Campaign Essentials

Develop successful digital marketing strategies with these four frameworks.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Introduction

If you've ever watched *Mad Men*, the acclaimed TV drama about the 1960s heyday of Madison Avenue ad agencies, you have an inkling of how marketing worked before digital media and the internet.

Back then, businesses:

- Identified their target markets and customer value propositions.
- Crafted creative messages to inspire the audience to try their products.
- Launched a campaign on TV, on radio, and in print, and…
- Waited weeks or even months to find out whether or not it worked.

This approach reached potential customers at the top of the marketing funnel, at what's known as the awareness stage. It was challenging for traditional marketers to target certain demographics and strategically serve different ads to specific audiences.

Today, however, marketers can reach people much further along in the funnel. Digital platforms like Google Analytics, Facebook, and SailThru provide detailed insight into consumer behavior at pivotal points such as the consideration and conversion stages, when people are ready to take action. There are also countless content formats that marketers can leverage across these platforms to influence behavior. The vast range of opportunities to reach and galvanize audiences makes for more effective marketing campaigns — but also more complexity for the people who plan them.

That's where digital marketing frameworks come in. Frameworks are tools that help marketers:

- Organize goals for individuals and teams.
- Prioritize marketing approaches for consumers on different paths.
- Collect the core elements needed to create and activate effective marketing plans.
- Determine which data and metrics to focus on, and much more!

In this paper, we'll walk you through four valuable frameworks used across General Assembly's digital marketing programs:

1. The Objective-First Framework
2. The Scale and Efficiency Metrics Framework
3. The Content Honeycomb
4. The Paid, Owned, and Earned Media Framework

Each of these frameworks serves a different purpose in focusing, planning, executing, and optimizing marketing campaigns.

Ready to boost your digital marketing skills and launch campaigns that drive real impact? Let's get started!

The Objective-First Framework

The Objective-First Framework

To take advantage of all the tools and data available today, marketers must be crystal clear on what they and their business are trying to accomplish, and why. Launching media plans across channels without truly understanding key objectives can lead to lackluster results that compromise the brand — and the bottom line.

Set yourself, your team, and your business up for success by establishing explicit marketing objectives and a well-defined path for achieving them.

The Objective-First Framework offers a streamlined approach to setting goals, drawing conclusions, and analyzing channels. It takes a lot of ambiguity out of crafting objectives and aligns stakeholders on what defines success. This powerful tool helps you:

1. Structure marketing efforts.
2. Share plans and results.
3. Use marketing resources wisely.
4. Discern what data is and isn't important.
5. Establish a common goal and ensure that all stakeholders are aligned.

The Objective-First Framework can be implemented at any level of your marketing organization — individuals can use it to keep their own goals on track, and teams can use it to pursue big-picture targets. The framework helps you outline goals and hypothesize, execute, and measure results, which means a quicker path to success.

How to Build a Strong, SMART Marketing Objective

As the name of this framework implies, choosing your objective is the most essential step in planning a marketing strategy and campaigns across any channel. A strong marketing objective will answer two critical questions:

1. What perception or behavior do you want to change in your customers?
2. What will changing this perception or behavior do for your business?

To set up an objective, first consider the following questions:

- What do I or my team specifically want to achieve?
- Why is this goal important to achieve?
- By when do I need to achieve this goal?
- What defines success?

Once you answer these questions, you can determine whether or not your objective is SMART: specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-bound. Just like the acronym suggests, a SMART objective is well thought out and crafted with consideration. It keeps you focused on the path to reaching your goal and helps you avoid logistical or strategic pitfalls.

The 6 Steps of the Objective-First Framework

Set Objectives

Define KPIs

Design Tactics

Execute Campaign

Measure Outcomes

Optimize Results

Here's a breakdown of the qualities that define SMART objectives.

S **Specific**
A good objective should be as specific as possible; this will help you to measure your progress toward reaching it. If your objective can be interpreted in several different ways, it may not be specific enough.

Let's say you wanted to recruit users for a food review app. Your objective might be, "Attract 200 new users this month." However, without stating that you want those users to be active contributors to your community, your team might offer a one-time sign-up reward. This may get 200 new users, but they will likely be bargain-hunters who won't contribute to the community… or return to the app. Make this objective more specific by defining the behaviors users need to take in the app before they can be counted toward your goal.

M **Measurable**
Could stakeholders disagree on whether or not your objective was achieved? If so, it's not sufficiently measurable. To make success as unambiguous as possible, think of hard numbers or objectives with "yes or no" answers that remove guesswork from analysis. For example, if your objective is, "Attract 200 new users who will write at least two food reviews in their first month using the app," you've defined a clear "yes" or "no" question with a quantifiable, measurable answer.

