

DIGITAL MARKETING GLOSSARY

This is a guide to the broadly accepted meanings of terms commonly used in the digital marketing realm; it's intended to be a living document, so if you have questions or would like to suggest terms to be added please let us know. Note that we're developing glossaries for SEO and email deliverability, so most terms that apply in those disciplines are left out of this glossary.

A

ABOVE THE FOLD:

This term originated in newspapers: important stories ran "above the fold" so that they could be read while the paper was folded. For online assets (like your website and emails), the term references the top portion of the page, that which is visible without scrolling.

A/B TESTING:

Testing a campaign component for effectiveness by deploying an existing, known performer (the control, usually A) against a trial version (the challenger, usually B) to a limited group, and analyzing behavioral difference among recipients. Emails and landing pages are the most-tested properties.

ACQUISITION COST:

In email marketing, the cost to generate one lead, newsletter subscriber, or customer in an individual email campaign; typically, the total campaign expense divided by the number of leads, subscribers or customers it produced.
([The Email Experience Council](#))

ADWORDS:

Google's pay-per-click (PPC) search-engine marketing (SEM) program.

ALGORITHM:

Step-by-step, ruled mathematical calculations. In digital marketing, search engines use algorithms to determine page rankings. Every search engine has its own unique, proprietary algorithm that gets updated on a regular basis. Google's famously has more than 200 major components.

ANCHOR TEXT:

Any text on a website that is hyperlinked ("linked"). As an example, this [anchor text](#) links to Act-On's homepage.

ASSETS:

Items such as white papers, eBooks, case studies, infographics, web pages, recordings, datasheets, videos, images, signs, etc. that have value. Uses: Paid, earned, and owned media; sales, customer success, training, marketing campaigns, web pages, microsites, as offers, and more.

ATTRIBUTION:

Attributing something – a lead, an action, revenue – to a causal factor, such as a visit to a specific web page, or attendance at a specific webinar, or a click on a specific pay-per-click ad; or attributing something to a general tactic, such as social media. Attribution is often used to help determine which activity or group of activities lead to the desired action. Attribution is most often measured as First-Touch, Last-Touch, or Multi-Touch.

B

B2B MARKETING:

Business-to-business marketing. (Examples: Intel, Gunderson rail cars, Sky Chef airline caterers)

B2C MARKETING:

Business-to-consumer marketing. (Examples: Apple, Trek bicycles, McDonald's)

B2G MARKETING:

Business-to-government marketing. (Examples: Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, McKesson).

BANT CRITERIA:

"BANT" is an acronym representing Budget, Authority, Need, and (purchase) Timeframe. These are criteria used to help determine whether or not a prospect represents a qualified sales opportunity. They are considered "explicit" criteria (the prospect provides the information, or it is obvious) rather than "implicit" criteria (usually behavior you can observe, such as web pages visited, content downloaded, or webinars attended).

BUSINESS RULES:

Rules that determine how a process will work and how different groups (e.g., sales and marketing) interact. Business rules may be accompanied by a Service Level Agreement that has a time constraint. An example of a process rule is the instructions inside an automated program, such as "If the recipient clicks on the link in this email, give them a lead score of 10 points and advance them to the next step." An example of how groups (e.g. sales and marketing) might apply a business rule is "all leads achieving a lead score greater than 55 will be routed to sales within 4 hours."

BUYER PERSONA:

A [buyer persona](#) is a model of a buyer that focuses on who the person is, what they want, why they want it – and when, where, and how they go about getting what they want. Good personas are created through researching your best customers, and represent a target group large enough to be important in a marketing plan. Personas are used to dial in messaging, plan campaigns, and more.

BUYER'S JOURNEY:

Vendor-customer interactions used to be framed from the sales perspective, often termed the "sales funnel." But buying patterns have changed:

According to Forrester Research, the typical buyer is anywhere from two-thirds to 90 percent of the way through the buying process before agreeing to engage with sales. Buyers are more autonomous, and so many marketers find that seeing vendor-customer interactions from the buyer's timeline and point of view – the "[buyer's journey](#)" – allows them to build stronger relationships with prospects than adhering to the old sales funnel view does.

