



How to Build a Digital Strategy



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Digital technology provides brokers with ways to grow their business through targeted lead generation, sophisticated customer marketing, and personalized sales and customer service. But just implementing technology won't deliver on this promise. It's only through the application of a strategic plan, wrapped around the right digital technology stack, that will allow brokers to maximize their results and drive their brokerage forward into the future.

Many brokers aren't sure why or how to include digital in their growth plan. Here are 5 of the most common questions and concerns we hear and how we respond to them.

1 **Our brokerage is still growing; we're not sure investing in digital is that critical.**
Many brokers with whom we work are growing, and that's very encouraging. But a digital strategy is not just about driving leads: it's about transforming your business and setting you up for the future. Decreasing response time, ensuring that follow-ups happen and optimizing the operations of your sales and service teams – in addition to generating targeted leads and implementing smart customer marketing – will ensure your brokerage continues to succeed.

2 **Digital is too expensive: it's only realistic for large brokers.**
Digital is an investment of time, money and resources, but so was your brick-and-mortar business. Both smaller and larger brokerages view digital as a critical investment. They have built strategic plans, so they know where they want their business to be next year; they are also incredibly excited about their future over the next five years. They are successful because they believe in the plans they have in place and are committed to making them happen. Investment concerns are real: sometimes it's more comforting to see the construction happening in your new office or hear your sales team on the phone than to spend money on less tangible marketing automation tools, web platforms, building email strategies or driving leads through paid ads. However, digital services do create transparent measurements for measuring accountability. By implementing lead-to-revenue and other key metric strategies across all channels, systems and internal departments, it becomes a lot easier to see where your investments are going and how they're performing. This level of connected insight is virtually impossible without best-of-breed technology, but it is a critical part of the process. For digital beginners, we encourage brokers to factor in one to two years to build a foundation that will include setting realistic performance benchmarks.

3 **Doesn't digital just drive people looking for cheap leads to our website?**
On the contrary, when digital is implemented with a strategic approach, it can help you avoid the bargain hunters and attract high-quality leads. One of the first steps we include in a digital strategy is to help brokers build their target buyer personas. Personas are a great way to picture the types of clients you want to engage; from there, you determine where to find them, as well as how, when and what they want to buy. In a recent strategic engagement, a broker client concentrated their acquisition efforts on a few key target personas; consequently, the volume of unqualified leads dropped from more than 50 per cent to 20 per cent. This allowed the brokerage's sales team to focus their efforts, resulting in a significantly higher conversion rate in just four months.

4 **My BMS can already run support marketing campaigns**
No single solution today can properly manage online and offline sales, service and marketing at scale (this is a much broader topic than what we'll cover here). Your broker management system (BMS) is critical to your technology stack, but it is just one component. BMS and customer relationship management (CRM) platforms may support a level of basic marketing, but they are best at what they do – customer/prospect relationship management, not marketing automation. We encourage brokers to choose best-of-breed, future-proof solutions that can scale with your brokerage; and remember, significant investment is required to stay in the forefront as leaders.

5 **We've tried a bunch of things over the years and we've haven't seen the return on investment.**
Your business is insurance. Your days are dedicated to servicing your existing customers, selling policies and managing your teams so that they can deliver on that same level of service. Implementing a digital strategy isn't something that can be done in the 15 minutes you have available. It can't be done by a team with little or no digital expertise, and it certainly isn't a single tactic like a website or Google adwords campaign. Many brokers have tried various digital marketing tactics and report that their projects have failed to show much success. The reason is simple: tactics and technology do not work unless they're supported by a solid business strategy. A strategy will determine the people you are trying to engage, align the best channels and technology to reach them, ensure your team is set up to respond and outline the key performance indicators (KPIs) to assess levels of success.

Conclusion

Digital has become critical for brokers to compete in today's market. Those who are successful have three key elements in place:

1. A strategy that focuses on lead generation, nurturing and customer marketing
2. A tech stack that includes best-of-breed technology
3. Clearly defined key performance indicators (KPIs) and data-driven insights, allowing them to accurately measure return on investment and optimize growth