

**What Makes A Digital Marketing Strategy Successful:
Insights For Growth-Phase Consulting Firms**

Megan Kealy

Masters in Digital Communication Candidate
Hussman School of Journalism and Media
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
November 22, 2021

Thesis Project, Submitted To:
Dr. Joseph Cabosky, Committee Chair
Dr. Lois Boynton, Committee Member
Courtney Kaprelian, Committee Member

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Literature Review	2
What is a Digital Marketing Strategy?	2
What Makes a Digital Marketing Strategy Successful?	3
Determine the “Why?” of the Organization	
Analyze the Competitive Landscape	
Identify Key Channels	
Develop a Content Plan	
Establish a Budget and Forecast	
Measure, Analyze, and Optimize	
Evaluating the Customer Journey for Consulting Firms	6
Identify the Target Audiences	
Develop Audience Personas	
Create a Customer Journey Map	
Digital Marketing Tactics Most Useful for Consulting Firms	8
Email Marketing	
Paid Media	
Earned Media	
Owned Media	
Social Media and Display Ads	
Methods.....	12
Deliverables	13
Communications Audit	
Best Practices Guide	
Timeline	45
References	46

INTRODUCTION

Digital marketing is the transformation of businesses and organizational landscapes – be it opening access to global markets and communities of interest, uncovering new pricing models, revolutionizing the placement and distribution of products, transforming media, facilitating greater collaboration and efficiency within organizations, or empowering consumers to demand new customer-centric marketing models (Kaufman & Horton, 2014). To successfully operate a business today, modern marketing strategies must be implemented to keep pace with competition, and marketers must lead with a digital-first mindset to meet their audiences where they are most likely to be found: online and digitally. Traditional marketing tactics, such as television commercials and magazine advertisements, should integrate with today's digital communication methods in order for companies to prosper or even survive (Brabandere, 2016).

Implementing a strong digital marketing strategy is especially important for growth-stage consulting firms today. Consulting firms are customer-centric companies comprised of industry experts who offer professional guidance and actionable solutions to businesses seeking growth or change (Deloitte, 2021). Those that are in the growth stage have proven their product to existing customers, are generating recurring revenues, and are now in the process of growing and scaling but are encountering obstacles to that growth (Churchill & Lewis, 1983). These companies are typically at a place where they can afford to hire team members with specialized skills and create departments with hierarchy, allowing founders to focus on their vision and letting employees take more ownership of the day-to-day project work (Churchill & Lewis, 1983). While traditional strategies such as word of mouth, telemarketing, direct mail, print ads, and event networking are important, these types of businesses must consider the benefits of turning to digital marketing for its massive marketplace of online prospects. As the companies look to

scale, they can reach an enormous audience online in a way that is both cost-effective and measurable.

One challenge for the consulting industry, however, is a lack of available insights regarding the type of digital marketing tactics they should implement to be successful long-term and what truly makes their digital marketing strategy effective. By developing two deliverables to address this unmet need — a communications audit and a best practices guide — growth-phase consulting firms will be informed of the types of digital marketing strategies and tactics they should implement to prepare for scalability and success. The communications audit evaluates the effectiveness of three reputable consulting firms’ digital communications practices, identifying the types of tactics and strategies that drive success. The best practices guide provides recommendations that growth-phase consulting firms can use to improve their digital marketing strategy and prepare them for long-term success in an evolving, digital-first era.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Current literature emphasizes the importance of companies implementing digital marketing tools to increase their brand awareness and maintain a competitive edge; however, there is little information on the type of tactics to implement by industry. It’s imperative that consulting companies understand which tactical strategies they should use to help them increase their online audience engagement, generate leads, and improve their brand awareness as they look to scale their company.

What is a Digital Marketing Strategy?

A digital marketing strategy – defined by the industry as “a thoughtful plan by a company to produce desired outcomes in the marketplace via customers, channel members, and competitors” – involves the company’s “value proposition, key brand messaging, and data on

target customer demographics” that “helps businesses achieve specific digital goals through carefully selected online marketing channels such as paid, earned, and owned media” (Avery & Teixeira, 2019; Hudson 2021; McKinsey & Company, 2015).

What Makes a Digital Marketing Strategy Successful?

Developing a digital marketing strategy is critical for organizations, as it provides them with a sense of direction and a competitive advantage by helping employees organize workflows, track campaign progress in real time, achieve business objectives, and gather marketing information about customers, prospects, and competitors (Deloitte, 2021). The roadmap to digital integration for a company begins with a value proposition followed by adopting a digital mindset, embracing a new model, formulating a strategy, executing its implementation, and generating sustainability (Shankar & Carpenter, 2012). Creating a truly effective digital marketing campaign requires a strong foundation of both strategy and creativity to turn business objectives into action that delivers meaningful results. The combination of achieving metrics and engagement statistics is what makes a campaign valuable (Hudson, 2021; Hurree, 2020).

Determine the “Why?” of the Organization

To develop a cohesive digital marketing strategy, it’s imperative for a company to first understand why their organization exists. By defining clear business goals, company values, and brand identity, companies will have a strong foundation to build upon as they integrate their digital plans into a wider organizational strategy (Deloitte, 2021; Rum, 2016). They should ensure their business goals are SMART: specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time bound (Hurree, 2020; Rum, 2016). Once they are definitive, it’s easier to match the digital strategy back to the broader company goals for a comprehensive long-term plan. Once a business identifies the core “Why?” of their organization, crafting an effective brand story, authentic

messaging, and engaging content will come more readily (Kaufman & Horton, 2014; Rum, 2016).

Analyze the Competitive Landscape

Understanding the competition is another important element of developing a successful digital marketing strategy. Through the process of researching and analyzing the marketing strategies and business characteristics of direct and indirect competitors within the consulting market, businesses can identify the strengths and weaknesses of other firms, define their company's standing in comparison, and highlight gaps the organization can fill (Hudson, 2021; Zhukova, 2021). By collecting and analyzing the public information available on competitors' social networks, consulting firms can stay updated on competitors' market positions, check rivals' choice of platforms for advertising and media placements, get insights on competitors' top marketing campaigns, and analyze competitors' search engine optimization (SEO) efforts (Zhukova, 2021). This type of competitive analysis provides useful knowledge when building out a company's digital marketing strategy and will help an organization maintain a top presence in the industry long-term (Hurree, 2020; Zhukova, 2021).

Identify Key Channels

It's also important to understand the key elements of the digital ecosystem that apply to the organization – specifically, the digital channels where the target audience is most engaged (Deloitte, 2021; Rum, 2016; Shankar & Carpenter, 2012). These include paid and organic search interaction, social signals for SEO, a broad reach of content strategy, display advertising and data strategy, and brand and proposition effect (Avery & Teixeira, 2019; Rum, 2016; Shankar & Carpenter, 2012). Drilling into each of these key areas of the digital ecosystem can enable a

company to have a better understanding of what it will entail to strengthen their online presence most effectively.

Develop a Content Plan

Content is key. It is critical to identify what the audience is looking for and creatively provide it to them. To do this, an organization should work towards developing quality content that's customized by audience and remains consistent in its messaging. Companies will likely find there will be overlaps that can help build consistency in messaging across digital channels (Hurree, 2020; McKinsey & Company, 2015). Developing a content calendar is also important to build on strategic goals about the content, as audiences like to see consistency (Holt, 2016; Rum, 2016). Creating a timeline with clear deadlines about the content deployment cadence is helpful, whether the frequency is daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, or annually (Rum, 2016).

Establish a Budget and Forecast

To ensure a successful digital marketing strategy, it's imperative the organization establishes a clear budget and forecasting plan (Ridley, 2020). The marketing department should begin by creating a list of all the desired marketing activities the company wishes to achieve (typically within one year's time), then prioritize them (Sherman, 2020). By tying each activity back to the business objectives, it should be clear which activities are most important to reach as short-term and long-term goals. Some may have to take precedence over others, depending on the budget available for marketing needs. It's critical to revisit the budget regularly and on an annual basis, as marketing needs will likely shift from year-to-year as the company scales.

Measure, Analyze, and Optimize

Another critical aspect of developing a marketing strategy is to set success benchmarks prior to a marketing strategy implementation so the strategy is more targeted and intentional

(Rum, 2016). If a company keeps its efforts open-ended, it will be difficult to measure return on investment (ROI) and campaign progress, which will be important for testing, learning, and improving (Avery & Teixeira, 2019). Tying marketing activities back to the SMART business goals helps companies set benchmarks for tracking progress and defining what “success” looks like (Deloitte, 2021; Rum, 2016). Most commonly, success is often measured by a form of conversion rate, amount of online traffic, and revenue (Deloitte, 2021; Hurree, 2020; Shankar & Carpenter, 2012).

By “going digital,” companies can instantly begin tracking and measuring all activity related to audience engagement and adjust marketing campaigns accordingly. When setting up a campaign online, it’s beneficial to identify the appropriate benchmarks to establish goals, help stay on target, and understand which marketing activities are working and which need improvement (Digital Marketing Institute, 2018). Once campaigns are running, it’s important to measure the impact of the strategy and optimize where necessary.

Businesses can understand – and shift – their path to success by following the concept of the “Build-Measure-Learn Feedback Loop,” which says that the faster a team can “go through the loop,” the faster they can learn and the faster they can create and scale a sustainable business (Ries, 2011). This is true for the creation of a digital marketing strategy, in that, the faster companies can adopt digital tools and integrate their traditional marketing efforts into digital elements, the faster they can outgrow competition and forge onto a successful future.