People across your organization should also be aligned on the tool(s) you'll use as a source of measurement — for example, the profit and loss report, a client survey, or sales reports. This establishes a shared vocabulary and ensures that everyone is on the same page (literally) when looking at metrics.

A **Attainable**
Choose an objective that you know can be achieved but is not guaranteed. This will keep you motivated and creative. If your objective is too easily attainable, there's no challenge in it and it may not impact broader business objectives in a significant way. On the other hand, if your objective is completely unrealistic, you risk wasting resources, frustrating leaders and teammates, and possibly failing the business.

R **Realistic**
Don't set objectives that rely heavily on something that's outside of your influence or lie dramatically beyond benchmark performance. If your plan requires technologies you don't have (or don't exist!), exceeds your budget, or leans on talent that isn't available, your chances of succeeding will be greatly limited.

T **Time-Bound**
Set target dates and key milestones to keep things on track. A realistic time frame provides a finish line to look forward to and creates a sense of urgency for accomplishing the goal. Milestones help organize and streamline key steps in a campaign and hold teams and stakeholders accountable for different components of the project.

"Just like the acronym suggests, a SMART objective is well thought out and crafted with consideration. It keeps you focused on the path to reaching your goal and helps you avoid logistical or strategic pitfalls."

Applying the Objective-First Framework to Your SMART Objective

Now that you've crafted a SMART objective, it's time to work through the rest of the Objective-First Framework. In this section, we'll outline each of the framework's six steps and their role in driving a successful marketing campaign. We've identified the main goal of each step and provided a few key questions you can ask to guide your progress.

1 Set Objectives

Set a SMART objective that describes why you are running the campaign and what you hope to accomplish. Key questions to answer include: What customer behavior are you trying to change? What will that do for the business?

> *My objective is to attract 200 new engaged users to my food review app in the next 12 weeks. Engagement will be defined as a user posting two reviews in their first month using the app. This objective will increase engagement and community involvement on the app, creating a more attractive package for advertisers. This will boost the app's revenue.*

2 Define KPIs

Determine the key performance indicators (KPIs) you'll use to evaluate the success of your campaign. KPIs are the metrics that you identify as most important for tracking performance against your stated objective. All KPIs are metrics, but not all metrics are KPIs. Consider: What are the top one to three metrics that address, "Did we reach our objective?"?

> *I'm going to track number of new users, how many reviews each new user posts on the app, and when they post them. My top metrics will be 1) number of new users — defined by creation of new accounts — between April 2 and June 25, 2) number of reviews posted by users who joined between April 2 and June 25 within first month after app download.*

3 Design Tactics

Determine how to reach your target customer by asking yourself: Where does your target customer spend time online? What devices, websites, and apps are they using? What motivates them?

> *I'm going to launch an Instagram ad campaign targeting users between 24–32 years old who are food enthusiasts and use similar food apps. My target customer spends a lot of time eating at restaurants, posting and looking at food photos on Instagram. They're motivated by trying the trendiest new dishes around the city and showing off what they ate.*

4 Execute Campaign

Put your tactics into action in the channels you believe will be most effective for your campaign, based on your research conducted in Step 3. Then, identify the resources and team members you need to execute this campaign.

The Instagram campaign will cost $250. I need the Creative team to choose three images and write copy for the Instagram post, plus create a landing page to compel visitors to download the app. I'll also need the Partnerships team to create a tracking URL to which potential users will be directed.

5 Measure Outcomes

Measure and analyze your performance as it occurs. This will help gauge the health of your campaign along the way. A helpful question to ask is: What metrics tell you how you can improve performance?

In the first two weeks of the Instagram campaign, 5,000 people visited the URL and 250 of them downloaded the app. Fifty-five of those people published one review in their first week after downloading the app. The fact that 5,000 people clicked the link from our Instagram page but only 250 of them downloaded the app suggests that the content on the page to which users were directed wasn't sufficiently compelling. I need to get more people who click on the Instagram ad to actually download the app.

6 Optimize Results

Use your results to inform iterations on the campaign that hopefully boost performance. It's likely you'll find variables you can alter in your campaign that may move the needle on your goals.

Because I suspect the issue is the landing page, I could create an alternate version of it with different images and copy, then perform an A/B test to compare download rates between the two pages.

Now that you know how to craft a winning marketing campaign that's built around a SMART objective, let's zero in on the measurement stage. Our next framework will guide you in making sense of all the data your campaign collects and using it to dictate your next move.

The Objective-First Framework on the Job

Marketing Director
A marketing director could implement the framework to set big-picture goals for their team, drive marketing plans, and prioritize campaigns.

Growth Marketer
A growth marketer could use the framework to test and measure experiments across marketing channels, driving customer and user acquisition, activation, retention, and upsell.

