

2021 Marketing Plan

Summary

[Company] is a Software-as-a-Service company located in Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania. Founded in 2005, [Company] was created by founder and president, Jeff Kahler, to meet the need in high-turnover industries for quality training programs that not only communicate consistent messaging to all employees at all times but that also provide a foundation for employee retention through training in those same industries.

[Company] provides this consistent messaging and these foundations using engaging training content and blended learning activities, which are delivered through its learning management system (LMS), trainingGrid™.

[Company]'s mission is to “inspire and facilitate employee success through the delivery of engaging, customizable, and easy-to-manage online learning.” In short, their vision is to “make training impactful and easy.”

The purpose of this marketing plan is to evaluate the current state of the marketing department and its activities and to establish a clear path toward supporting corporate strategic initiatives and goals.

Target Audience

[Company]'s primary audience today is the convenience store. From small operations to large retail chains, [Company] boasts a solution for every size whether that means subscribing to the “full [Company] solution” or purchasing single seat compliance training through the [Company] marketplace.

On a smaller scale, [Company] also markets to restaurants. Restaurant compliance content is available for purchase in the marketplace, and a meager number of restaurant modules are available through subscription.

[Company] is currently seeking to enter new markets that are primarily service-oriented.

Current Situation

Due to interruptions in the marketing department leadership as well as the fast growth of the company, [Company]'s marketing department has not proven to have a significant impact on sales growth. Much of [Company]'s business has come from cold calling and networking by business development representatives. Marketing's purpose is to generate quality leads for the sales team; however, current tactics have not proven successful.

Additionally, the marketing team is currently in the process of redesigning the [Company] website, which has been an enormous undertaking.

The following evaluation and recommendations provides a deeper understanding the current state of each marketing department focus area as well as recommendations for each focus area.

Evaluation and Recommendations

I. Audit and Analysis

a. Conduct a thorough audit of existing collateral

In the fall of 2020, it was recommended that [Company] conduct a thorough audit of existing collateral to include blog content, presentations, print collateral, social media assets, and email assets in order to determine what active, accurate resources are available and identify those that are needed. Such audit has not yet been completed, but it is essential to know and understand what assets are available so that any gaps can be addressed.

b. Conduct a comprehensive competitive marketing analysis

In the fall of 2020, it was also recommended that [Company] conduct a thorough competitive marketing analysis of several competitors to include Discoverlink, Cornerstone, and 360Training. Such competitive analyses would allow [Company] to learn and understand competitor offerings and marketing tactics for the purpose of better positioning the company for success against the competition. This competitive analysis was partially completed but was cut short due to time constraints

c. Develop a SWOT analysis

Additionally, in the fall of 2020, it was also recommended that [Company] develop a SWOT analysis, gathering the results of the competitive marketing analysis, cultivating a deeper understanding of the information, and determining where the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats lie for [Company].

Conducting such audits and analyses will allow [Company] to develop a strategy that will identify a true starting point and reasonable goals as well as identify a clear path for accomplishing those goals.

II. Audience Development

a. Further develop target audience

Buyer personas have been developed for the convenience store segment of [Company]'s target audience. Buyer personas should be developed for each type of audience so that messaging targeting different audiences reaches the right people with the right message at the right time.

b. Identify buyer journeys

Currently, it is difficult to understand how the [Company] target audience navigates through the marketing funnel. It is essential that [Company] understand this journey in order to effectively provide the right messages at the right time.