Evaluating the Customer Journey for Consulting Firms

Identify the Target Audiences

Defining the target audience is another critical element of a marketing strategy, enabling marketers to tailor content within each campaign to appeal to the emotions and interests of the

target audience, understand the language used by the target audience – including the phrases and terms that resonate with them – position messaging in a way that connects with the audience’s challenges, desires, and motivations, and know where the target audience spends their time to place messaging in the most-effective locations (Hurree, 2020).

The way customers speak about a company’s brand is also a critical insight that can be gathered for use in shaping its strategy; therefore, companies should understand how their customers describe the attributes and benefits of their products and services in order to view themselves the way their customers do and adjust accordingly (Neumeier, 2005).

Organizations should also create a persona, or personas, to target, rather than solely relying on data points (Pierno, 2017). The more defined the audience is, the better the marketing strategy will be, as they will be top of mind during the creation of brand messaging and advertisements.

Develop Audience Personas

To dive deeper into the identity of the target audience, it’s helpful for companies to build audience personas by creating two or three persona profiles of the typical audience types that engage with the company’s brand or services most (Avery & Teixeira, 2019). Each persona should be described demographically, psychographically and behaviorally, noting their current and desired mindset (Holt, 2016).

When looking at the different user types, it’s important to identify intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, audience pain points and challenges, preferred information sources, and online behaviors and motivators (Avery & Teixeira, 2019). Additional elements of the persona research could include gathering preference information about product reviews and online customer/client

communication, as 74% of adults prefer to read online reviews by others who have purchased the item before making a purchase of their own (Smith & Anderson, 2016).

Create a Customer Journey Map

The goal of marketing is to reach consumers at the moments that most influence their decisions (Court, Elzinga, Mulder, & Vetvik, 2009). With consumers so active on the Internet today, it's important for companies to target customers at touch points when they are most open to influence. Understanding the journey of the customer – from awareness to consideration to decision to retention – helps companies identify where and how to reach the audience with their communication strategy (Rum, 2016). Customers should be moved from their current to desired mindset through a variety of campaign tactics that will change and shape their behaviors (Avery, & Teixeira, 2019).

To truly move forward, businesses must not just embrace “what works” but should constantly explore what could work *better* (Brabandere, 2016). This constant exploration is what drives change, inspires creativity, and fosters dynamic strategy, where innovation and out-of-the-box thinking will continue to lead to a more-successful future for companies.

Digital Marketing Tactics Most Useful for Consulting Firms

To create a “good” strategy, companies must focus resources and actions accordingly, rather than trying to cover “all the bases” (Rumelt, 2011). All of the actions in a company's marketing plan should reinforce and support one another deliberately.

To build an effective marketing funnel, companies must break down the various steps of the customer journey (Rum, 2016). As part of this funnel, it's most important to consider top-of-the-funnel activities such as outreach, where audience engagement is key for capturing new

traffic, engaging with repeat customers, and nurturing client relationships (Digital Marketing Institute, 2018).

Additionally, a marketing strategy should encompass a combination of email marketing, paid media, earned media, owned media, shared media, and social media and display ads (Avery & Teixeira, 2019; Dietrich, 2021; Robinson, 2021).

Email Marketing

With consulting firms serving primarily business-to-business (B2B) audiences, it is imperative that email is incorporated into the marketing strategy as it is a highly effective way to engage with existing users and customers, with 72% of B2B customers most likely to share useful content via email (Eliason, 2015; Ridley, 2020). B2B email marketing equates to more engagement, leads, conversions, and in turn, sales (Ridley, 2020).

To utilize email marketing, there are four main areas consulting firms should focus on: audience data collection, personalization of content, an automated email series and drip campaign creation, and email database active growth (Sherman, 2020). Drip campaigns are an effective way to move customers through audience lists and toward a final conversion point (Eliason, 2015). Some recommendations for a B2B model include a welcome series for email signups, onboarding for new customers, and automated replies for contact forms (Ridley, 2020).

Targeted personalization in emails can also help increase customer engagement, resulting in a 20% average increase in sales (Sherman, 2020). Email campaigns with personalized subject lines, for example, are 26% more likely to be opened (Eliason, 2015). Tailored messages can include information like a customer's first name or the last product they bought. Through current customer relationship management (CRM) tools like HubSpot or Salesforce, companies can send tailored campaigns to the proper segments through use of validated tags (Hudson, 2021).

Paid Media

Companies should focus paid digital efforts on customer retargeting and optimization of advertising messaging to stay ahead of direct competition (Avery & Teixeira, 2019). This is because people who see retargeted ads are 70% more likely to convert (Smith & Anderson, 2016). If users are visiting certain product pages that the company would like to focus on, they can use retargeting to show ads that link to that specific product page. Using ads not only drives traffic to a company's website or social media pages, but businesses can also create retargeting campaigns to increase conversions and sales.

Earned Media

The public relations traction channel is helpful for getting recognition in the media via online magazines, newspapers and blogs that can feature a story about a company or its services (Eliason, 2015). Organizations can easily package a story to hand over to reporters to help them shape a positive case study about them and media can solicit information about specific topics as well. Cision, for example, owns sources such as Help a Reporter Out (HARO) and PR Newswire. HARO features an online news media database where news reporters can pitch topics and organizations can seek them. Similarly, PR Newswire is an online news release distribution service, providing companies with an outlet to disseminate announcements to news media databases. These tools assist organizations in getting noticed as industry thought leaders and experts in their special markets.

Owned Media

The more owned media channels a business has, the larger their digital footprint, which means more potential reach to customers and followers (Avery & Teixeira, 2019; Holt, 2016). Consulting firms can utilize owned media by hosting their own website, implementing a search

optimization plan on their website, establishing a blog as a microsite linked from their website home page, and establishing a strong presence on social media (Avery & Teixeira, 2019).

Social Media and Display Ads

Furthermore, social media platforms are an area where influencers can heavily persuade other customers via word of mouth, building up the trust and awareness of companies (Holt, 2016). LinkedIn and Facebook are two platforms that are conducive to B2B business promotion (Ridley, 2020).

Advertising on social networks also allows companies to target ads with greater specificity than on Google or another search engine (Eliason, 2015). Companies can easily refine their ads based on certain demographics, interests, and pages people have liked.

By building up an inventory of social content, marketing teams can schedule social media posts on a regular basis and realize an increase in engagement and shares (Deloitte, 2021; Holt, 2016). This can help position the company as an industry thought leader and stay ahead of competition (Hudson, 2021).

Digging deeper into the audiences on each of these platforms (LinkedIn, Facebook) can also allow companies to determine the best messaging and creative content to use for paid advertising to reach the right audiences and maximize conversions (Avery & Teixeira, 2019). Companies can take advantage of A/B testing as a way to optimize their marketing results (Avery & Teixeira, 2019). Running A/B tests can help companies learn how to drive more traffic to their websites, generate more leads, increase conversion rates, and gain a competitive advantage (HubSpot & Kissmetrics, 2021). LinkedIn also allows companies to advertise to specific people based on their industry, employer, job title, seniority, interests, or groups. Testing

each of these audiences will be an integral part of finding the best group to target for future advertising, ultimately maximizing conversion opportunities.

METHODS

The goal of this project is to provide educational materials that consulting firms can use to implement a strategic digital marketing plan in order to enhance their brand identity and grow their online presence. My communications audit offers insight into the habits of successful consulting firms' digital methods, while my best practices guide provides the tactical recommendations that other growth-phase firms can use to implement their own digital strategy.

DELIVERABLES

Communications Audit: Analysis of Consulting Firms' Online Communication Channels

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	14
Objective	14
Methods.....	14
Platforms.....	15
Company Analysis: Accenture.....	16
Key Themes.....	16
Owned Media.....	18
Paid Media.....	21
Earned Media.....	22
Company Analysis: Boston Consulting Group.....	23
Key Themes.....	23
Owned Media.....	24
Paid Media.....	27
Earned Media.....	27
Company Analysis: Health Advances LLC.....	28
Key Themes.....	29
Owned Media.....	30
Earned Media.....	33
Key Takeaways.....	34
1. Top Channel.....	34
2. Brand Identity.....	34
3. Content Themes.....	35
4. Search Engine Optimization.....	35
Sources.....	36

Introduction

A communications audit is the research and analysis of an organization's communication methods, audience engagement, and stakeholder feedback to identify the strengths and opportunities of the company's communication practices. In an audit, the content, engagement, trends and insights are reviewed to conclude how a company is best reaching its target audience across key channels. Based on the best practices identified, recommendations can be formed to help other companies build their communications strategy effectively.

Objective

This audit examines the digital communications channels – including paid, earned, and owned media – of three consulting firms which are customer-centric companies comprised of industry experts who offer professional guidance and actionable solutions to businesses seeking growth or change (Deloitte, 2021).

The information uncovered in this audit will inform the tactical recommendations that will be used in a best practices guide designed to help other consulting firms improve their digital communications efforts, enabling them to build and reinforce positive relationships with key stakeholders.

Methods

During the timeframe of September to October 2021, an assessment took place, analyzing reputable consulting firms and their digital communication practices. Preliminary research was conducted to identify 15 consulting companies using specific research criteria.