Digital Marketing Manager
A digital marketing manager could leverage the framework to set goals for web, social, and email campaigns that boost online traffic and increase customer acquisition.

The Scale and Efficiency Metrics Framework

The Scale and Efficiency Metrics Framework

Marketers spend a lot of time sharing and defending the results of campaigns and activities. Stakeholders and leaders constantly ask: "What results did this drive?" "Where can we cut our budget?" "What can we optimize?"

To answer these questions, marketers must navigate metrics from vastly different sources that span tools, dashboards, and even authors (a custom report an agency composes may vary dramatically from the tables a chief marketing officer pulls). Each source will emphasize different data and calculations — impressions, engagement rate, click-through rate, return on investment, and more. Misunderstanding or misinterpreting numbers at any stage can have a severe impact on your business.

That's where the Scale and Efficiency Metrics Framework comes in. There are two types of metrics typically used by marketers: scale metrics, which indicate sums or volumes (e.g., number of website visitors), and efficiency metrics, which indicate rates or ratios (e.g., return on investment). Knowing the value of each type of metric helps you think about how to scale and optimize your marketing activities.

The premise of the framework is that all scale metrics fall into one of four buckets:

- **Cost** measures how much is spent on a campaign, including agency or ad fees.
- **Reach** measures the number of people contacted through impressions, visitors, video views, and so on.
- **Response** determines whether or not audience members take the actions you want them to take through metrics like clicks, swipes, or completed views of a video.
- **Revenue** measures the amount of money made, as in total revenue or lifetime customer value.

An efficiency metric is the ratio of two of those buckets (i.e., one bucket divided by another), and each one tells you something different. By breaking down reports into these buckets and metrics, it'll be easier to compare how you did across different channels and prioritize which channels to invest in further.

You can use the Scale and Efficiency Metrics Framework to:

1. Compare metrics across different channels.
2. Understand the impact marketing efforts have on growth.
3. Determine the cost and efficiency of growth.

Now, let's take a closer look at some of these metrics and how you can leverage them to optimize your marketing strategy.

How to Use Scale and Efficiency Metrics Together

Armed with a clear metrics strategy, marketers can create and refine campaigns that focus on reaching a specific outcome and make smarter business decisions when allocating or requesting budget. Metrics are also powerful tools for persuading stakeholders to devote funds toward future marketing efforts.

Metrics That Matter

Cost

Reach

Response

Revenue

These four categories of scale metrics lie at the heart of calculating the metrics you need to gauge the success of your campaigns

Low Calculation Skills

Many marketers struggle with metrics. In a sample of 10,000 professionals who took GA's Digital Marketing Level 1 skills assessment, test-takers correctly answered an average of 33% of questions that involved using data to measure campaign performance. Learn more in our report, *The State of Skills: Digital Marketing 2018*.

As we mentioned previously, **scale metrics** measure volume. They are useful in understanding figures like how many people a campaign reached, how much money users spent on your product, or how much you spent on ads. They are also helpful in analyzing the success of a campaign, can be used to validate hypotheses, and are an effective way to measure growth over time.

At their core, **efficiency metrics** are numbers that indicate effectiveness. These metrics are always rates or ratios and are often expressed as a percentage.

5 Key Efficiency Metrics

1 Cost per Reach

Wondering how far your money stretches to reach your audience? Cost-per-reach metrics indicate the cost-effectiveness of a media channel or partner. They're helpful in guiding how much money to invest in the various platforms on which your campaign runs.

The most common cost-per-reach ratio is **cost per mille (CPM)**, or the cost per thousand impressions. This is a useful metric to have when planning the budget required to achieve a target reach. A social media marketer might use it to gauge the success of a Facebook ad in a brand awareness campaign.

The formula for calculating CPM is **Cost ÷ Impressions x 1,000**. For example, if you buy 50,000 impressions for $250, your CPM is $250 ÷ 50,000 × 1,000, or $5.

2 Response per Reach

Response-per-reach metrics help determine what percentage of audience members who could have taken a desired action actually did. For example, of all the people to whom you showed a banner ad, how many clicked on it?

Prevalent response-per-reach metrics include:

- **Engagement rate**, which indicates the percentage of viewers who see an ad and interact with it in any way. It's typically used for interactive media and social ads. The most common engagement rate formula is **Interactions ÷ Impressions x 100**. For example, if you had a social ad that generated 100 impressions, three likes, and five shares, your engagement rate would be 8 ÷ 100 × 100, or 8%. However, it's important to note that there are multiple ways to look at engagement rate. Some marketers use reach or followers as the denominator in place of impressions.

