



The Inbound Sales Funnel™ Methodology:

OUR SECRET TO SELLING MORE WITH AN INTEGRATED SALES & MARKETING FUNNEL

Small-medium size businesses (SMBs) face a fork in the road when considering investment in digital marketing. SMBs know that now, more than ever, it's crucial to invest in digital marketing and advertising, but they're unsure of where to turn, or frustrated with their current efforts.



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Data Speaks for Itself 3

The Whole Is Greater Than The Sum Of Parts 4

Defining The Integrated Funnel 5

The Buyer Journey 6-7

Example 1 8-10

Example 2 11-12

Key Question 13

How To Identify Your Customer’s Position In The Buyer Journey 14-15

Conclusion 16-17

Contact 18

THE DATA SPEAKS FOR ITSELF...

as budgets for digital marketing and advertising have increased significantly within the last decade. According to [eMarketer](#), 2017 marked the first year in history that digital marketing and advertising spend surpassed TV ad spend in the US. Additionally, [CMO Survey](#) surveyed leaders from a pool of 2,895 marketers (VP level and higher) at US for-profit companies and discovered they're allocating more dollars than ever to digital. Marketing leaders expect to spend a full 54% of marketing budgets on digital within the next five years, up from just 44% in 2018.

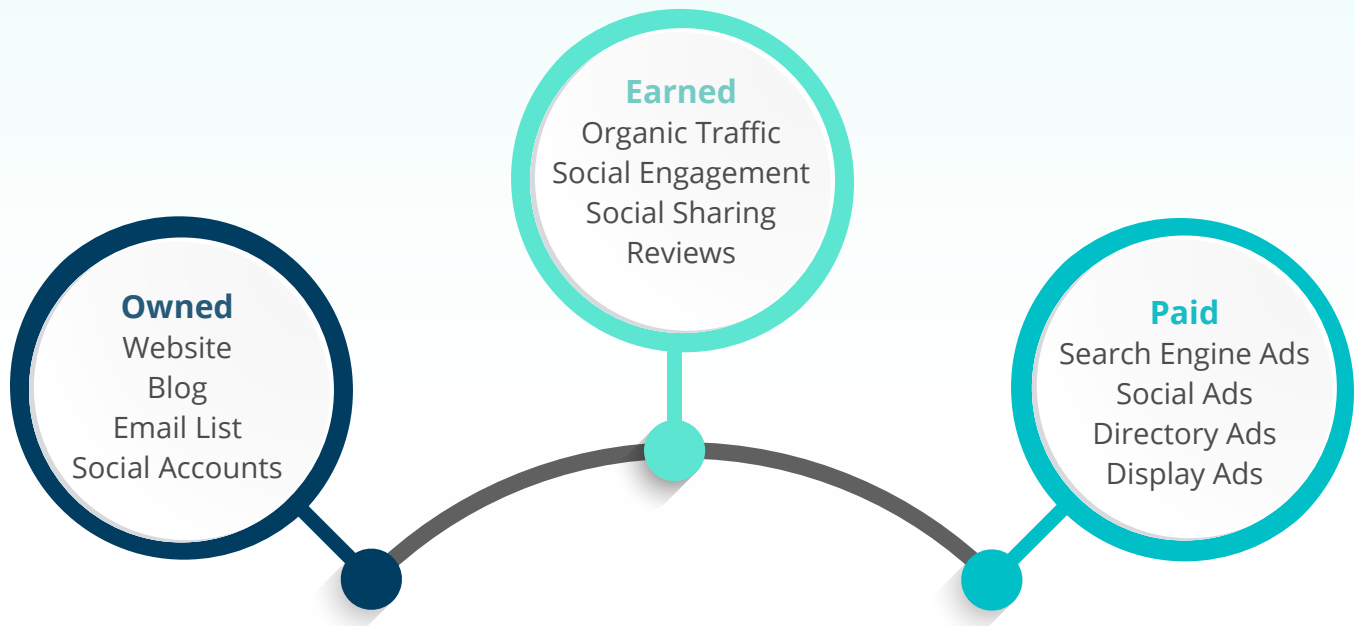


The radical transformation in how customers buy products and consume information has made it difficult for SMBs to compete online. Maintaining and growing an integrated marketing funnel typically requires contracting with agencies that have hefty price tags, hourly billing and binding agreements. More often than not, SMB's pay exorbitant fees for marketing campaigns and strategies that do not produce Return on Investment (ROI). SMB's who don't hire pricey agencies often resort to hiring a hodgepodge of freelancers leading to holes in their funnel and communication problems. The sum of these shortcomings may be [why nearly two-thirds of SMBs](#) express a desire to self-manage their digital marketing efforts in-house, whether they have legitimate experience or not. This equates to blindly navigating the digital marketing landscape, making decisions solely based on intuition rather than data and analytics, or customer behavior.



FunnelCake was founded to provide SMBs with an integrated funnel solution that is affordable and cost effective. An integrated funnel pulls multiple online channels together into a cohesive experience for your customers and improves through monthly iterations. For SMB's looking for their marketing engine to fire on all cylinders, the integrated sales and marketing funnel is the best choice.

THE WHOLE IS GREATER THAN THE SUM OF THE PARTS