15 Reputable Consulting Companies		Research Criteria
Accenture	LEK Consulting	Number of employees
Bain & Company	McKinsey & Company	Active social media accounts
Blue Matter Consulting LLC	PricewaterhouseCoopers	Number of followers for each social media account
Booz Allen Hamilton	Putnam Associates	Average frequency of posts across social media accounts
Boston Consulting Group	Syneos Health	Type of content posted to the social media accounts
Clearview Healthcare Partners	Trinity Life Sciences	External links included on the social media posts
Deloitte	ZS Associates	Type of content and resources included on the company website
Health Advances LLC		Whether the company operates an active blog

Table 1. Original 15 reputable consulting companies identified in the preliminary audit research using the enclosed research criteria

Three of the 15 companies were chosen to analyze deeper for this audit. The companies were identified based on the number of employees, brand recognition, tenure in the consulting industry, and active digital presence. The companies consist of one “large” consulting firm (Accenture), one “mid-sized” consulting firm (Boston Consulting Group) and one “boutique” consulting firm (Health Advances LLC).

Company Name	Category	Number of Employees
Accenture	Large	100,000+
Boston Consulting Group	Mid-sized	2,000-35,000
Health Advances, LLC	Boutique	50-500

Table 2. Companies analyzed for this communications audit

Research was conducted on the three companies to gather quantitative and qualitative metrics and samples of digital content from the past 12 months, examining the companies’ active online communications channels. Data provided insights into the effectiveness of the companies’ current communications programs, providing a solid foundation on which to identify the strengths and key takeaways contained within this report. The content was analyzed based on:

- Publicly available metrics for paid, earned, and owned digital channels including social networks, company websites, blogs, podcasts, paid search, and online reviews
- Information posted online within the past 12 months
- 100 posts reviewed for each social media network

Platforms

Based on the active digital communication channels used by the three companies, as well as publicly-available information, this audit examines elements of paid media (paid search and search engine optimization (SEO)), earned media (company reviews), and owned media (social

media posts on LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter, company websites, company blogs, and company podcasts).

Company Analysis: Accenture

Accenture is a public company with over 600,000 employees and brings in more than \$50 billion in revenue (2021 fiscal year). For the audit, the company is categorized as “large” due to its employee count over 100,000.

Paid Media	Paid Search SEO Keywords
Earned Media	Company Reviews
Owned Media	LinkedIn Facebook Twitter Accenture Website Accenture Blog Accenture Podcast

Table 3. The active communication channels examined for Accenture

Key Themes

Accenture features four key themes across its active online channels including **diversity**, **equity and inclusion (DEI)**, **innovation**, **leadership**, and **sustainability**. The consistency of content across these channels creates a familiar brand identity and a cohesive online presence for the company, allowing viewers to follow a storyline from platform to platform.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

As part of its DEI theme, Accenture is heavily focused on the development of its employees through training and growth opportunities and takes firm stances on social

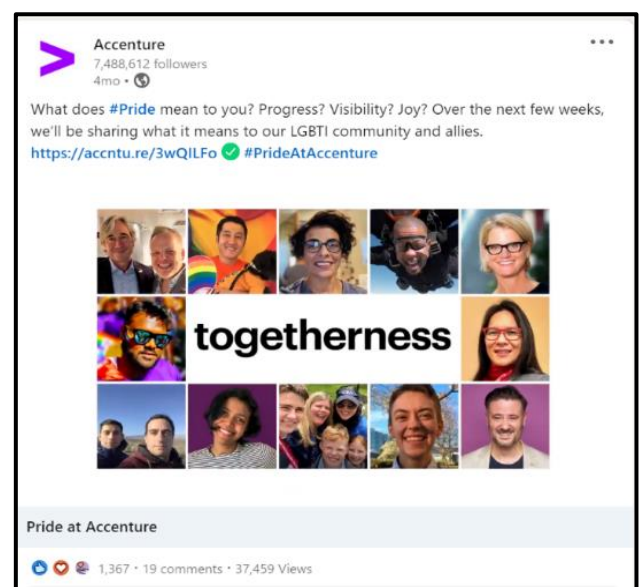


Figure 1. Example of Accenture LinkedIn post highlighting the company’s support of DEI efforts

matters that foster a more progressive and equitable work environment. This is shown through visual storytelling across the company's platforms with imagery and videos that showcase employee events, diversity initiatives, learning and development opportunities, and a focus on serving as allies for one another.

The company's CEO, Julie Sweet, is a minority and an active advocate across social channels as well as a strong voice in the public eye when it comes to industry matters and the future of Accenture.

Innovation

As part of the company's innovation theme, Accenture's passion for evolving its tools, practices, and people is apparent on each of its digital platforms. Its tagline, "Let there be change," is used across all digital channels, creating a consistent message of continuous growth.

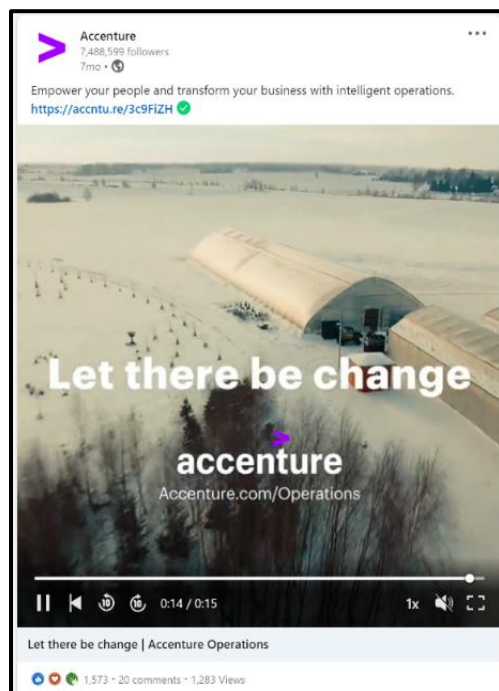


Figure 2. Example of Accenture LinkedIn post applying its “change” tagline

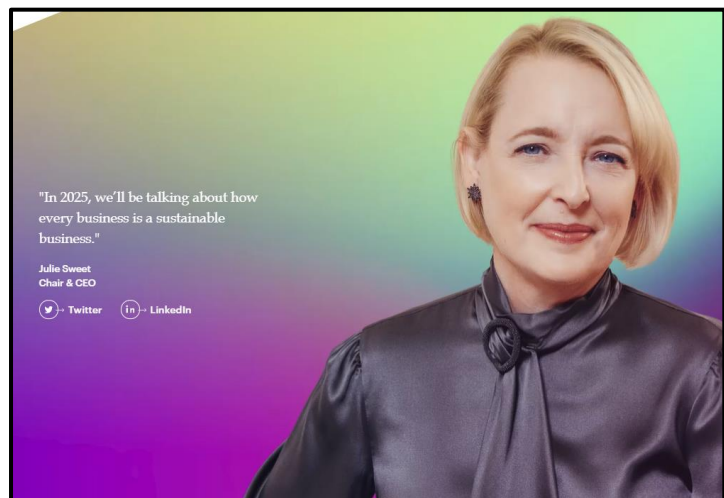


Figure 3. Accenture CEO, Julie Sweet, is featured across the company website making statements about the company's commitment to sustainability

Leadership

The company's industry leadership theme is recognizable through its frequent publishing of white papers, articles, and social conversations about the advanced, proprietary technology it offers clients.

Accenture takes on a leadership voice on the topic of COVID-19, offering data-backed insights and innovative resources companies can use to conduct their businesses successfully post-pandemic.

Sustainability

The company's commitment to sustainability is also a large part of its corporate citizenship efforts.

Accenture has vowed to achieve net-zero emissions by 2025, powering its offices with 100% renewable energy, investing in nature-based carbon removal solutions, engaging key suppliers to reduce their emissions, and equipping its people to make climate-smart travel decisions. These efforts are a testament to its leadership position in the industry as well.

Owned Media

Accenture's owned digital channels that are most active are LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, its company website, blog and podcast.

Social Media Channels

Across all social networks (LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter), there is consistency, uniformity, and alignment in content, branding, key themes, and company portrayal.

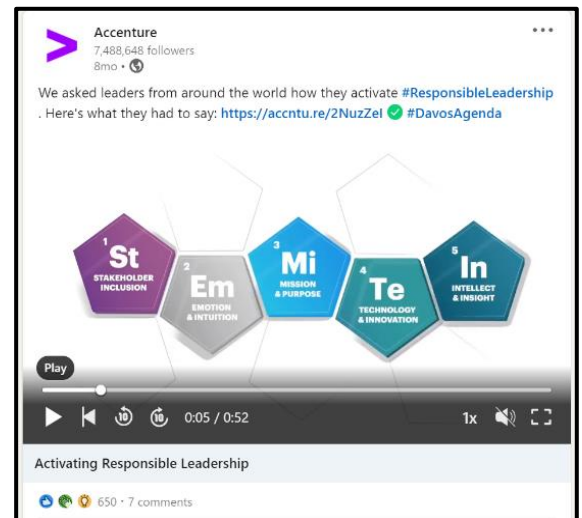


Figure 4. Example of Accenture LinkedIn post using interactive elements to showcase testimonials from leaders around the world

LinkedIn					
# Followers	Average Views	Average Frequency	Average Likes	Average Comments 3	
7,488,242	5,000	2 videos/day, 5 posts/week	300-600		
Facebook					
# Followers	Page Likes	Average Frequency	Average Likes	Average Comments	Average Shares
839,782	790,205	3-5 times/week	200	10	10
Twitter					
# Followers	# Tweets	Average Frequency	Average Likes	Average # Retweets 2	
522,200	21,800	3 posts/day	15		

Table 4. A snapshot of performance metrics pulled from Accenture’s LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter pages, October 2021

Of the 100 posts analyzed, approximately 75 percent contain videos and imagery with interactive, colorful, and moving elements including video clips, polls, survey insights, infographics, and employee testimonials. These types of posts continuously receive the highest engagement from Accenture’s audiences.