- **Click-through rate (CTR)**, which is the percentage of people who were exposed to an ad and then clicked on it. The formula for calculating CTR is **Clicks ÷ Impressions x 100**. For example, if you ran a Facebook News Feed ad that generated 3,000 impressions and received 50 clicks, your CTR would be 50 ÷ 3,000 × 100, or 1.67%.

- **Conversion rate**, which is the percentage of people who had the opportunity to complete an action you defined — and did. This metric requires context to pinpoint the best version of the formula to use. To calculate the conversion rate for prospects who clicked on an ad, or what's known as a **post-click conversion rate**, the formula would be **Conversions ÷ Clicks x 100**. To measure the percentage of site visitors who convert, regardless of traffic source, your **visitor conversion rate** would be **Conversions ÷ Visitors x 100**. Adjust the denominator based on the context that makes sense for your campaign.

3 Cost per Response

Marketers can pinpoint which channel or tactic is most cost-efficient in driving results with cost-per-response metrics. Typically, these metrics are measured as a ratio of **cost per (X)**, or **CP(X)**, with X indicating an action.

Here are a few examples of how they may be calculated across different contexts:

- Search: cost per click
- eCommerce: cost per order
- Apps: cost per install or cost per download
- B2B: cost per lead
- Video: cost per completed view

To calculate any of these metrics, divide total ad spend by number of X, where X equals leads, clicks, orders, or whatever you are tracking. For example, if you spent $10,000 to acquire 200 leads, your cost per lead is 10,000 ÷ 200 or $50.

Be mindful of quality when focusing on CP(X) metrics. For instance, if you're comparing cost per click across multiple platforms, one may clearly outperform the other. But, when you dig deeper, you may see that the lower performer actually drove more high-quality leads.

4 Revenue per Response

Cost-per-response performance metrics help determine which tactics and campaigns are most cost-effective — but their uses are limited on their own. If you don't know how much those "responses" are worth in terms of revenue, you won't know how much expense is too much. This is where revenue-per-response metrics come in.

If a Facebook campaign runs at a $30 cost per download (CPD) and a search campaign runs at a $50 CPD, your instinct might be to stop spending on search and move that budget to Facebook. However, you won't really know whether or not you need to stop spending unless you know how much an app download is worth to your business. If a download results in $51 of revenue (a $1 profit per download), it may still be worth running search ads to reach a wider audience than you could on Facebook alone.

In other words, you won't always want to go with the lowest "cost per" available, as scale comes into play.

One common revenue-per-response metric is **average order value (AOV)** — the average size of a purchase on a website or app. For retail and eCommerce businesses, average order value will be a key metric. The formula is **Revenue ÷ Number of Orders**. So, if you made $10,000 from 50 orders, your AOV would be 10,000 ÷ 50, or $200.

5   Return on Investment

Ah, the holy grail of marketing: The ability to say exactly how much incremental revenue was generated by the marketing campaign! You'll often hear ROI tossed around in discussions surrounding the overall efficacy of a marketing strategy and the bottom line.

The formula for **return on investment (ROI)** is expressed as a percentage and calculated as **(Revenue - Cost) ÷ Cost x 100**. For instance, if you generated $200 in revenue from a Facebook ad and you spent $125 on it, then your ROI would be (200 - 125) ÷ 125 × 100, or 60%.

Sometimes, **return on ad spend (ROAS)** is used instead of ROI. ROAS does not subtract the cost from the numerator. The formula here is simply **Revenue ÷ Cost x 100**.

Applying the Scale and Efficiency Metrics Framework

Now that you've grasped the basic principles behind this framework, it's time to apply them to a marketing campaign.

Let's say your plan involves Facebook and YouTube campaigns driven by your in-house team, plus a programmatic display campaign implemented by an outside agency. For each of those channels, you want to determine:

- What you spent.
- How many people you reached.
- What kind of response you got from that reach.
- Whether there was a direct revenue outcome.

The metrics outlined in this framework help you answer those questions for each channel. Once you've calculated and compared the results, you may discover that your cost per acquisition is much lower on Facebook than on other channels. Based on this information, you may want to investigate why this campaign is performing so much better than other channels. (Is it the creative? The targeting? Or were the viewers on Facebook also exposed to other channels?) This can help you make optimization decisions that will improve your overall ROI.

The Scale and Efficiency Metrics Framework on the Job

Marketing Strategist
A marketing strategist could conduct market research, then leverage the framework to determine strategies for internal marketing teams.

Marketing Insights Analyst
A marketing insights analyst could use the framework to analyze marketing effectiveness against business objectives.

Marketing Director
A marketing director could implement the framework to ensure their team is focusing on the metrics that will accomplish high-level marketing objectives.

The Content Honeycomb

The Content Honeycomb

Content marketing encompasses the creation and distribution of content that aims to help a specific target customer progress through their journey toward a business conversion.