Marketing in the new digital era demands an integrated funnel that drives your customers from the different stages of consideration to conversion through multiple touchpoints. Investing into individual marketing channels like Pay-Per-Click (PPC) or Search Engine Optimization (SEO) doesn't cut it anymore. Businesses are already experiencing a performance decline in their individual marketing channels as their customers struggle to separate signal from noise; an effect exacerbated by the entrance of late majority businesses (on the [diffusion curve](#)) into the digital marketplace. The opportunity offered by digital is a double edged sword for SMB's, startups, and ecommerce companies rather than a gold rush.

It is true that agile businesses enabled by the web have disrupted slower moving incumbent players, but new digital monopolies have emerged to replace the monopolies of old. For a SMB, startup, or e-commerce company, the challenge is that competition is no longer constrained by locale. The standard of experience that consumers have come to expect online is being set by Amazon and other Fortune 500 companies, not by local competition. The difficulty can be summarized as this:



**It's easy to get your feet wet with digital sales & marketing,
it's hard to actually swim the distance.**



To understand why most digital sales and marketing efforts go awry, we must understand marketing synergy, or how marketing channels interact and relate to one another. Investment in an integrated funnel has a synergistic effect on each area of performance. Conversely, lack of investment in an integrated funnel means decreased effectiveness in each area of performance. The gap between small and large businesses online will only continue to widen if SMB's, startups, and ecommerce companies fail to internalize this principle of synergy.

DEFINING THE INTEGRATED FUNNEL

An interactive digital experience with consistent messaging that engages your potential and existing customers on their preferred mediums and leads them to conversion through multiple, contextual touchpoints.

There are two Key Elements here:



Interactive & Omnichannel: An integrated funnel connects businesses to customers across a variety of channels and provides a contextual path-to-purchase by identifying their position in the buyer journey.

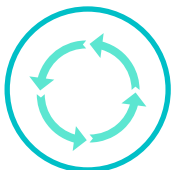


Messaging & Experience: A consistent message and experience across your digital channels and platforms is essential to attract and hold the attention of your customers.

An integrated funnel has these benefits:



Customer attention: Businesses aren't just competing against companies in their industry for the attention of their customers on the internet. They compete against every meme, cat picture, news article and selfie. An integrated funnel is necessary to cut through the noise and drive conversion.



Synergy: There's a special magic that occurs when a digital sales & marketing engine fires on all cylinders: visibility soars, traffic increases, and conversion rates explode. As customers move from touchpoint to touchpoint, gaining value and building trust every step of the way, they **make buying decisions** by learning about products, services and brands; all of this is **scalable through automation**.