From a content standpoint, 50 percent of all social media posts relate to DEI and employee engagement, 30 percent pertain to innovation and leadership featuring thought leadership initiatives and case studies about the company’s services and client offerings, and the remaining 20 percent highlight Accenture’s commitment to sustainability. Within these posts, the company provides tips, best practices, industry reports and data insights.

There is consistent branding across all of Accenture’s social media posts including its color palette, tone of voice, and hashtags (e.g., #LetThereBeChange). There are numerous links connecting the company’s LinkedIn posts to its website, blog and podcast – creating a cohesive online ecosystem.



Figure 5. An Accenture LinkedIn post featuring a video clip about diversity, recruitment, and inclusion that received a very high level of audience engagement (2,267 likes, 44 comments, 47,618 views)

The main differences across social networks are the length of content and audience engagement. The highest audience engagement and interaction is seen on LinkedIn, then Facebook, and lastly, Twitter. On LinkedIn, users “liked” most actively, while on Facebook, users “commented” more, and on Twitter users were more likely to “like” posts rather than “comment” or “share.” The content on Twitter is much more concise than the other channels with the use of bullet points, checklists, and brief summaries.

Company Website

Total Visits	Average Site Duration	Pages per Visit	Bounce Rate	Traffic Sources
23.35M	7 min, 48 sec	7.62	30.77%	LinkedIn: 68.14% YouTube: 14.89% Facebook: 6.41% WhatsApp Webapp: 4.86% Twitter: 1.45%

Table 5. A snapshot of Accenture’s website performance metrics from October 2021

Accenture’s on-page website elements are very colorful, engaging and interactive, portraying an innovative and futuristic tone. There is scrolling movement from section to section, with 80 percent of content featuring content that is focused on change—again highlighting the company’s tagline, “Let there be change.” The themes that are highlighted across the site align with Accenture’s social channels: leadership (e.g., the CEO has a presence throughout the site discussing industry insights and community involvement), DEI (promotion of social matters, employee testimonials, and career opportunities), and sustainability (steps to achieving net-zero emissions). Users can easily navigate across Accenture’s website and leave with an understanding of its clients, services, offerings, and company culture.

Company Blog

Accenture is very active on its blog, posting 2-5 times each month with viewpoints covering various industry and topical trends. As a general theme, the blog content frequently

provides guidance for companies to become digital-first, smarter in cloud computing, and more tech-savvy. The blog is easy to navigate and pulls in the company's theme of innovation and tagline of "Let there be change." It offers an e-newsletter subscription where users can sign up for an ongoing content stream. Additionally, the blog links to Accenture's "Built for Change" podcast series, and links back to the company website and social networks, creating a cohesive digital experience for users.

Company Podcast

Accenture hosts a "Built for Change" podcast series that plays off the company's tagline, "Let there be change." Its two hosts include CEO of Accenture North America, Jimmy Etheredge, and Sports Analyst/former NFL Linebacker/*The New York Times* Bestselling Author, Emmanuel Acho. On each podcast, they discuss motivational and inspirational stories shared by guests and as well as "tough" topics with celebrities who are change-makers and leaders with a goal to shape a more equitable future. Topics include mental health, disabilities, diversity, equality, race and innovation – both in and out of the workplace. The podcast is meant to foster change and bring social issues to light that are critical in driving companies and cultures forward.

Paid Media

Approximately 15 percent of traffic to Accenture's website (Accenture.com) derives from search (86 percent organic and 14 percent paid). To attract desktop traffic from search engines, Accenture pays for approximately 2,300 SEO keywords. The top-searched keywords include: Accenture, Accenture careers, Accenture jobs, Accenture interactive.

The company also invests in paid-per-click advertising on Google. When searching Google using these keywords, an advertisement appears with the delineation "Ad" next to the Accenture web domain in the first result on the search engine results page. Directly beneath is a

link to the Accenture website. This is a good sign for the company's SEO as falling into the top five search results makes this page more likely to be clicked through, increasing the likelihood for more traffic to Accenture's website home page.

Earned Media

There are a variety of company reviews present online discussing Accenture's company culture, quality of life, compensation, career development, and business outlook. Based on the 30 reviews analyzed, employees are expected to work long hours but are rewarded for their hard work through fulfilling growth opportunities, flexible work arrangements, competitive salaries, bonuses and stock options. There is a consensus that the culture is very positive and comprised of support systems that push one another to develop and excel. Diversity is embraced across the company and employees are valued for their unique backgrounds and skill sets. Employees believe the company is focused on innovation and growth while staying true to its identity.

Firm Culture	"Get ready for a wild ride where you'll be working with some of the smartest, most collaborative, and most ambitious people in the world. You'll need to market yourself internally and network with as many people as possible to build you own web of contacts, but it will be worth it."
Quality of Life	"There is a lot of emphasis on taking time off and flexible work arrangements. Accenture has attempted to reduce travel requirements."
Compensation	"The firm consistently reviews the compensation package to ensure the plan has something to offer for everyone. We recently completed an assessment to share feedback on other potential package options that we would value as employees."
Career Development	"Extremely robust internal training, mentoring, and personal advancement opportunities. Very high degree of development assessment, monitoring, and coaching. Industry leading self-guided and professional-led initiatives and skill-building opportunities."
Business Outlook	"Accenture is at the cutting edge of digital consulting. It inspires confidence in my job security and excites me that I get to be a part of a firm that is undoubtedly #1 in the world at this."

Table 6. A handful of randomly-selected, anonymous online reviews about Accenture

Company Analysis: Boston Consulting Group

Boston Consulting Group (BCG) is a private company with over 20,000 employees and brings in more than \$8.6 billion in revenue annually (2020). The company is categorized in this audit as “mid-sized” due to its employee count (2,000-35,000).

Paid Media	Paid Search SEO Keywords
Earned Media	Company Reviews
Owned Media	LinkedIn Facebook Twitter BCG Website BCG Blog

Table 7. The active communication channels examined for Boston Consulting Group

Key Themes

BCG focuses on three main themes across its active online channels: **DEI, leadership, and sustainability.**

The company uses consistent branding across its digital platforms, incorporating colorful imagery, data visualization, polls and surveys to portray industry insights and stances on social matters.

DEI

The company’s employees appear to be inclusive and supportive of one another, using hashtags across their platforms such as #GenderEquity and #WelcomeToTheGroup. They feature their own employees in much of their content, showing the importance of company culture.

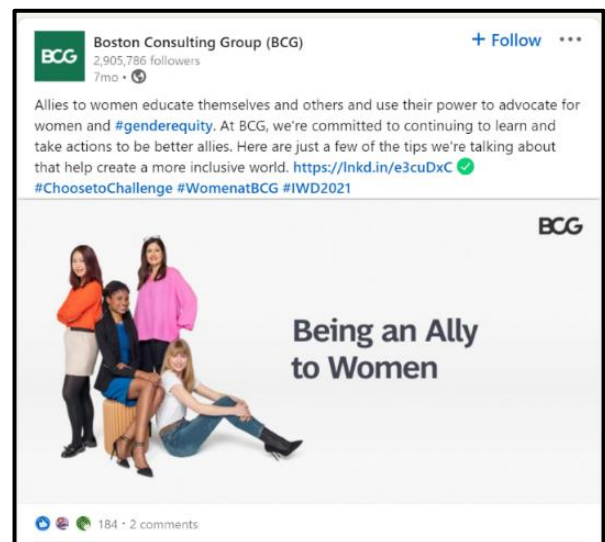


Figure 6. Example of BCG LinkedIn post highlighting the company’s support for women and gender equity

Leadership

BCG also promotes its leadership in the consulting industry by targeting clients online by sharing data-heavy insights, industry knowledge, and showcasing their community involvement. The company posts a variety of thought leadership articles online including a LinkedIn article series, called #DrivenByPurpose, that features ways they unlock clients' potential through their industry expertise. They also highlight various tips and best practices companies can use to implement the proper tools and functions they will need in order to navigate the working world following the COVID-19 pandemic.



Figure 7. Example of a BCG LinkedIn post with engaging data visualization to supplement messaging that supports the need for companies to achieve net-zero emissions

Sustainability

BCG highlights its sustainability efforts across its digital channels as well. They focus on educating their audiences on the environmental impact of various industries and services, the importance of managing climate change, and their desire to reach net-zero emissions in the near future.

Owned Media

BCG's owned digital channels that are most active are LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, its company website and blog.

Social Media Channels

Across all of the company's social networks (LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter), there is consistency in branding and content, featuring its key themes in a colorful, engaging way.

LinkedIn					
# Followers	Average Views	Average Frequency	Average Likes	Average Comments 15	
2,905,538	20,000	12 times/week	600		
Facebook					
# Followers	Page Likes	Average Frequency	Average Likes	Average Comments	Average Shares
580,177	562,701	1 time/day	100	3	10
Twitter					
# Followers	# Tweets	Average Frequency	Average Likes	Average # Retweets 3	
445,700	14,800	5 posts/day	10		

Table 8. A snapshot of performance metrics pulled from BCG's LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter pages, Oct 2021

Of the 100 posts analyzed, 60 percent contain videos, 30 percent contain colorful imagery, infographics, polls and charts, and 10 percent include links to white papers, industry articles, and company web pages. Posts that include videos consistently receive the highest audience engagement including number of likes, views, shares and comments. The videos feature BCG employees speaking about DEI, their leadership position in the consulting industry, and reasons they enjoy working for the company including the positive culture and opportunities for growth.

