

THE  
DIGITAL  
MARKETING  
SUCCESS  
PLAN



HOW TO AVOID  
POOR COMMUNICATIONS,  
MISALIGNED EXPECTATIONS,  
AND WASTED DOLLARS

COREY MORRIS

THE  
DIGITAL  
MARKETING  
SUCCESS  
PLAN



HOW TO AVOID  
POOR COMMUNICATIONS,  
MISALIGNED EXPECTATIONS,  
AND WASTED DOLLARS

COREY MORRIS



INDIE BOOKS  
INTERNATIONAL

© 2024 by Corey Morris  
All rights reserved.  
Printed in the United States of America.

No part of this publication may be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means, without the prior permission of the publisher. Requests for permission should be directed to [permissions@indiebooksintl.com](mailto:permissions@indiebooksintl.com), or mailed to Permissions, Indie Books International, 2511 Woodlands Way, Oceanside, CA 92054.

The views and opinions in this book are those of the author at the time of writing this book, and do not reflect the opinions of Indie Books International or its editors.

Neither the publisher nor the author is engaged in rendering legal or other professional services through this book. If expert assistance is required, the services of appropriate professionals should be sought. The publisher and the author shall have neither liability nor responsibility to any person or entity with respect to any loss or damage caused directly or indirectly by the information in this publication.

Digital Marketing Success Plan™ is a registered trademark of Digital Marketing Success Plan, LLC.  
Google®, Google Ads®, Performance Max®, Google Analytics®, Google Tag Manager®, Google Search Console®, Google Business Profile®, Google Local Services Ad®, GA3®, and GA4®, are registered trademarks of Google, LLC  
Meta® is a registered trademark of Meta Platforms, Inc.  
Instagram® is a registered trademark of Instagram, LLC  
LinkedIn® is a registered trademark of LinkedIn Corporation  
Microsoft Advertising® is a registered trademark of Microsoft Corporation  
WordStream® is a registered trademark of WordStream, Inc.  
Word® is a registered trademark of Microsoft Corporation  
ChatGPT® is a registered trademark of OpenAI OpCo, LLC

ISBN-13: 978-1-957651-80-4  
Library of Congress Control Number: 2024912498

Designed by *theBookDesigners*

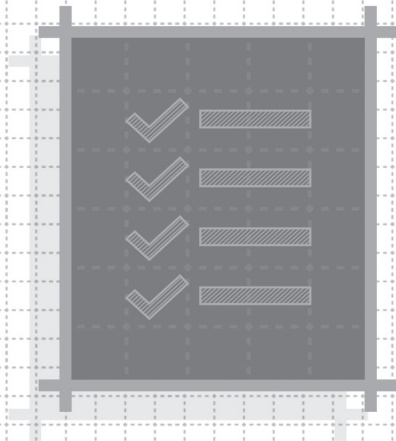
INDIE BOOKS INTERNATIONAL®, INC.  
2511 WOODLANDS WAY  
OCEANSIDE, CA 92054  
[www.indiebooksintl.com](http://www.indiebooksintl.com)

# CONTENTS

<b>Part I: Why Digital Marketing Success Matters.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Chapter 1: When It's Time For Digital Marketing Planning .....	3
Chapter 2: How To Maximize ROI With A Digital Marketing Success Plan.....	13
<b>Part II: START Planning Steps To Develop Your Digital Marketing Success Plan.....</b>	<b>23</b>
Chapter 3: S For Strategy.....	25
Chapter 4: T For Tactics.....	49
Chapter 5: A For Application .....	57
Chapter 6: R For Review .....	65
Chapter 7: T For Transformation .....	73
<b>Part III: What's Next.....</b>	<b>81</b>
Chapter 8: Arrival At Your Own Digital Marketing Success Plan.....	83
Chapter 9: Digital Marketing Success Plan Implementation And Iteration.....	89
Chapter 10: Into The Future.....	101

<b>Appendices</b> .....	<b>105</b>
Appendix A: Calculating Return On Investment (ROI) .....	107
Appendix B: SEO Isn't Just SEO.....	109
Appendix C: Factors That Affect SEO's ROI .....	111
Appendix D: Dangers Of Cookie-Cutter SEO.....	113
Appendix E: How To Create And Manage An SEO Budget ..	115
Appendix F: Dangers Of Copying Another Brand's SEO.....	117
Appendix G: What Matters In SEO As AI Accelerates Change .....	119
Appendix H: Sustainable SEO Strategy.....	121
Appendix I: Use SEO To Target Your Audience Through The Funnel .....	123
Appendix J: Avoiding Cannibalization Between Organic And Paid Search.....	125
Appendix K: GA4 Reports You Need .....	127
Appendix L: Acknowledgments.....	131
Appendix M: About The Author.....	133
Endnotes .....	137
Index .....	139

# PART I



**WHY DIGITAL  
MARKETING SUCCESS  
MATTERS**



# ONE

## WHEN IT'S TIME FOR DIGITAL MARKETING PLANNING

**THE YEAR WAS 2008**, and this is my “Corey, the rookie search-engine-optimization (SEO) analyst” comeback story.

A digital agency (before “digital” was the nomenclature) hired me because I was a hard worker and eager to learn. Within the first couple years of my career there, I was provided with formal training and certification in SEO and the opportunity to be “the SEO guy” for the agency’s clients.