For your brand's content to be noteworthy, it has to provide value to the user. The Content Honeycomb is GA's framework — modeled after information architecture pioneer Peter Morville's widely used User Experience Honeycomb — for helping you generate, evaluate, and push content marketing strategies that make your brand stand out.

The Content Honeycomb posits that high-value content possesses certain key characteristics. Some (or all) of it should be participatory, entertaining, helpful, educational, meaningful, and/or unique.

If you look at any content success story, it probably ticks the box for at least two or three of these characteristics. You should aim to do the same.

The Content Honeycomb is a great tool for evaluating content, whether it's created in-house or by an outside agency. As you review each piece of content, ask which boxes it ticks off. If it's helpful, can you also make it entertaining? If it's educational, can it also be participatory? In this regard, the framework is extremely valuable in helping to articulate what's missing from any given content campaign.

High-Value Content Breakdown

Marketers with a deep understanding of content strategy are more in tune with how their customers feel, what they say, and what they hear. They listen and tailor their efforts according to what their audience really wants — and these efforts translate into results.

What makes for a strong content strategy? Specific characteristics, like "participatory" and "meaningful," lie at the core of the Content Honeycomb, and crafting material that embodies those terms requires thoughtfulness and detail. Let's break down each Honeycomb component and explore how you can begin putting it to work.

Meaningful

Meaningful content connects with an audience on a deeper emotional, intellectual, or philosophical level. This content isn't just about being warm and fuzzy — it's a business differentiator.

To create meaningful content:

- Start conversations on social media about resonant topics.
- Conduct interviews with thought leaders that reveal insights that can improve readers' lives.
- Showcase social impact stories that highlight your brand's commitment to bettering communities and advancing worthy causes.
- Share stories of people who have been positively impacted by your brand.

The Content Honeycomb helps you create high-value content for your brand.

I can publish a post on my food review app's blog that highlights how local restaurants partner with community gardens to incorporate fresh, organic ingredients into their menus.

Educational

Each day, customers search the internet to learn about their interests. They want to go behind the scenes, find out what's new, and get inspired. Educational content informs an audience about topics that are relevant to a company's goods, services, or values.

To create educational content:

- Craft tutorials and how-tos on skills related to your product.
- Publish slide decks, white papers, or blog posts with helpful information on current trends.
- Conduct webinars or live "ask me anything" (AMA) broadcasts to share insights from your business's thought leaders.
- Condense useful facts into shareable infographics.

I will partner with a chef to produce a cooking tutorial video and host it on my app.

Helpful

Helpful content is just that — it makes things easier for customers, whether it's a tax calculator and guide to use throughout the season, or simply an FAQ series related to a product.

To create helpful content:

- Build apps and tools that solve problems for your customers.
- Share resources and toolkits that assist people in using your product or service to its full potential.
- Publish white papers that provide insight into your readers' lives and provide actionable advice.
- Address common questions with FAQs.

I will create a "traveling foodie's dictionary" that translates common terms found on regional menus.

Participatory

Participatory content aims to make customers part of a brand story. It inspires people to act, whether they're engaging in a webinar's open-chat forum or contributing to a community LinkedIn Group.

To create participatory content:

- Leverage tools like live video to host a forum in which customers can interact with or add to the content as you're creating it.

- Create live, offline experiences that customers can take part in.
- Run contests and competitions that invite users to create and share original content.
- Use quizzes and polls to invite people to find out more about themselves — and your brand.

We'll run a virtual "scavenger hunt" in which users can "find" ingredients at restaurants they review in exchange for points that can be redeemed for dining discounts.

Entertaining

There's an old adage that suggests people remember how you make them feel more than they remember what you say or do. This also applies in the world of marketing and is the best way to approach creating entertaining content. Marketers can humanize their brands through content that resonates with strong emotions to develop deeper connections with their audiences.

To create entertaining content:

- Share entertaining photos, videos, or even animated GIFs that connect your brand personality, key messaging, and target audience.
- When it works, consider bringing humor into the equation.
- Engage in brand storytelling, experimenting across media formats — videos, slideshares, podcasts, articles, etc.
- Leverage influencers to create and share original branded content.

I will tweet out trending GIFs that pair well with quotes from user reviews.

Unique

Today's consumers are met with a constant deluge of new content, from their email inboxes to their social media feeds. Your content not only needs to be fresh and different — it also has to stand out. Effective campaigns are often based on a deep understanding of a specific customer and what matters to them. They break through the clutter of dull "brand speak" and talk to customers in a way that's relatable — and unique.