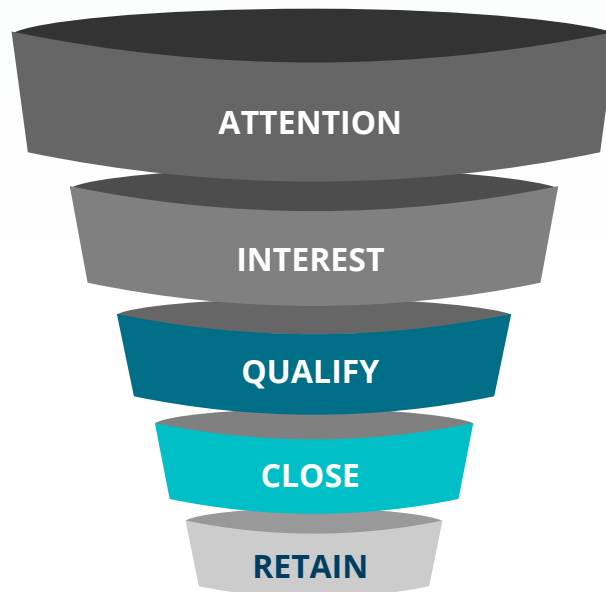


Attribution: It's one thing to have data and another to leverage it accurately. **Without an integrated funnel, it is difficult to know what needs improvement because it's broken and what needs investment because it's working.** Digital marketers are spread thin between the many technologies and platforms in the **marketing technology landscape**. Without an integrated funnel, it's easy to be misled by inaccurate, redundant or siloed data tracked by the different tools in your marketing stack.

THE BUYER JOURNEY

In marketing speak, **the buyer journey** is a framework that helps us understand the various stages of consideration that an average buyer will traverse in making a purchase decision. It is a psychological map that forces us to consider the motivations, questions, and desires that must be addressed in the buying process in order to drive conversion. There are a variety of funnels, but the one we like the most at FunnelKake is this:

The buyer journey formulated for digital sales & marketing



The goal of the buyer journey is to establish a roadmap detailing the psychology of your customers. The actual road that your customers will drive on, the physical touchpoints that allow them to traverse the buyer journey, is referred to as the path-to-purchase. It might be tempting to look at this and think what we're describing is the same as any old funnel, but that would be a mistake. The truth is that what passes as common knowledge on funnel marketing is mostly WRONG! Why? Because traditional sales & marketing funnels are for us, not the customer.



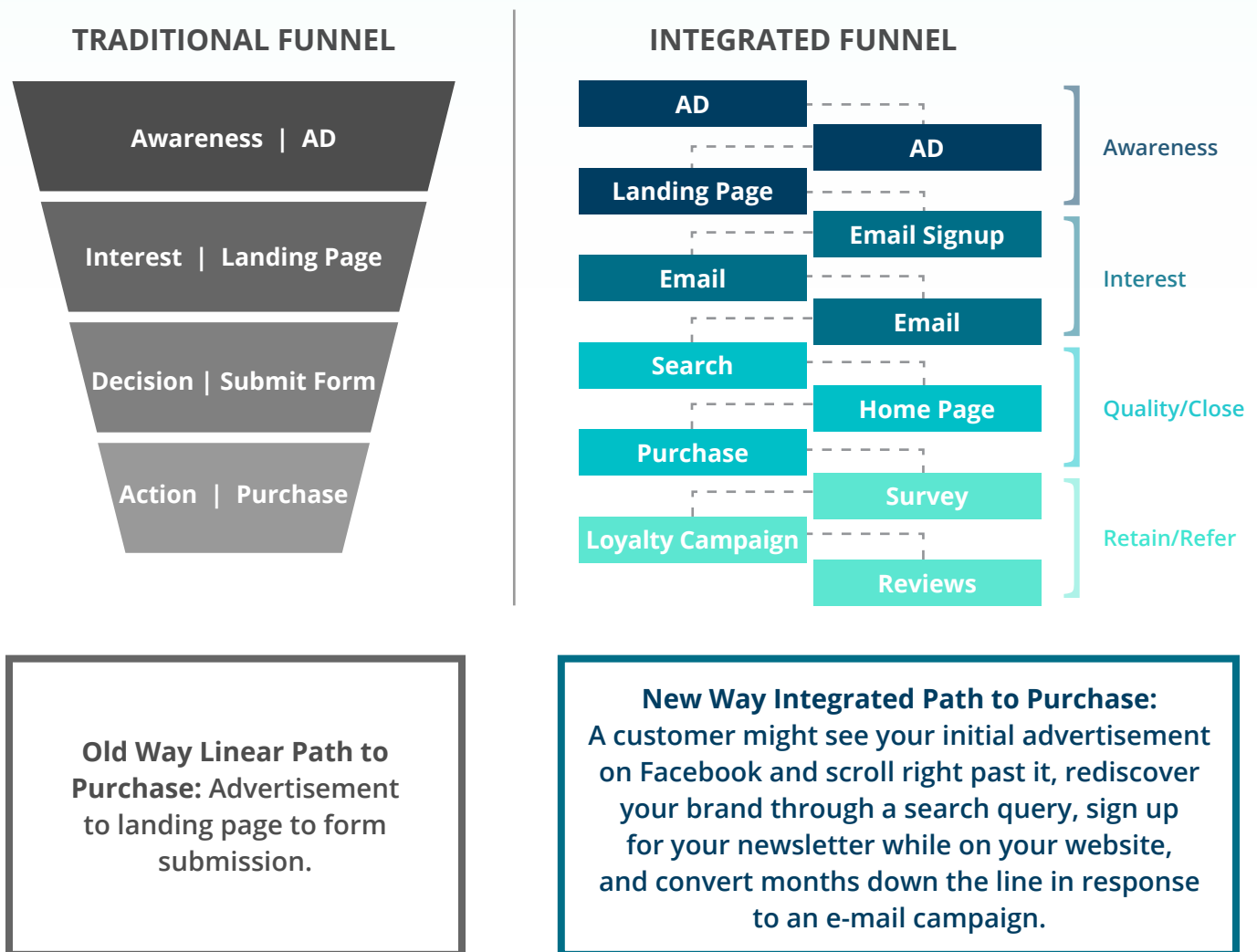
**Traditional sales & marketing funnels are for us
(salespeople and marketers), not for the customer.**