One of my very first SEO clients was a criminal defense attorney based in the Midwest; let’s call him Bernie the attorney. He wanted to use SEO so he could be found, predominantly on Google, for key legal practice focuses such as white-collar crimes, among others. Working with him, we built a new website, wrote optimized web copy, did all the SEO best practices, tracked performance over time, and within four months, achieved first-page, top-five position results for several targeted terms.

After a warm greeting and walking Bernie back to our conference room with a neat stack of printed and stapled

## THE DIGITAL MARKETING SUCCESS PLAN

reports on the table and his website up on the screen, we sat down to get started. I had my plan mapped out of how I wanted to walk through the report.

I started out by displaying the specific keywords, where they were ranking, and showing a comparison to the previous month, as well as when we began SEO. The software was more challenging to configure back in those days, but I had solid ranking metrics that lined up with what we saw manually in the search results as well. Excitedly, I walked through the traffic metrics next. Organic search traffic was up in a way that correlated with those improved rankings. I shared the visit quality metrics and could hardly hold in my excitement to flip over to the next page—the one I thought would be best received—the conversion goals page. I had nearly two dozen conversions from search traffic. It was such a clear picture of how the SEO efforts were working by increasing visibility, engagement, and ultimately, people filling out his contact form to become clients.

Everything was going so well in my mind. Traffic was going to the site and contact forms were being filled out. All the metrics in my SEO report were green, and the graphs were pointing upward. However, when I got to the end of my walk-through of the report, I could tell that Bernie was not happy. He abandoned his poker face and was very direct that he was not impressed by any of the positive statistics. “Corey, none of this matters. I have not gotten a single case since I started spending all this money with you. All I want you to do is get me at least one substantial case in ninety days or else.”

Crestfallen, I left the meeting. The standard SEO metrics told me I was doing a good job. How could this client not

think I was doing a good job? I sat down with my SEO mentor, Lloyd, and complained that I did everything right. “No, you didn’t, Corey; you didn’t understand the real business issue here. It is not clicks and page views, it is paying clients.” Lloyd shared with me some deeper questions to take back to the client to understand his business.

I met with Bernie at his office, and we mapped out different metrics together. I made revised decisions based on this new information and revamped strategies and tactics. Little did I know at the time, through this process I had created my first digital marketing success plan. That came about by going deeper into the client’s business, starting with his ultimate business outcome and goal, validating that SEO truly was an appropriate channel for it (despite what he had already signed on to do contractually), and getting out of my siloed SEO mindset.

In the planning process, I realized that business metrics trump SEO metrics. We implemented the new plan and focused on substance and not vanity. Rather than focusing on terms that get a lot of traffic and visibility but also generate a lot of unqualified and unprofitable leads, we shifted focus to a quality approach with terms that would drive the right kind of cases. We matched the funnel to search intent and devised a full content plan, technical SEO auditing, and an approach to set him apart from the competition and garner the key cases that matter.

Have you heard the expression, “Don’t make a federal case out of it?” That’s not what a criminal defense lawyer says. Three months later, we landed not one but three high-dollar white-collar crime cases going to federal court. After that, we settled in for a long, successful relationship. Bernie’s practice continued to grow, along with his reputation and influence in the region.

## THE DIGITAL MARKETING SUCCESS PLAN

The moral of the story: business metrics trump SEO metrics every day of the week.

### WHY DIGITAL MARKETING PLANNING MATTERS

Digital marketing has been a discipline since before it had the word “digital” in it. Whether we’re talking about what was formerly called “internet” marketing, “online” marketing, or any combination of inbound, outbound, or other digital or web-based activities, it has become synonymous with marketing overall. And that’s a great thing. What started as siloed or even sometimes narrow and gimmick-filled channels like SEO and paid search, or old school things like email marketing, or those harder to attribute to direct sales like social, we’re now in an era where all are widely accepted as important parts of the marketing mix for most businesses overall. We don’t have to put “digital” as much at the front of a lot of the marketing things we do, as it is accepted as an everyday part of marketing plans.

The appeal of harnessing brand awareness and direct leads or sales online emerged alongside consumer adoption of digital experiences. My personal affinity for things that can be directly measured attracted me to digital marketing versus some of the tried-and-true traditional channels and approaches. I’m not against traditional marketing or things that can’t be measured as easily. In fact, I love the tech and things that my friends who focus on out-of-home advertising and the physical space can do. However, for me, the allure of online activities and being able to track things (within reasonable privacy standards and with anonymized data) is still really attractive.

While a lot of traditional advertising and marketing relied on long-established methodologies and focused on creative and messaging, digital was a new frontier and Wild West. OK, enough of my interpretation of how marketing has developed and changed over the years I've been in the game.

Trust me and know that with the ability to do things quickly, measure their impact, iterate, and either “follow the script” of best practices or do something no one has done before, the nature of digital marketing is that there isn't one way to get to your goals. On top of that, the one constant is change.