To create unique content:

- Look for content your customers are already generating that's related to your brand, and play off of it.
- Offer experiences — either online or in person — that cannot be had anywhere else.
- Start with the problem your product solves. Reference the work of other leaders in the field or create content in partnership with them to provide original, cross-industry perspectives on your customer's core needs.

"Marketers with a deep understanding of content strategy are more in tune with how their customers feel, what they say, and what they hear."

The Content Honeycomb on the Job

Social Media Manager
A social media manager can leverage this framework to create different types of content for users to engage with and share.

Copywriter
A copywriter could use this framework to write compelling content that effectively tells a brand's story across marketing collateral.

Director of Content
A director of content can utilize the Content Honeycomb to guide content strategy for their team of writers and designers.

I will compile and share neighborhood-specific restaurant guides by aggregating reviews that users have written on my app.

A strong content strategy should extend consistently across all marketing functions, as every platform and channel is an opportunity to galvanize your audiences and introduce them to your brand. To use content to its full potential across paid, owned, and earned media, engage in ongoing, cross-team brainstorming and keep the Content Honeycomb in mind. By following this framework, your content will make strides in driving profit and elevating the profile of your brand.

The Paid, Owned, and Earned Media Framework

The Paid, Owned, and Earned Media Framework

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Whether they're working on a paid social media campaign, crafting copy for a website, or landing coverage in a magazine or blog, there's one goal many marketers share: to raise brand awareness. However, with multiple team members creating countless content assets across several digital channels, processes can get hectic — and inefficient — quickly.
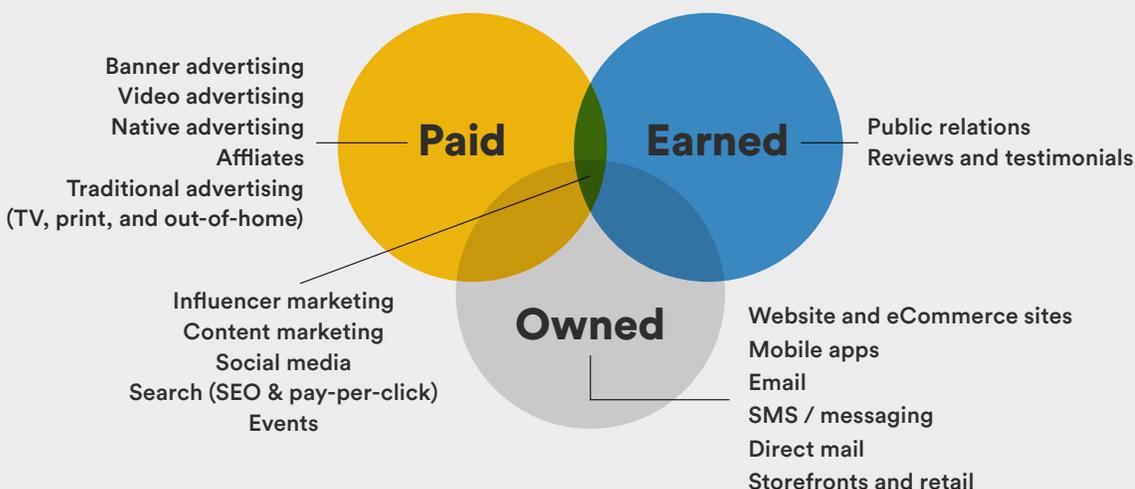
An effective marketing operation requires that everyone on the team takes a holistic view of how media tactics work together. Media tactics fall into three main buckets:

1. **Paid:** Media that a marketer pays for, such as display advertising, pay per click (PPC), paid influencers, and retargeting.
2. **Owned:** Media from owned properties such as websites, mobile apps, email, and social media platforms.
3. **Earned:** Shares or mentions outside of owned channels, such as blog links, news articles, and customer testimonials (negative reviews included).

Most organizations leverage media in all three categories, and each channel often correlates with the responsibilities of different roles and teams. Some channels, like social media, influencer marketing, and content, may intersect with all three buckets.

When team members are aligned on the interplay between paid, earned, and owned media, they can work to tell a cohesive, consistent story across multiple channels. At the same time, they can optimize their contributions independently by thinking about how their work impacts the rest of the organization.

Juggling so many channels and developing a strategy that includes owned, paid, and earned media can be daunting. It requires organization — and that's where the Paid, Owned, and Earned Media Framework comes in.

Banner advertising
Video advertising
Native advertising
Affiliates
Traditional advertising
(TV, print, and out-of-home)

Paid

Earned

Public relations
Reviews and testimonials

Influencer marketing
Content marketing
Social media
Search (SEO & pay-per-click)
Events

Owned

Website and eCommerce sites
Mobile apps
Email
SMS / messaging
Direct mail
Storefronts and retail

Media tactics fall into the categories of paid, owned, or earned — though some tactics may intersect with all three.

