process?**

Putting this program into action might sound like an overly time-consuming task, but in actuality you're likely to have a lot of the basic building blocks needed to host it already in place. All that's required from you is to fill in the missing gaps. So if you have a website with a data capture & email marketing program up and running but no SEO or PPC tactics, concentrate on getting your search strategy up and running quickly.

Once the gaps are filled in, it's then simply a case of ensuring each part of the marketing process draws on the decisions made in the segments before it. For instance, do your website and email marketing campaigns match the branding guidelines set out earlier on in the cycle? Has there been a positive response (increased conversions) to the newsletters you've been sending or does the content need reviewing? Rather than making decisions based on trial and error, you'll be using actual, empirical evidence with a better likelihood of getting results.

Maintaining the integrated marketing process is also easier than you might imagine: because the process hinges on the ethos of best practice, every element is designed to reach the highest possible quality standard, and the analysis & improvement segment of the cycle ensures the processes are being tested for improvement continuously.

### **Conclusion**

An integrated marketing process is the next step required to grow your business and is ideal for those who want to make assured steps into the world of digital marketing. For simplicity's sake, we have included just four of the main online advertising channels of today but the beauty of the model's cyclical structure is that it's possible to add new channels such as social media or mobile marketing without interrupting the channels already in place.

Since it also operates on a principle code of best practice and is geared towards continuous review, the process can 'take care of itself' to some extent.

This means you'll have more breathing space and confidence with which to test unknown marketing channels before making them a fully-fledged part of your marketing system.

By maintaining the basic principles of testing, measuring and improvement that are so intrinsic to this system, your business should be in good shape to thrive in spite of the uncertain times ahead and outstrip your competition in the online arena.



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