Across BCG's social media channels, there is consistent branding present in every post including repetitive company hashtags to represent their inclusive culture, sustainability efforts, and leadership initiatives (e.g., #EvergreenLeadership). The company's LinkedIn article series (#DrivenByPurpose) helps them increase brand awareness and drive traffic to the company website.

The content is aligned across each social network, carrying the messaging and images through for consistency. BCG is most active on

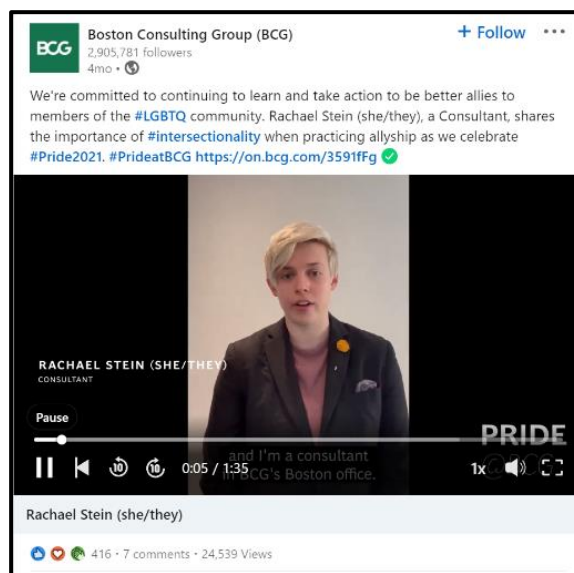


Figure 8. Example of a BCG LinkedIn post featuring a video testimonial from an employee

LinkedIn which aligns with Accenture’s trend as well. Surprisingly for the consulting industry, BCG is quite active on Twitter as well. The Twitter posts are lengthy and not as concise as other consulting firms’ Twitter posts. The use of branded charts, graphics, and data display is effective in attracting users across all three social platforms as these types of posts receive the second highest engagement behind video posts.

Company Website

Total Visits	Average Site Duration	Pages per Visit	Bounce Rate	Traffic Sources
1.70M	4 min, 38 sec	4.75	44.10%	LinkedIn: 64.61% YouTube: 10.60% Facebook: 9.85% WhatsApp Webapp: 3.87% Twitter: 3.80%

Table 9. A snapshot of performance metrics pulled from BCG’s website home page, October 2021

BCG’s website showcases its industry leadership initiatives with moving, interactive elements upon entering the home page. As the user scrolls, the next block features articles and insights that link to the company’s blog, followed by a section highlighting the company’s DEI work, followed by a section featuring BCG’s commitment to sustainability. There are clear opportunities for users to subscribe to the company’s email newsletter and apply for a job. The use of human imagery is inviting and creates a family-like feel that aligns with BCG’s hashtag, #WelcomeToTheGroup. The CEO and leadership team is a focal point across the site, aligning with the company’s leadership theme.

The website branding is cohesive and content about their services and client offerings is organized and easy to locate. The company portrays themselves as leaders in the industry by featuring thought leadership content in many areas across the site.

Company Blog

BCG's blog features a variety of insights, ideas, and perspectives from employees. Based on the variety of articles, the company is portrayed as being innovative and having many knowledgeable subject matter experts across multiple industries, from cybersecurity to sustainability to people strategy. The blog site aligns with the messaging and branding that fits the rest of the company's digital channels, creating a cohesive storyline from channel to channel.

Paid Media

Approximately 39 percent of traffic that hits Boston Consulting Group's website (bcg.com) derives from search (99 percent organic and 0.3 percent paid). To attract desktop traffic from search engines, BCG pays for approximately 93 keywords. The top-leading keywords bought by BCG include: bcg sustainability reputation, climate change group, digital transformation, bcg digital ventures, environmentally bcg.

It appears that BCG does not invest in paid-per-click advertising. Its company website, however, appears as the first result on the search engine results page of Google. Falling into the top-five search results makes this page more likely to be clicked through, increasing the likelihood for more traffic to BCG's website home page.

Earned Media

Online company reviews for BCG highlight employee feedback on the company culture, quality of life, compensation, career development, and business outlook. Based on the 30 reviews analyzed, BCG employees are humble, talented and genuine, and the work is interesting yet intense. There is a general theme that the company is true to its core values and cares for its people and culture by promoting inclusivity and transparency. The company makes an effort to help employees balance work and life priorities through flex options and benefits programs.

According to employees, learning and development as well as diversity initiatives are top of mind. Digital, technology, and strategy work are among the top offerings mentioned across various reviews. It is also noted that employee morale may have declined as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic remote work transition because of the loss of travel perks, extreme work hours and limited social interaction.

Firm Culture	“True openness in the culture—I genuinely look forward to seeing my BCG colleagues each day and feel that my managers want me to succeed.”
Quality of Life	“The hours can be long and projects intense, but the firm does make visible efforts to improve quality of life.”
Compensation	“Compensation is very attractive and merit-based, while allowing everyone to participate in the firm’s success. We have regularly had special bonuses and additional vacation time awarded to all staff in most successful years.”
Career Development	“BCG is very transparent about the developmental pipeline and promotion process, with clearly defined metrics for tracking development as well as strengths and weaknesses. The firm has a strong commitment to diversity and inclusion with respect to gender, race, etc. There are also many opportunities for both formal and informal mentoring.”
Business Outlook	“We have grown greatly despite the challenging business environment this year, and in our biopharma area. We are deeply invested in our client and our team, and this genuine value-driven approach seems to be elevating us above those who would be our competitors.”

Table 10. A handful of randomly-selected, anonymous online reviews about Boston Consulting Group

Company Analysis: Health Advances LLC

Health Advances LLC is a private company with approximately 170 employees and brings in more than \$30 million in revenue annually. The company size is categorized in this audit as “boutique” based on its employee count (50-500).

Earned Media	Company Reviews
Owned Media	LinkedIn Facebook Twitter Health Advances Website Health Advances Blog

Table 11. The active communication channels examined for Health Advances, LLC

Key Themes

Across its active online channels, Health Advances focuses on three main themes: **DEI**, **volunteerism**, and **leadership**. The company shares various news articles and insights from its employees across their social networks, company website and blog, but about 50 percent of content publicized is comprised of information they share from other companies as a way to engage in conversation across the industry. The company lacks a sense of brand identity across its active online channels, without a main design or color palette present. The content posted from one channel to the next lacks repetition, falling short of telling a cohesive brand story. They do, however, have a clear company mission, vision, and values stated on their website. This is a solid foundation in which they can build their brand.

DEI

Across Health Advances' online channels is a strong portrayal of inclusivity. A full page on its website is dedicated to its DEI commitment including examples of ways the firm is supportive of all cultures, communities, and identities.

Volunteerism

The company's commitment to volunteerism, donations, and charitable efforts is also apparent. They feature a variety of posts that explain the active volunteer initiatives employees participate in throughout the year as well as company donations to different organizations and



Figure 9. Facebook post showing Health Advances employee commitment to charity and donations

communities. When sharing information about these efforts, the imagery is employee-centric and portrays the company’s culture as supportive, positive, and collaborative.

Leadership

A leadership theme is also prevalent on Health Advances digital channels, with the company’s leadership team actively participating in industry events and sharing thought leadership materials on each of its digital platforms including whitepapers, blog articles, data and insights that reflect their expertise in the healthcare field. They often discuss upcoming medical conferences where their employees have been chosen to speak on a panel or give a presentation on a relevant industry topic, demonstrating their expertise.



Figure 10. Health Advances LinkedIn post promoting a whitepaper as an example of thought leadership

Owned Media

Social Media Channels

Across the company’s social networks (LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter), approximately 80 percent of posts are in support of social matters and feature promotional posts about social and religious holidays that cover many groups and cultures.

LinkedIn					
# Followers	Average Views	Average Frequency	Average Likes	Average Comments 1	
8,692	Not available	2 times/week	6		
Facebook					
# Followers	Page Likes	Average Frequency	Average Likes	Average Comments	Average Shares
340	317	2 times/month	3	0	0
Twitter					
# Followers	# Tweets	Average Frequency	Average Likes	Average # Retweets 1	
770	789	2-3 times/month	2		

Table 12. Performance metrics pulled from Health Advances LLC’s LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter pages, Oct 2021

Of the 100 posts analyzed, 50 percent include industry articles and data insights shared from other consulting companies, employees, and industry partners. The posts comprise data-backed messaging and interesting graphics, receiving the highest level of engagement across all company platforms for likes, shares, and comments, especially those containing graphics and charts.

Approximately 30 percent of posts include content about the company's leadership involvement in industry events and discussions as well as employee features that demonstrate their breadth of expertise across the firm.

Across all active social channels, 20 percent of posts relate to the celebration of social or religious holidays, more prevalent on Facebook in particular. These were the least popular posts among audiences, receiving minimal engagement.