III. Marketing Operations

a. Identify key performance indicators, standard reporting procedures, and understand ROI

Key performance indicators (KPIs) are an integral part of measuring return on marketing investment. Regular reporting from Google Analytics, social media insights, and email marketing data will allow marketing leadership to make sound judgments when pursuing certain marketing activities and also allow that leadership to pivot quickly should a marketing effort cease to produce fruit. Additionally, to date, there has been no work done to effectively measure and communicate return on investment. Understanding the

return on marketing investment will allow the marketing department, and the company as a whole, steward the budget well and make wise marketing decisions.

b. Evaluate marketing automation software and make recommendations for a more robust system

The current marketing automation software, Act-On, is lacking in several areas. The cost to add certain functions such as social media management, a chat feature, and more are significant, and the design is clunky and difficult to use. Customer support is virtually non-existent. A marketing automation software evaluation has been completed, and it is recommended that [Company] further evaluate the platforms HubSpot and SharpSpring.

c. Develop further refined marketing strategy to align with strategic goals and objectives

After fully evaluating [Company]'s current assets, exploring the competitive landscape, focusing on the right audience, and implementing proper policies, procedures, and a sound marketing automation system, [Company] will be better equipped to plan a marketing strategy that will align with the company's strategic goals and objectives.

IV. Brand Management

a. Develop brand style guides

Since updating the logos in 2020, no brand style guides have been developed. Prior to that date, style guides were in place that communicated to both internal and external [Company] customers how brand assets must be used. Such style guides are essential to maintaining a consistent brand image and voice and should be implemented with new branding as soon as possible.

b. Establish public relations policy and practice

Currently, there is no known public relations policy in place. [Company] should develop press release templates as well as a media kit for upload to the website for the purpose of easily providing the necessary media to news outlets that wish to feature the brand.

c. Maximize social media channels

At this time, Facebook and LinkedIn are the primary social media channels with which [Company] is engaged. While these two channels should remain the primary social media channels, it may be beneficial to explore further the usage of Twitter and Instagram, not only to promote [Company] itself but to cross-promote other [Company] brands, MotionGlass Studios and Culture of Convenience. Additionally, to maximize social media efforts, a marketing representative should be interacting with clients and prospects through social media to continue to grow and engage its audience.

d. Optimize trade shows and other events

Over the past year, [Company] has participated in a handful of events, none of which had significant success in identifying new prospects. [Company] should begin to re-evaluate the events in which it participates and develop a plan for determining which events to attend, the assets required for each event, and capturing and contacting leads following each event.

V. Product Launches

a. Refine content release communications

At this time, [Company] is promoting new content releases much like it always has done. This involves sending an email to the client, an email to the prospect, and an internal

email along with either basic or optimized module resource pages and, at times, a landing page. This strategy should be re-evaluated and refined in order to expand the reach of [Company]’s communications and to improve brand image. Additionally, a follow-up post-mortem and plan should be implemented for the purpose of tracking how well each new release performs.

b. Maximize the impact of product update communications

[Company] continues to promote product updates much in the same way they do content releases; however, these releases also include marketing videos—one to the customer and one to the prospect. Many times, development of these assets is far behind, and little creative energy has been applied to these launches. Launch windows should be extended, and the communication plan should be re-evaluated in order to maximize the impact of these releases. Additionally, a follow-up post-mortem and plan should be implemented for the purpose of tracking how well each new release performs.

VI. Content Marketing

a. Align editorial calendars to one strategy across brands

[Company]’s marketing team also works with MotionGlass Studios as well as the Culture of Convenience podcast. The marketing team has been charged with aligning editorial calendars among these three brands, which involves continual awareness of the content calendar, industry calendars, new trends, and more. At this time, no real strategy is evident. [Company] must develop a plan for going forward in order to become more strategic in their efforts for the purpose of cross-promotion and synchronization between brands.

b. Refine blog strategy

The current blog strategy for [Company] has been stagnant for quite some time. As with the editorial calendar, there is no real strategy evident. The copywriter has been diligent about developing blog posts that are keyword-focused on a consistent basis and continues to update and repost articles on a monthly basis. Blog posts must be posted strategically instead of on a whim, and they also should be dated so that [Company] can appear as a thought leader in the industry. Additionally, Users naturally gravitate toward most current results, appealing to users and increasing click-through rates, which is an essential SEO metric (Barysevich).