Traditional sales & marketing funnels predict sales outcomes by organizing volume and conversion rates by funnel stage. They are informative in this regard. They don't, however, tell you anything about the buyer journey or the path that an individual customer will take to purchase your product or service (path-to-purchase). Want 10 sales this quarter? Great, you'll need 100 form submissions. And to get 100 form submissions you'll need 1000 website visitors. But nowhere in this description is a concept of the buyer journey.

THE BUYER JOURNEY (CONT'D)

The buyers and consumers of today are immune to traditional marketing and advertising tactics. They are unlikely to follow a well-defined, linear path to purchase; at least not any path dictated by **your needs** rather than **theirs**. The complexity of the modern buyer journey means it's of utmost importance to be present where your customers are to lead them to purchase through multiple, contextual touchpoints.



An integrated funnel helps your customers navigate the buyer journey (the various stages of consideration leading to a conversion) through multiple touchpoints (path-to-purchase). We can understand where they are in the buyer journey by analyzing their behavior and prompting them for feedback. With this understanding, we can lead them to conversion through (multiple) contextual digital touchpoints. Digital touchpoints like pay-per-click advertising (PPC), search engine optimization (SEO), social media marketing (SMM), email marketing, and website content put your products, information, offers, etc in front of your customers to make them buy, buy more, and refer.

The examples on the following pages demonstrate how digital marketing channels work together in an integrated funnel.

EXAMPLE 1

GOOGLE SEO AND PPC

The core function of Google is connecting users to content related to the keywords they search for. That's it. Whether or not Google is doing its job is just a question of how good it is at achieving this core function. There are two main methods of getting your content seen by Google's audience.



Search Engine Optimization (SEO): SEO is the practice of optimizing your website and website content to earn higher keyword rankings on search engines and increase organic traffic. Google regularly crawls websites to index their content to make it available for search. Part of SEO is making it easy for Google to scan this content and understand what it is. The other part of SEO is making sure that the content creates value for the user who is reading and searching for it.



Google Ads aka Pay-Per-Click Advertising (PPC): Google Ads is Google's advertising platform that allows business owners and advertisers to drive targeted website traffic by bidding on keywords for advertising placement. For example, a marketer advertising a winter jacket, could show up in Google search results for "cheap winter jackets", by running a Google Ads campaign targeting that keyword string.

Caveat: We want to pause here and emphasize that Google's algorithms for SEO and PPC are distinct entities. Therefore, marketers should still optimize channel performance according to the rules of the applicable algorithm. However, you will see the best results from your search engine marketing by taking both algorithms into consideration.