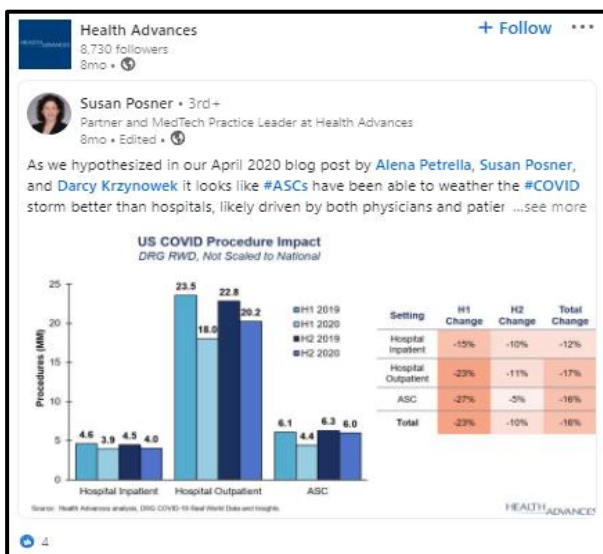


Figure 11. Example of data visualization posted to Health Advances' LinkedIn account



Figure 12. Health Advances LinkedIn post promoting an employee's leadership position in a COVID-19 discussion about returning to the workplace

LinkedIn is used by the company most frequently (two posts per week) and mainly includes content pertaining to data insights and industry news. Facebook posts include content related to social and religious holidays (90 percent of posts). Twitter posts are a mix of both. Across the three platforms, there is a lack of brand cohesion and company identity. They tend to serve as standalone websites to viewers, featuring different types of content.

Company Website

The Health Advances website does not contain public metrics and analytics. The key content featured on the site include client services, company accolades, DEI commitment, and charitable efforts. The home page includes colorful, interesting graphics, and the company's mission, vision and values are clearly stated across the site. The navigation is organized and information is easy to find, however the internal website pages include long paragraphs of copy that could benefit from a more concise, bulleted format. The company blog and social media networks are linked from the website home page, creating a pathway to connect all online channels.

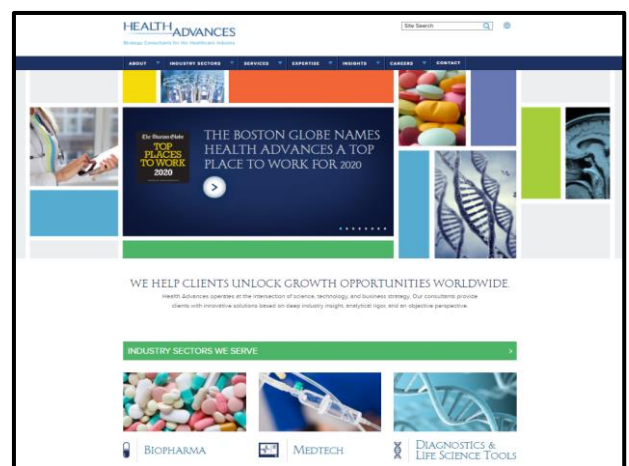


Figure 13. Health Advances LLC website home page

Company Blog

Health Advances has an active blog that is focused on an “innovation” theme and features various industry news such as conference recaps, industry updates, COVID-19 pandemic updates, and white paper key takeaways. New content is posted approximately once per month, and users can easily navigate back to the company website, follow the blog content stream via e-newsletter, or click on a topic of interest to jump to a specific blog post quickly.

The company's brand does not carry through to the blog website. The site is simple but contains relevant industry information to portray the company as a thought leader in consulting. The basic user experience could be helpful for viewers to navigate quickly to certain blog topics.

Earned Media

There are a variety of online reviews about Health Advances LLC describing the company culture, quality of life, compensation, career development, and business outlook. Based on the 30 reviews analyzed, employees view the company culture as a “family” environment with opportunities for personal and professional growth. The company offers challenging and meaningful work. Employees believe the work/life balance is respected with flexible schedules and a generous vacation policy. The company is said to offer competitive benefits and compensation, but employees seem to have an unclear understanding of the method behind the company's bonus payout. Employees also mention that the training program offered by Health Advances is unmatched.

Firm Culture	“Every day I think to myself I could not have picked a better first job out of college. I am beyond lucky to work here and feel that I am challenged every day with meaningful work that I am passionate about. The social atmosphere in the office adds to this positive experience.”
Quality of Life	“Hours are very flexible depending on the project, but can be intensive depending on project timelines. Taking time off is easy if requested in advance and very, very rarely will have to do work while on vacation. Travel requirements are minimal.”
Compensation	“Compensation is very competitive for other healthcare specialty firms our size. During the recruitment period, the firm was happy to increase their offer when I showed them a competing offer that I had received; and also the starting salary for the other incoming employees at my level.”
Career Development	“The training program is unparalleled in its scale, quality, and depth. New hires are fully devoted to training for 7 weeks to make sure staff are well set up for success.”
Business Outlook	“With the sole exception of COVID-19 impact, I believe Health Advances is in a very strong position. We continue to grow YoY, maintain a great reputation with clients, and internal leadership continues to blossom.”

Table 13. A handful of randomly-selected, anonymous online reviews about Health Advances LLC

Key Takeaways

When analyzing the activities across the three consulting firms, there are communication methods, design elements, content topics, and technological practices that surfaced as working well to reach the target audiences based on the level of engagement the companies received when posting to their active online channels. The following are key takeaways based on the communications audit of Accenture, Boston Consulting Group, and Health Advances LLC.

1. Top Channel

Across the three firms, LinkedIn consistently receives the highest engagement among the consulting industry audience – making this a key communications channel, consulting firms should consider in their digital strategy. Based on the analysis, posting to the company’s LinkedIn page at least one-to-two times per week helps keep this audience interested and engaged with the content. The most popular LinkedIn posts have elements that include video, colorful imagery, data visualization, polls, surveys, and interactive features that present industry data or feature employees discussing the company culture. Providing a mix of these types of posts on LinkedIn will allow a consulting firm to shape themselves as an industry thought leader that values the future of its employees and company culture. Over time, these actions should increase online followers and engagement levels for the firm.

2. Brand Identity

A strong brand evokes the same impression and feelings across all digital channels. During this audit, it became apparent whether a company focuses on its brand identity by the presence (or lack thereof) of brand colors, consistent messaging, and tone of voice across their online communication channels. When brand elements are carried across all channels, there is a clear sense of cohesion and “story” that can be told about who the company is. When done well

for two of the three companies, the viewer finds a sense of trust and credibility within the company – understanding who they are, what they offer, and where they’re headed as a future business. As a consulting firm offering professional services to a client base, brand cohesion is critical to implement across all communications channels to craft a connective story and portray oneself as an industry expert. Both Accenture and Boston Consulting Group did this well across their online channels.

3. Content Themes

There are four key themes that are most important to this audience: DEI, sustainability, leadership, and innovation. Based on the level of audience engagement, it is clear that this industry values messaging related to inclusivity and a supportive culture in the workplace, environmental sustainability and the desire to achieve net-zero emissions, being a part of a culture that drives change and forges ahead as a leader in the consulting space by way of thought leadership materials and involvement in key industry conferences and discussions, and taking part in groundbreaking work through innovative client offerings.

4. Search Engine Optimization

It was uncovered in this analysis that Accenture and Boston Consulting Group invest resources in their search engine optimization efforts, including keywords and paid search, that help their company rankings on Google’s search engine results pages. This increases their likelihood for more traffic to their company websites, boosting their online presence, and enhancing their credibility as an established and trusted source for consulting services.

Optimizing online channels can begin with the company website and expand to wider integrated marketing efforts over time. Based on this audit, the success of these two companies demonstrates the importance of developing a technically-sound website with optimized service

pages that convey offerings in a compelling way. A company's broader strategic business goals, such as raising brand awareness and generating leads, can all be achieved through SEO activity. Ranking among the top-five search results on Google and investing in focused keywords will put the company's brand in front of large volumes of users and prospective clients.

Sources

<https://www.similarweb.com/website/accenture.com>
<https://www.similarweb.com/website/bcg.com>
<https://www.linkedin.com/company/accenture/>
<https://www.facebook.com/accenture/>
https://twitter.com/Accenture?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor
<https://www.Accenture.com>
<https://www.accenture.com/us-en/insights/blogs-index>
<https://www.accenture.com/changeconversations>
<https://firsthand.co/company-profiles/management-strategy/accenture>
<https://firsthand.co/company-profiles/management-strategy/accenture>
<https://www.linkedin.com/company/boston-consulting-group/>
<https://www.facebook.com/BostonConsultingGroup/>
https://twitter.com/BCG?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor
<https://www.Bcg.com>
<https://www.bcg.com/en-us/featured-insights/thought-leadership-ideas>
<https://firsthand.co/company-profiles/management-strategy/boston-consulting-group>
<https://www.linkedin.com/company/health-advances/>
<https://www.facebook.com/healthadvances/>
<https://twitter.com/healthadvances?lang=en>
<https://www.healthadvances.com>
<https://healthadvancesblog.com/>
<https://firsthand.co/company-profiles/management-strategy/health-advances-llc>

The Beginner's Guide to Digital Marketing Strategy: Insights for Growth-Phase Consulting Firms

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	38
1. Define Your Business Goals.....	39
2. Identify Your Target Audience.....	39
3. Determine Your Key Channels.....	40
4. Develop a Content Plan.....	42
5. Measure, Analyze, Optimize.....	43

Introduction

Digital marketing is a dynamic process that refers to any marketing methods conducted through electronic devices in which brands are promoted to current or prospective customers (Hudson, 2021). Unlike traditional marketing, digital marketing provides an avenue for two-way communication between a business and its clients.