This framework provides a roadmap for considering media options and choosing which tactics to pursue. Leverage it to:

1. Understand and assess the value of different channels for your brand.
2. Organize how you utilize these channels.
3. Evaluate how different channels amplify one another.
4. Get a better understanding of your colleagues' roles.
5. Align teams across media tactics to create a converged campaign.

Let's take a deeper dive into the three types of media.

1 Paid Media

Paid media today include both traditional and new types:

- Banner, video, social, and native advertising
- Paid search
- Paid influencers
- Affiliates
- TV
- Print
- Out-of-home

Thanks to the data at the heart of new media, the conversation goes beyond reach to include engagement and relevance. Paid media are often the most expensive digital marketing tactics, but they offer more immediate and predictable reach to a target audience.

Paid campaigns are usually classified in one of two ways:

1. A brand campaign prioritizes reach. The goal is to share your message with a target audience, raising brand awareness and intent to purchase.
2. A direct response campaign is meant to drive an action. These typically offer a promotion and a clear call to action (CTA) to try to incentivize the user to complete a conversion.

Thanks to the evolution of creative formats, both goals can be achieved in a single ad that catches a user's attention, educates them about a product, and drives them through a conversion. For example, Facebook's carousel format, when used with its Lead Generation objective, allows users to enter their email address directly into an ad unit. This lets a marketer combine both brand awareness and direct response into a single ad.

2 Owned Media

Owned media channels are those that are fully under a brand's control. They can be designed, updated, and shared at the company's discretion.

Websites are arguably the most important owned assets, as a major goal of nearly all other digital marketing channels is to drive traffic to company websites where visitors can then convert. Other key properties include mobile apps, eCommerce sites, content, email lists, direct mail, SMS/messaging lists, and branded social channels.

A company's physical locations and hosted events are also owned channels, as businesses have control over what happens there.

Owned media channels give you the opportunity to educate and entertain your customers, as well as create a seamless customer experience. For many individuals like email marketing managers, brand managers, and SEO specialists, optimizing owned media channels is a full-time job.

3   Earned Media

Earned media come from sources outside of your organization, often in the form of word-of-mouth recommendations. Studies show that people find recommendations from people they know to be more trustworthy than content coming directly from brands, and no amount of paid advertising can make up for a lack of valuable earned media.

Common sources of earned media include social media and content marketing shares, unpaid influencers, public relations, reviews, and testimonials. This type of marketing can be very effective but tends to require a longer-term effort than paid and owned media.

It's also important to note that earned media are the least in our control. We can put effort into driving press coverage or influencer shoutouts, but we can rarely dictate what people say about our brand.

The Paid, Owned, and Earned Media Framework on the Job

Performance Marketer
A performance marketer could leverage the framework to determine which paid channels their company should pursue.

Brand Manager
A brand manager could look to the framework to ensure consistent messaging across paid and owned channels.

Social Media Manager
A social media manager could use the framework as a guide for monitoring earned media and finding ways to engage with consumers.

How to Plan a Converged Media Campaign

The most effective marketing strategies combine paid, owned, and earned media to create an impact that's greater than the sum of its parts. Moreover, the combination that's best for your brand will be one that's uniquely tailored to your size, budget, resources, and existing reach.

When you're planning a campaign, use the following worksheets to ensure that all stakeholders and teams are aligned on how they're contributing to the larger end goal(s). As you'll see, many of these questions incorporate themes and strategies covered in earlier frameworks, and we encourage you to keep your SMART objectives and KPIs in mind.

Paid Media Evaluation Worksheet

Checklist

Complete the following steps to help prioritize the paid media partners you use.

- ☐ Consider how much of your target audience the partner can reach.
- ☐ Calculate the cost of the paid ad.
- ☐ Determine if your ad whether contextually relevant to the content the paid media partner publishes.
- ☐ Research whether the partner has effectively achieved similar objectives in other brand campaigns.
- ☐ Pinpoint how much control you would have over target demographics, psychographics, technographics, locations, etc. that are important for your campaign.
- ☐ Investigate how robust the partner's capabilities are when it comes to tracking interactions and measuring performance.
- ☐ Find out if the partner will be transparent about where your ads are actually served and to whom.

Helpful Questions

What attributes are important for audience segmentation and targeting?

Which channels are going to be the most efficient and effective in reaching that audience?

Do your ads link to optimized landing pages on your owned channels?

Have you set up retargeting to move people through the marketing funnel?

Are you bidding on search terms for people who have seen your ad and/or have a relevant need?

Owned Media Evaluation Worksheet

Checklist

Optimize your company's owned media by applying these key strategies.