VII. Email Marketing

a. Further develop targeted email lists

[Company]’s current email lists are not highly segmented, and it is often difficult to determine which lists should receive which emails. Specific lists should be developed to ensure that the right people are getting the right messages at the right time.

b. Establish drip campaigns

[Company] does not currently operate any drip campaigns. Email drip campaigns continue to engage users even after they’ve viewed the website and help move them along the buyer journey. Establishing drip campaigns will help to continue that engagement and further retain prospects, leading them to the ultimate decision of purchasing from [Company].

c. Develop a strategy for consistent, yet not overwhelming, communications

There has recently been some concern around the number of emails clients and prospects are receiving. Key stakeholders at [Company] believe that the number of emails sent out from marketing should be reduced in order to minimize the number of emails these audiences receive. To align with these stakeholders, the marketing department should evaluate the pros and cons of moving to an e-newsletter and or brainstorm other solutions in order to better target its consumers yet effectively communicate important messages to its primary audiences.

VIII. Website

a. Complete the website redesign project currently in progress

[Company] is in the process of redesigning its website for the first time in several years. The team is currently transitioning the project from 2PLUS Communications to the [Company] marketing team. In order to ensure a smooth transition, the marketing department should work with 2PLUS Communications to complete the necessary graphic assets as well as develop all copy needed to communicate the [Company] message across the site.

b. Implement new marketplace (WooCommerce)

The second phase of the website redesign is implementing a new marketplace called WooCommerce. WooCommerce is a marketplace platform that is easy to use and that blends well with the website on which it is hosted. Implementing this new software into the website will be completed near the end of the website redesign process.

IX. Advertising

a. Analyze the effectiveness of paid search advertising on sales

As [Company] explores paid search opportunities on social media, it should simultaneously evaluate the effectiveness of those paid search campaigns on the sales of compliance modules. Paid search, if lucrative, may be an option worth exploring further.

b. Explore the potential for social media advertising

Social media advertising can be quite beneficial for certain businesses online. It may be worth exploring, and even experimenting, with some advertising on social media—specifically LinkedIn—to determine whether this is a channel that will generate revenue for the company.

c. Identify plan for additional paid search advertising

Following the evaluations of paid search on sales, [Company] should develop a plan for ongoing paid search advertising and develop a budget and a proposal to present to key stakeholders. If the analysis of paid search reveals an increase in sales, continuing and even increasing the paid search budget may boost revenue even further.

X. Additional Collateral

a. Determine the need for additional collateral to include PowerPoint presentations, PDF documents, and print communications

[Company]'s "library" of assets is limited. Sales has access to a PowerPoint presentation that is outdated and needs to be revised. The Client Relations team's presentations also could use an upgrade. [Company] should have access to a quality, branded presentation template that is generic but that can be tweaked per client. [Company] should also have

a standard quote and proposal template. Both of these items should also be updated to reflect the new branding.

b. Consider updating business cards

Currently, [Company]'s business cards are not a good representation of the brand. Business cards are plain blue with white text with basic information. Business cards may, at times, be the face of the company and should stand out from the competition. Business cards should be updated with the current branding and include the [Company] logo and social icons.

Conclusion

[Company]'s marketing team has a significant amount of work ahead of them. Because the marketing landscape changes so quickly, as does technology, so it is hard to keep up with ever-changing trends, especially when there have been gaps in leadership.

Although there is a significant amount of work to be completed, it is ultimately essential to conduct the internal audit, a competitive analysis, and a SWOT analysis in order to determine which initiatives to pursue first. These audits and analyses are essential to determining the current health of [Company]'s marketing and determining the trajectory to come.

Sources

Barysevich, Aleh. "How Risky Is It REALLY to Change Your Article Dates for SEO?" *Search Engine Journal*, <https://www.searchenginejournal.com/change-article-dates-seo/381114/#close>. Accessed 23 June 2021.