HOW PPC BENEFITS FROM SEO

As mentioned, Google's core function is to connect users to content related to the keywords they search for. When you pay for Pay-Per-Click advertising, you are paying for the privilege to subvert this core function and cut in line. Google assigns values called "Quality Scores" to advertisements on their platform to prevent abuse of this privilege. Quality Score is in large part determined by the relevance of your advertising and landing pages to Google's users. Having a lower Quality Score means that, all else equal, you will have to pay more for the same placement compared to a campaign with a higher Quality Score.

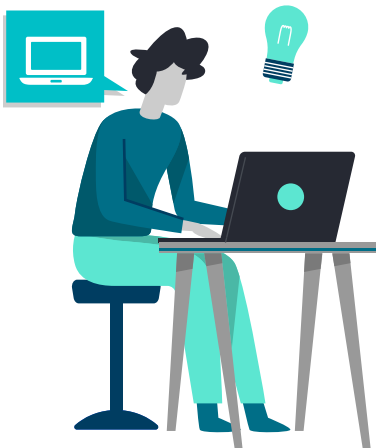
“ **In order to preserve search relevance, Google penalizes advertisers who do not create quality ad experiences for Google's users in the form of lowered Quality Scores.** ”

You can improve the performance of your PPC campaigns by following best SEO practices. For example:

- Including keywords that users are searching for on your landing pages
- Explaining topics in simple, easy-to-read language
- Using text instead of images for important titles, headlines, and content.

Leveraging SEO in conjunction with PPC extends the utility of your search engine marketing efforts. Instead of anemic landing pages that sit there unless paid traffic is being driven to them, you can create self-sufficient landing pages that generate their own traffic and drive conversion! Talk about efficiency.

HOW SEO BENEFITS FROM PPC



Google's search engine algorithm is a moving target. That's the bad news. The good news is the algorithm changes in the direction of quantifying and improving user experience. Back in the 2000's, it was possible to increase share of organic search traffic by manipulating HTML code and "stuffing" keywords on web pages. Now, Google evaluates a wide range of data points to determine who is creating the best content and experiences.

The problem seems simple in theory: build a website people love and create relevant content. The complexity is that it requires substantial investment and patience to gain and increase share of organic traffic. Google needs time to crawl through your site, index changes to your content and then evaluate visitor experience.

SO HOW DO YOU KNOW YOUR SEO EFFORTS ARE HEADED IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION?

This is a classic “chicken and the egg” problem: **In order to *get* organic traffic, you *need* organic traffic, and this process can take months and longer.** This problem can be broken into two subsets:

- 1 Validation:** In order to increase organic traffic, you have to create SEO content that is relevant to users, but you don’t (really) know if your SEO content is relevant to users until you have traffic.
- 2 Feedback Loop:** Google must determine that your content is relevant to visitors to send you traffic, but Google does not know that your content is relevant to visitors until you have traffic.

A strategy for dealing with these problems, as detailed below, is leveraging PPC advertising to validate your SEO content strategy and boost website visibility to close the feedback loop.

HOW PPC SOLVES THE VALIDATION PROBLEM

It’s difficult enough to tell what content and messaging will resonate with your market when it comes to direct selling. Content and messaging is even more difficult when it comes to SEO because of the lag time between creating and investing in an SEO strategy and receiving validation that the strategy is working.

PPC is hands down the best way of gaining this initial validation. Instead of waiting your turn, you can cut in line, develop keywords, content, and messaging, and then get actual data on performance to guide your SEO marketing messages. Instead of blogging blindly for six months with the hope that it will be relevant to users, you can run tests to identify keyword and content opportunities to then double down on those opportunities.

HOW PPC SOLVES THE FEEDBACK LOOP PROBLEM

Google improves your search ranking after analyzing visitor experience on your site, which is not possible without pre-existing traffic. While the PPC traffic going to your landing pages is not factored into Google’s SEO algorithm (they want to preserve the integrity of organic search), the PPC traffic is relevant for increasing website visits and brand exposure. An analogy is instructive here.