A successful digital marketing strategy should encompass a combination of methods including email, paid, earned, and owned media, and should be driven by a company's value proposition, brand messaging, and data on audience demographics.

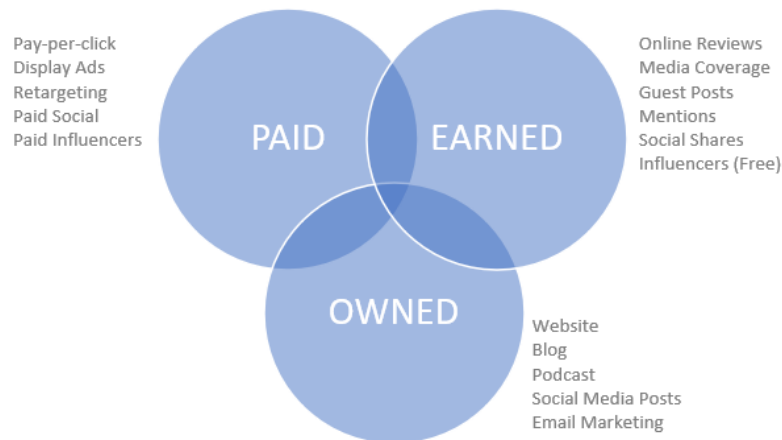


Figure 1. Tactical examples of paid, earned, and owned media.

In an evolving digital-first era, consulting firms are turning to digital marketing for its massive marketplace of online prospects to reach clients in a way that is both cost-effective and measurable (Hurree, 2020). Building a visible online brand is a critical step towards generating leads and increasing client engagement. As your consulting company looks to scale, it's important to understand the digital elements that will be most effective in reaching your audience. Follow these best practices to guide you in developing your digital marketing strategy.

1. Define Your Business Goals

Understanding your organizational goals is the first step in creating a successful digital strategy. Define clear company values and business goals that are SMART: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound.

SMART GOALS				
SPECIFIC	MEASURABLE	ACHIEVABLE	RELEVANT	TIME-BOUND
State what you'll do Use action words	Provide a way to evaluate Use metrics or data targets	Within your scope Attainable to accomplish	Makes sense within your job function Improves the business in some way	State when you'll get it done Be specific on date or time

Table 1. Guiding questions and examples to consider when crafting your company's core values

Consider hosting a workshop with your colleagues to collect their feedback on how they view the company and what fuels them each day. Their insights can help craft your company's core values and business goals. Once you've created this foundation, you can later tie your marketing strategy back to these broader goals, resulting in a cohesive plan where all communication channels tell a consistent brand story.

Guiding Questions	Categories to Consider	Examples of Company Values
What is important to us? What guides our work? What brought us together and continues to hold us together? What motivators fuel us when we are at our busiest? What will help guide us when we are facing a difficult decision? What are the elements we enjoy about what we do? What parts of our company are we proud of? What parts of our job challenge us? What type of talent do we want to attract if we hire? Where do we see ourselves as a company in 3 years? 5 years? 10 years?	Commitment and Accountability Relationships and Client Service Learning and Development Excellence and Quality Diversity and Individuality Creative and Resourceful Integrity and Humility Collaboration and Respect	"Improve our clients' performance significantly" "Create an unrivaled environment for exceptional people" "Embrace diverse perspectives with curiosity and respect" "Build enduring relationships based on trust" "Diversity of thought, expertise, experience, and background" "Respect for the individual and their capacity and desire for personal growth" "Maintain high standards and conditions for client service" "Value delivered in the form of tangible and lasting change" "Drive for results with unparalleled client service"

Table 2. Guiding questions and examples to consider when crafting your company's core values (Deloitte, 2021; Hurree, 2020; Rum, 2016)

2. Identify Your Target Audience

Define the target audience you'll want to reach online. Do you aim to acquire new clients, win back former clients, or retain current clients? An exercise that will help you understand your

72% of business-to-business (B2B) clients expect vendors to provide personalized engagement tailored to their needs, and 84% report that being treated as people and not numbers is the key to winning their business (Deloitte, 2021).

client audience is to create personas that represent your ideal client types. Using real data, you can develop simple profiles of two or three client types that you strive to target online with your marketing efforts—including demographic information, online behaviors, decision drivers, challenges and fears, and motivators. By completing this exercise, your employees can visualize your specific audience types when creating deliverables to reach them. The personas will drive your firm to create more customized offerings and tailored communications for your clients. This type of personalization is key to winning, and retaining, their business.

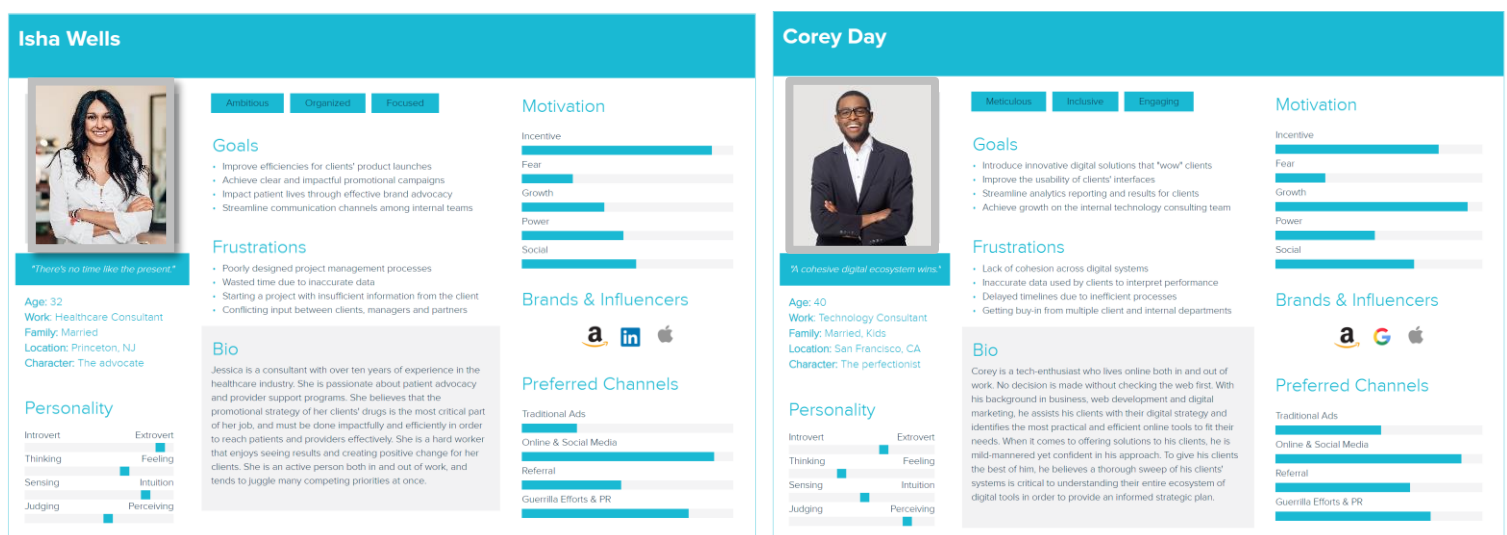


Figure 2. Examples of audience personas and key categories to include

3. Determine Your Key Channels

Based on a communications audit conducted on consulting firms who have an active online presence, analysis shows it is most important for this industry to consider paid, earned, and owned media channels when developing a digital marketing strategy (Communications Audit Report, 2021). The top consulting firms reach their key audiences on a variety of online channels, striving to create a cohesive digital ecosystem that tells a consistent brand story across each platform.

Based on research findings from the communications audit, the channels that are most important for the consulting industry to consider are:

- **Paid Media:** Paid search, Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
- **Earned Media:** Online reviews, News coverage
- **Owned Media:** Website, Blog, Social media (LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter)

LinkedIn receives the highest engagement among the consulting industry audience, compared to Facebook and Twitter. Posting to your company's LinkedIn page 1-2 times per week can keep your audience interested in your content. Include videos, colorful imagery, data visualization, and interactive features to gain the most traction (Communications Audit Report, 2021).

As a supplementary effort to these channels, email marketing is known to be a highly effective B2B marketing initiative to engage with existing clients and uncover the type of content that interests them most (Eliason, 2015). This is a channel consulting companies can implement to strengthen their digital strategy even further, equating to more engagement, leads, conversions, and sales.

72% of B2B customers are likely to pass along useful email content to their industry peers (Ridley, 2020).

It's also important to note how critical SEO is to the success of your digital communications efforts. Top consulting firms invest resources in SEO strategy, including keywords and paid search, in order to improve their company rankings on Google's search engine results pages. Ranking among the top-five search results on Google and purchasing focused keywords will place your company's brand in front of large volumes of users and prospective clients. This will increase the likelihood of driving more traffic to your company website, boosting your online presence and enhancing your credibility as an established and trusted source for consulting services. To begin, you can optimize your online channels starting with your company's website and expanding to wider integrated marketing efforts over time. It's important that your website is technically-sound with optimized service pages that convey your offerings in a compelling way (Communications Audit Report, 2021).