- ☐ **Brand storytelling:** Keep your overall brand voice consistent across all owned channels, but have a unique value proposition and use case for each.
- ☐ **Conversion funnels:** Regularly reassess conversion paths (such as form completion or purchase) to see if there are any steps or points of friction you can remove.
- ☐ **Responsive design:** Make sure websites are optimized for both design and response time across desktop, tablet, and mobile views.
- ☐ **Mobile apps:** Consider what unique audiences and use cases your mobile apps serve when it comes to customer engagement and retention (e.g., mobile pay opportunities, fingerprint login, etc.).
- ☐ **SEO:** Regularly evaluate search terms that are relevant to your brand and optimize your site accordingly.
- ☐ **Content marketing:** Publish content that's of interest to relevant prospects.
- ☐ **A/B testing:** Split test landing pages, layouts, and messages to optimize performance.
- ☐ **Retargeting:** Use cookies and tags to retarget people who visit your site but don't complete a conversion with paid advertising.

Helpful Questions

What is the end action you want your customer to take? Where does this happen?

How can you make it as easy as possible for people to complete that action?

Are you proactively providing answers to questions people may have?

Is it easy to find your brand based on search terms for relevant needs?

How can you move people from paid to owned channels so you don't have to pay each time you want to reach them?

Earned Media Evaluation Worksheet

Checklist

Make the most of word of mouth and invest time and effort in earned media by completing these action items.

- ☐ Make sure your PR and marketing teams plan and work together to amplify each other's efforts.
- ☐ Find influencers who already love your brand and offer them unique experiences that encourage them to talk about it more.
- ☐ Identify websites that are already mentioning your brand but aren't linking to your own and encourage them to do so.
- ☐ Get close to your customers and create content they'll find valuable and shareable. (The Content Honeycomb framework section on page 14 will be useful here.)
- ☐ Engage your community on social media and keep conversations going.
- ☐ Use social media listening tools to stay up to date on trends involving your brand.
- ☐ Monitor reviews and aim to resolve customer service issues promptly.

Helpful Questions

Who might be interested in what your brand is doing (e.g., influencers, press, etc.)?

How can you encourage these influencers, media outlets, etc. to talk about your brand?

What high-value, shareable content are you creating?

How can you engage with customers in a way that encourages them to talk about your brand (without being pushy)?

Where Do We Go From Here?

You can create an effective marketing strategy whether you're a large team or one-person shop. No matter the scope, defining a clear, holistic plan and utilizing the frameworks we've discussed can help prevent unnecessary guesswork and campaign chaos.

As you begin applying the frameworks on the job, remember to:

Develop a strong hypothesis.
There's no crystal ball in marketing — we don't know what will and won't work when it comes to our individual brands. Marketers have to perform their own due diligence to gain insight into the value their products and services bring to consumers and create marketing plans based on these findings. After that, they can perform a series of campaign tests to validate their hypotheses and optimize for larger, full-course execution.

Set up meaningful goals.
If you don't know where you're headed, how can you possibly know how to get there? Creating clear, strategic, measurable objectives helps marketers set goals that are both purpose- and data-driven. Make sure your goals are clearly communicated and understood across your company and by anyone working on your campaigns.

Focus on metrics that matter.
As we learned, not every metric is relevant for every campaign. Marketers can oftentimes misconstrue the effectiveness of a campaign by looking at the wrong metrics. Before executing a campaign, take time to identify the ones that are most important to you.

Be versed and strategic about your media.
A key to becoming a better marketer is understanding that media do not live in siloed buckets. Audiences consume media in all forms, and it is your job to build trust in your brand through not one, but many experiences. Some experiences may occur on your owned channels, but a great many will happen when you're not in the room. Be cognizant of the full ecosystem of channels your consumers utilize and remember they might be exposed to your brand when and where you've least planned for it.

Be valuable.
Creating content that's already available and without value does nothing to help a marketer stand out in a crowded space. When you create content that's meaningful and keeps the consumer's decision-making power in mind, you can build better trust among present — and future — customers.

About General Assembly

General Assembly is a pioneer in education and career transformation, specializing in today's most in-demand skills: digital marketing, data science, web development, design, and product management. The leading source for training, staffing, and career transitions, we foster a flourishing community of professionals pursuing careers they love.

Through innovative training and hiring programs, GA helps companies — including more than one-third of the Fortune 100 — source talent, train teams, and assess skills to identify growth opportunities. Our assessments in digital marketing, data science, and web development enable companies to benchmark their teams' competencies to identify gaps and guide investments in skill development.

As individuals and companies struggle to compete in an increasingly technological economy, General Assembly provides award-winning training to close the global skills gap through full-time, part-time, and short-form programs at our global campuses, online, and onsite with teams.

To learn more, visit ga.co.

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