Imagine your website is a resort on a tropical island. Even if your resort is great and all of your existing customers love it - getting tan and enjoying their coconut kombuchas; without a convenient way to discover and travel to the island you are unlikely to have many customers. Let’s say you contract with a cruise line to bring visitors to the island so they can come and experience the joy of your resort. This stream of visitors is small at first, but the ones that stay have a great experience. It turns out, if your visitors stay even a single night, they are likely to visit again in the future. They even start telling their friends and bringing you new business! Soon enough, your resort will be teeming with visitors.

EXAMPLE 2

IMPROVE ADVERTISING PERFORMANCE

To understand synergy in a broader context, let's look at a common digital sales & marketing goal: improving advertising performance. Due to the low barrier to entry (content marketing, social media marketing, etc, all take more time and potentially more investment to start paying measurable dividends), advertising online tends to attract a lot of uninformed investment; therefore, SMB, startup, and ecommerce advertising is an area ripe for analysis.

The majority of SMB advertising online is designed to elicit a direct response from customers. Direct response marketing is a tried and true way of driving conversion even before the advent of the web, focused on catching the right people at the right place in the right time with the right offer. So, when the average SMB, startup, or ecommerce company considers how to "maximize advertising performance", what they are typically considering is how to "maximize the number of direct responses relative to their advertising spend". For many reasons, this is a myopic view of the role that advertising plays in your digital marketing efforts. But before we get there, let's review some basic equations that are useful in quantifying marketing performance.

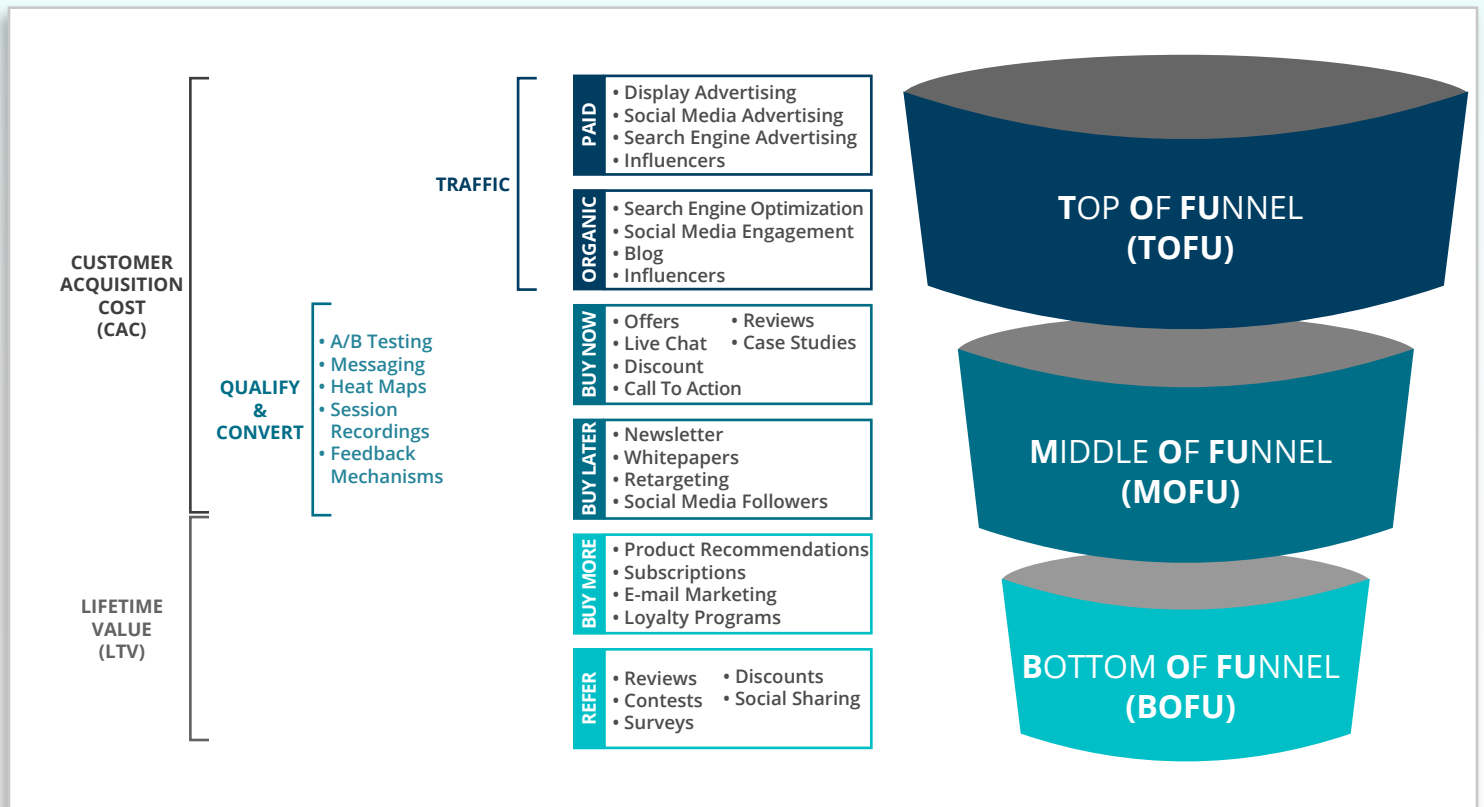
Successful digital sales and marketing is a balance of these equations:

$$\text{Lifetime Value (LTV)}^* > \text{Customer Acquisition Cost (CAC)}^\dagger$$

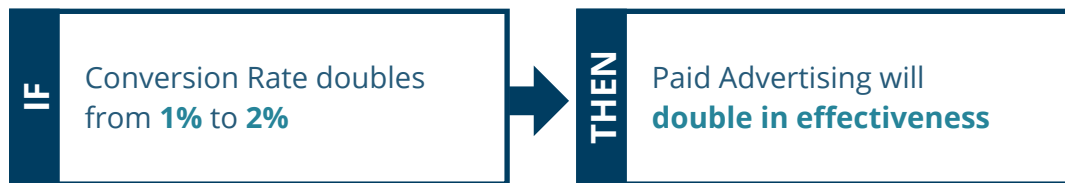
*Lifetime Value (LTV) = Average Purchase Size (ASP) x Average Purchase Frequency (APF)

† Customer Acquisition Cost (CAC) = Cost of Traffic x Conversion Rate

More sophisticated models exist and apply to each unique business, but the above framework is a solid starting point when trying to quantify digital sales & marketing program success. Specifically, this is the kind of reporting that is relevant to executives and other stakeholders impacted by but not directly engaged in the day-to-day of digital sales and marketing since it demonstrates how marketing performance implicates organizational goals. Considering that advertising is just one traffic source, among many potential traffic sources, our digital sales & marketing programs are most effective when viewed holistically.



We have to look outside of Paid Advertising, to everything around it (like **Conversion Rate Optimization** or increasing **Lifetime Value**) for outside return on investment.



In this sense, improving advertising performance is less about in-channel optimization and more about **avoiding bottlenecks throughout the funnel**.

KEY QUESTION

WHY IS IT MYOPIC TO FOCUS SOLELY ON DIRECT RESPONSE WHEN CONSIDERING DIGITAL MARKETING PERFORMANCE?

Let's take an example from traditional retail sales.

Imagine a new store opens in your neighborhood. After days of passing it on your way to work, you decide to venture in. As soon as you walk through the door you are accosted by an employee.



While this scenario rings hyperbolic, it's not far off the mark from how most businesses interact with their customers online. What should strike you as tone deaf is the lack of willingness to help a potential customer **before** they are ready to buy. It's easy to see why this is problematic in a brick and mortar setting. So why is it that so few businesses take the time to understand and serve their customers when it comes to their digital sales and marketing?

HOW TO IDENTIFY YOUR CUSTOMERS' POSITION IN THE BUYER JOURNEY

Once a customer is engaged in your funnel, you need to qualify them by analyzing their behavior. Only data-driven behavioral analysis gives you real insight into your customer. Behavior is king. Best practices are generic prescriptions, far outpaced in effectiveness by iterative experimentation and analysis. Here are signals you can analyze to understand your customers:

- 1 Traffic Sources** - How your customers found you online can tell you a lot about their intentions. By adding URL and analytics tags to your campaigns, you can identify in-roads to your website.
 - Direct Visit (Typed in URL)
 - Organic Search
 - Paid Search
 - Links
 - Advertisements
 - E-mail
- 2 Session History** - Website session history gives us invaluable data to qualify your customers. Has the user visited your website before and if so, how frequent are the visits? What did they do when they got here? What pages did they navigate to? These are some of the questions that must be answered for conversion rate optimization (CRO).
 - Cookies
 - Session Duration
 - Total Visits
 - Heat Maps
 - Session Recordings
 - Bounce Rate
 - Form Submissions
- 3 Content & Keywords** - This is where all study of intentionality starts when it comes to optimizing your funnel. What content are they interested in? What keywords lead them to you? This gives us direct insight into the buying intent of your customers.
 - Keyword Intent
 - Browsing Intent
 - White Paper Downloads
 - Case Study Views
 - Blog Views
 - Page Views

HOW TO IDENTIFY YOUR CUSTOMERS' POSITION IN THE BUYER JOURNEY (CONT'D)

4 Feedback Mechanisms - Beyond analyzing the behavior of your customers, it's important to interact with your customers and give them an opportunity to share their voice.


- Live Chat
- Reviews
- Ratings
- Surveys
- Contact Us
- Social Media
- Customer Service Data

5 Engagement - How are your users engaged with your content? These empirical signals can indicate whether your messaging is on or off target.

- Email Opens
- Email Clicks
- Social Media Follows
- Social Media Comments
- Social Media Shares
- Social Media Tags

All of these variables offer information on what your customers are looking for and how you can help them. Instead of speaking to different customers with different needs in the same way, the key to unlocking digital marketing success lies in speaking to your customers contextually and offering a path-to-purchase that is relevant to them. Pay attention to consumer behavior, create a contextual path-to-purchase, and, alongside an integrated sales funnel like FunnelKake's, you'll be on your way to mastering the buyer journey.

CONCLUSION

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- For businesses whose sales and marketing efforts have failed in the past, navigating the digital marketing landscape can feel hopeless. SMB sales and marketing efforts go awry for various reasons. Sometimes it's a path to purchase focused on your needs rather than the needs of your customer, other times it is a lack of synergy between marketing channels. Whatever the case, marketing in the digital era demands an integrated funnel, and **businesses who utilize our proprietary solution** will reap the benefits by mastering the buyer journey.
 - See your marketing efforts pay off with FunnelKake's integrated funnel.
 - FunnelKake was founded on the core belief that digital sales & marketing is most effective as an integrated sales funnel. Thus, offering the optimal solution for SMBs whose past marketing efforts have failed to generate return-on-investment.
 - Consumers in the digital age are more vigilant than ever when it comes to making purchasing decisions. Google-sponsored research found that **88% of consumers consulted an "average of 10.4 sources"** before making a buying decision. With the freedom to explore many different products and services on the internet, it's counter-productive to market to your customers through limited channels. Surviving the digital era requires an integrated funnel that brings modern buyers down from varying stages of consideration to conversion through a variety of touchpoints.
 - In a survey conducted by the **Local Search Association (LSA)**, when a group of local businesses was asked "Do you believe that a single integrated marketing system would improve the efficiency or effectiveness of your online marketing?" Roughly 62% said "yes," and only 7% said "no." Even though most business owners understand the power of the integrated funnel, they have struggled to find an effective solutions provider to meet their needs. FunnelKake is the simple answer to this problem.

CONCLUSION (CONT'D)

Our full-stack of digital sales and marketing services

We integrate the following assets and performance areas for SMBs, ecommerce, and startups.



Website



Conversion Rate
Optimization (CRO)



Social Media
Marketing (SMM)



Search Engine
Optimization (SEO)



Search Engine
Marketing (SEM)



Pay-per-click
Advertising (PPC)



Directory
Advertising



Content
Marketing



Email
Marketing



Ecommerce



Reputation
Management



Retention
Marketing

Don't get left behind. Thrive in the digital era with FunnelKake.

Our integrated funnel includes everything you need to promote your business, generate leads, and increase sales. You take care of delivering great products and services; we'll handle getting new sales, gaining new customers, and keeping your existing customers buying and referring more. If you're ready to see your digital marketing efforts finally pay off **contact us and see how our integrated funnel will help you.**

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