We have enough to keep up with when it comes to changes in search and social algorithms, privacy laws, ways we can track and attribute performance, and emerging tech. And that's just the digital marketing channels and tech overall. That doesn't even take into account our own business strategies, products, services, target audiences, and goals. Oh, and there's the ever-changing target that we have in our competitors and their actions.

Whether we're focused on artificial intelligence (AI), changes in cookies, privacy laws, or shifting consumer/prospect behavior—we have a lot on our plates.

It can be tempting to jump in and just “do” digital marketing, knowing this constant state of change. In fact, SEO is a great example, as “optimization” is in its name, implying the ongoing and iterative nature of it as a channel and discipline. I'll get into some real stories in a bit that shed light on some client and prospect situations. However, some quick examples will be provided showing how easy it is in digital marketing to jump in and just start spending money.

EXAMPLE ONE

Google makes it way too easy to spend money in Google Ads by suggesting to small (and really all) businesses that machine learning always helps them spend money effectively. You see this in Performance Max campaigns, AI-generated ads, and the insanely dumb optimization score. While Google has been a tremendous source of business growth, revenue generation, and profits for my clients over nearly two decades and is in the mix of a lot of campaigns we run, I have constantly seen updates geared toward spending more, whether it is working for the client/brand or not.

EXAMPLE TWO

Meta saw how complex their ad platform was, so they decided to add advertising to their organic platforms with “boosted posts,” making it easy to spend hundreds of dollars to show a post to an ill-defined audience in a few taps without ever leaving your everyday Instagram mobile app. While boosting still works and is part of a lot of successful strategies, what started out as a tactic to spend a few bucks and get an out-sized return in reach has become something with diminishing returns and a very easy way to spend a lot of money that won’t connect to return on investment (ROI).

EXAMPLE THREE

Every. Single. SEO. Tool. Ever. Every one of them has a low-barrier-to-entry site auditing tool that may help with indexation but doesn't actually help you convert your traffic. On top of that, their pricing is insanely high, and they make you feel like you must use a crazy expensive tool to do good (or any) SEO. And please know that I say this as a *huge* proponent of tech and AI. I have used it since the first day of my SEO career and have tried nearly every tool that I can get my hands on. Yet, when I look at the cost of the tools versus many of the promises of software, I find that more isn't always better and that I have wasted more dollars than I care to calculate over my career on tools that haven't provided ROI or that have long sat underutilized or even dormant.

EXAMPLE FOUR

Social media for business-to-business (B2B). Enough said. People don't think about where their actual audience is when buying. The trend has become quality over quantity over the years as social media has matured and attribution modeling has gotten better. However, there are still plenty of brands doing social without a strategy, a plan, or expectation of ROI. I'm not saying there isn't value in brand awareness and engagement—in fact, I'd love it if that was an admitted or stated goal by a lot of companies if there isn't a direct ROI expectation. However, I find that often, that doesn't exist despite some staggering budgets and efforts being devoted to social media.

### EXAMPLE FIVE

Cost-per-thousand (CPM) models in programmatic display advertising in 2024 are just insane. There are a number of strategic, market-based, and maybe even economic reasons why programmatic is so crazy right now. With constant changes due to AI, privacy laws, changes to cookies, and more, it is bound to get flooded with new ads and advertisers even more while giving even less transparency. Like anything, with a strategy or plan, it can be connected to a marketing funnel, customer journey, and ROI. However, programmatic can be out of control and a quick way to spend a lot of money without a bigger plan as well.

### BACK TO PLANNING

With those examples in mind and shifting back to discussing marketing plans—marketing plans aren't a new concept, and digital marketing plans aren't either—they are as important as before. New tech and changes are coming at us faster than ever. Companies have been burned by agencies, consultants, and hires that have not delivered to expectations. People are moving to different companies and roles as frequently as ever.

The “Great Resignation” and the ongoing trend of people remaining in roles for less time than they used to means that a lot of marketing plans and strategies are outliving the people who put them in place or approved them. That makes the need for documentation and objectivity even bigger. Turnover of people, ideas, and strategies can be very disruptive and

cause issues with seeing plans through to meaningful ROI. In fact, the average tenure of a CMO among the top 100 advertisers decreased to 3.1 years in 2023.<sup>1</sup> And, no, I'm not pointing fingers at or picking on clients—agencies have also seen increased turnover.

Having a digital marketing plan that is documented, objective, and fully defines your goals, roles, resources, strategy, tactics, assets, measurables, and schedule is critical. Without one, you're relying on what is in people's heads, following some sort of checklist, or just doing things on a whim when there's time or interest. That is *not* a recipe for success.

Digital marketing is an investment. Whether you're paying in-house staff, media spend, software, contractors, consultants, an agency, or a combination of all of the above, dollars are being expended on resources. I can also make the same case for soft costs of time and energy investments. Investments should be made with an expectation of a return on that investment.

If you have ROI goals and desires for digital marketing versus looking at it just like an expense or "vendor" relationship that you must do, then you absolutely need a digital marketing plan. Or, better, a digital marketing success plan.