4. Develop a Content Plan

Your clients are interested in what your consulting firm can offer them, and why you're different from the others. By creating a content plan, you can prepare a library of posts or messaging that match the key themes your audience is most interested in reading and engaging with. This can be done by using a scheduling tool as simple as an Excel spreadsheet where you can input the date, digital channel (LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Website, or Blog post), content theme, and specific content that you will post manually. Alternatively, you can consider utilizing a paid service, like HubSpot, that has the ability to schedule your content automatically, pushing it public to your website, blog, or social media networks on a scheduled date and time.

Once you have an organized method to host your content plan, you'll want to create relevant content that will connect your clients with the benefits of your consulting services. The content should be written in the form of blog posts, website blurbs, social media posts, articles and whitepapers. Pushing educational content to your audience will position you as an industry thought leader, increase your company's brand awareness, and promote your services as top-of-mind when clients are looking for project help.

Creating relevant content for your audiences is considered the most effective SEO tactic by nearly 72% of marketers (Carpenter, 2012).

It has been shown that the level of audience engagement is extremely high when consulting firms post about these content themes: (1) Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI), (2) Innovation, (3) Leadership, and (4) Sustainability (Communications Audit Report, 2021). Specifically, the consulting industry audience values messaging related to inclusivity and a supportive culture in the workplace, achieving environmental sustainability and net-zero emissions, being part of a culture that drives change, shaping oneself as a leader in the consulting space by way of thought leadership materials and involvement in industry conferences and

discussions, and taking part in groundbreaking work through innovative client offerings (Communications Audit Report, 2021).

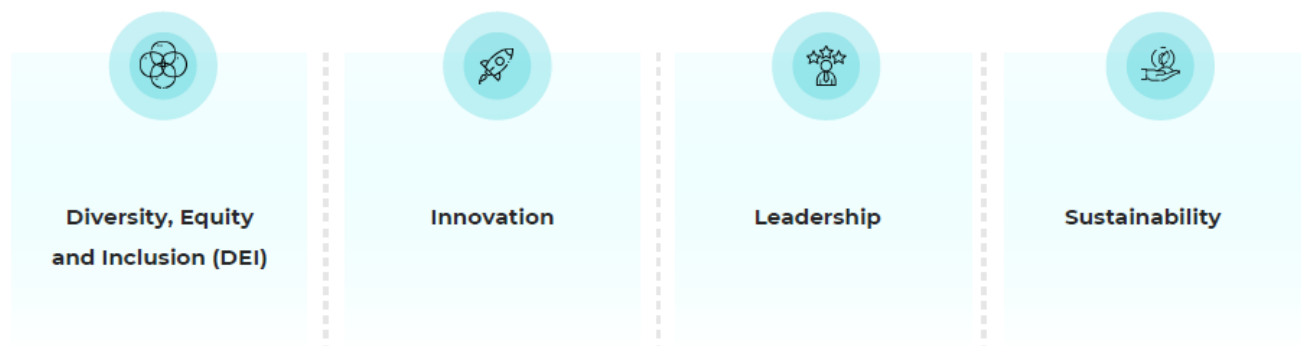


Figure 3. The four key content themes the consulting industry audience engages with most across digital channels (Communications Audit Report, 2021)

As you're crafting content around these key themes, it will be important to find ways to incorporate SEO into the messaging. Decide on the keywords and phrases you will use to rank high on Google's search engine results pages, and insert those keywords into your blog content, website blurbs, and social media posts. Creating this cohesive ecosystem of alike content across each channel allows users to find you easier online, and boosts your search engine result rankings when prospective clients are looking for your services.

5. Measure, Analyze, Optimize

An advantage of digital marketing is that your online efforts are trackable and measurable. Analytics allow companies to track user behavior at a highly detailed level including how many times users click on a link, how much time they spend on a web page, how often they open emails, and more (Hudson, 2021). Ensure you have a plan to pull metrics reports on a regular basis for your active digital channels, and review them for improvements or declines in performance. These metrics can inform your strategy over time so you can continuously adapt your marketing messaging and optimize your digital efforts.

One of the most commonly used tools for marketing analytics is Google Analytics. This tool can be customized in many ways to measure the performance of your company website and blog. It can track the keywords that are bringing users to your website and demonstrate how users are navigating through your website, among other things. For social media channels like LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter, metrics can be found within each channel's company page. Combined, these metrics provide a view of what's working, and what's not. As a key part of your digital marketing strategy, use this data to continuously test new content and shape your digital efforts to your audience's preferences.

TIMELINE

Date	Task
08/21/21	Distribute Proposal to Committee for Review
08/21/21 - 09/03/21	Committee to Provide Proposal Feedback and Approval
09/04/21 - 09/11/21	Incorporate Any Feedback from Proposal Review
09/17/21	Submit Final Proposal to UNC
09/03/21 - 09/24/21	Conduct Research for Deliverables
09/24/21 - 10/15/21	Write Content for Deliverables
10/15/21	Distribute Deliverables to Committee for Review
10/15/21 - 10/29/21	Committee to Provide Feedback on Deliverables
10/30/21 - 11/05/21	Incorporate Feedback from Deliverables Review
11/08/21	Distribute Deliverables to Committee for Review and Approval
11/08/21 - 11/21/21	Committee to Review Final Deliverables
11/22/21 at 2:00pm ET	Defend Thesis (All Committee Members Present)
11/23/21 - 11/30/21	Incorporate Feedback from Thesis Defense
12/01/21	Submit Final Thesis Materials to UNC Sakai Portal

REFERENCES

- Avery, J., & Teixeira, T. (2019). Marketing reading: Marketing communications. *Harvard Business Publishing Education*. Retrieved August 3, 2021, from <https://hbsp.harvard.edu/product/8186-PDF-ENG>
- Brabandere, L. (2016). *The forgotten half of change: Achieving greater creativity through changes in perception*. Diversion Books.
- Churchill, N. C., & Lewis, V. L. (1983, May). The five stages of small business growth. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/1983/05/the-five-stages-of-small-business-growth>
- Deloitte. (2021, June 11). Creating a successful digital marketing strategy. *Deloitte Consulting Blog*. <https://www2.deloitte.com/mt/en/pages/strategy-operations/articles/mt-creating-a-successful-digital-marketing-strategy.html>
- Dietrich, G. (2021, January 5). Why communicators must (finally) embrace the PESO model. *SpinSucks Blog*. <https://spinsucks.com/communication/pr-pros-must-embrace-the-peso-model/>
- Digital Marketing Institute. (2018, June 18). 7 key ingredients of a successful marketing strategy. *Digital Marketing Institute*. <https://digitalmarketinginstitute.com/blog/7-key-ingredients-of-a-successful-digital-marketing-strategy>
- Eliason, N. (2015). How to acquire customers: 19 “traction” channels to start testing today. *Zapier Blog*. <https://zapier.com/blog/acquire-customers/>
- Holt, D. (2016, March). Branding in the age of social media. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2016/03/branding-in-the-age-of-social-media>
- HubSpot & Kissmetrics. (2021). *An introduction to using A/B testing for marketing optimization: Using split tests to optimize landing pages, email, and call-to-action* [eBook]. HubSpot. <https://offers.hubspot.com/ab-testing-kit>
- Hudson, E. (2021). *The ultimate guide to marketing strategies & how to improve your digital presence* [eBook]. HubSpot. <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/digital-strategy-guide>
- Hurree. (2020). *The essential guide to marketing strategy*. The Marketing Slice. <https://info.hurree.co/en/marketing-strategy-essential-guide#marketingstrategydefinitionimportance>
- Kaufman, I., & Horton, C. (2014). Digital marketing: Integrating strategy and tactics with values: A guidebook for executives, managers, and students. Routledge.

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315879451>

- McKinsey & Company. (2015). *Big data, analytics, and the future of marketing & sales* [eBook].
<https://www.mckinsey.com/~/media/McKinsey/Business%20Functions/Marketing%20and%20Sales/Our%20Insights/EBook%20Big%20data%20analytics%20and%20the%20future%20of%20marketing%20sales/Big-Data-eBook.ashx>
- Ridley, D. (2020). *The definitive guide to B2B email marketing*. Vital Design.
<https://vtldesign.com/digital-marketing/email-marketing/b2b-email-marketing-guide/>
- Ries, E. (2011). *The lean startup: How today's entrepreneurs use continuous innovation to create radically successful businesses*. Crown Business.
- Robinson, S. (2021). What is the PESO model for marketing? *Brilliant Metrics, Inc.*
<https://www.brilliantmetrics.com/knowledge/blog/what-is-the-peso-model-for-marketing/>
- Rum, J. (2016, January 25). 10 steps to building an effective digital strategy. *SocialMediaToday*. <https://www.socialmediatoday.com/marketing/10-steps-building-effective-digital-strategy>
- Rumelt, R. (2011). *Good strategy bad strategy: The difference and why it matters*. Currency: Illustrated edition.
- Shankar, V., & Carpenter, G. S. (2012). *Handbook of marketing strategy*. MPG Books Group.
- Sherman. (2020). 5 steps to developing a B2B email marketing plan. *Lyfe Marketing*.
<https://www.lyfemarketing.com/blog/b2b-email-marketing/>
- Smith, A., & Anderson, M. (2016). Online shopping and eCommerce. *Pew Research Center*.
<https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2016/12/19/online-shopping-and-e-commerce/>
- Zhukova, N. (2021, March 12). How to do competitor analysis and improve your digital marketing strategy with SEMrush. *SEMrush Blog*.
<https://www.semrush.com/blog/how-to-do-competitor-analysis-in-digital-marketing/>