CALL TO ACTION (CTA):

A suggestion to someone to take an action. Often it's an encouragement to buy now, or call now. In digital marketing, it's often an invitation to click to receive some kind of benefit, such as the opportunity to register for a webinar or download a white paper. CTAs are most often seen as a banner, button, or some type of graphic or text on a website, in an email, or in a pay-per-click ad. The [marketing goal of a CTA](#) is to prompt a user to click and continue down a conversion funnel. CTAs can be tested with A/B testing, and they can be measured via a conversion rate formula that calculates the number of clicks over the times the CTA was seen.

CAMPAIGN MANAGEMENT:

The end-to-end process of planning, creating, executing, and measuring marketing programs, which are usually directed at specific audience segments.

CLICK-THROUGH RATE (CTR):

The percentage of people who actually click on a link (e.g., in an email message or sponsored ad) after seeing it. Generally calculated as the number of email clicks divided by tracked email opens, or ad clicks divided by ad impressions.

CONTENT MARKETING:

"The marketing and business process for creating and distributing valuable content to attract, acquire and engage a clearly defined and understood target audience – with the objective of driving profitable customer action." ([The Content Marketing Institute](#)) It's usually focused on meeting customer needs or answering inquiries rather than promoting a product. Whatever the content may be (a web page, an eBook, a tweet, etc.), and however it is distributed, there is always a business objective for using it.

CONVERSION:

When a prospect takes another step in the buyer's journey, such as when a visitor to your website fills out a form and becomes a lead, or when a lead meets your requirements to become a qualified lead, or when an opportunity becomes a closed sale.

CONVERSION RATE (CR):

The percentage measure of conversion in various stages in the buyer's journey. For example, if one person in every hundred visitors to a landing page fills out a form, that page's conversion rate is 1:100, or 1 percent. Another example: The number of leads that convert to an opportunity in the sales cycle. Conversion rates help you determine which marketing programs and tactics are working, so you can emphasize what works and fix what's broken.

CRM:

The phrase "Customer relationship management" is most often used to describe the technology used by a sales team to manage customer/prospect interactions, the sales pipeline, and closed deals. Examples of CRM technologies include Salesforce.com, SugarCRM, NetSuite CRM, Microsoft Dynamics, and SalesLogix. The phrase is also used to refer to all aspects of interaction that a company has with its customers, whether sales or service-related. In that interpretation, CRM is often discussed as a business strategy that enables an organization to manage the entire customer lifecycle.

CUSTOMER LIFECYCLE MANAGEMENT:

The process of a vendor actively engaging with a buyer throughout the buyer's entire cycle, beginning as a prospect, through the funnel to qualification and closing, then retention, loyalty, advocacy, and re-purchase. The customer acquisition process gets a lot of attention, but given that increasing customer retention rates by 5% increases profits by 25% to 95% – and 80 % of your future profits will come from just 20% of your existing customers – it makes sound financial sense to pay attention to the entire lifecycle, with emphasis on retaining existing customers. (Statistics from CMO.com)



DEMAND GENERATION:

Demand generation is an overarching program and process for driving broad awareness and interest in a company's products and/or services. It calls for

marketing programs coupled with a structured sales process. Typically, [demand generation](#) programs involve multiple marketing and sales components facilitating a stepped process that could include: building awareness, facilitating discovery, supporting buyers as they consider solutions, and validating purchase decisions. One of the outcomes of demand generation is the positioning of your brand, company, and products or services in ways that makes your audience more likely to purchase. Lead generation is one demand generation tactic.

DEMOGRAPHICS:

Quantifiable statistics of people in a given population, and/or its quantifiable subsets. These are used to sort people into meaningful market segments. B2C demographics might include factors such as gender, age, or location. B2B demographics tend more to factors such as title or department. "Firmographics" apply similar factors to organizations; common attributes are industry, revenue, and number of employees.



EARNED MEDIA:

Publicity or social buzz that's free. In essence, the press and/or your customers become a free distribution channel for your marketing messages. It's usually

generated by your (not-so-free) strategic deployment of carefully crafted content assets (owned media). As an example, if a New York Times reporter writes a story about your company, that story is earned media. To get that story, a highly trained media relations person probably personally pitched a thoughtfully written press release to an editor at the paper. That press release is owned media. If you want to drive traffic to that story, you could run an advertising campaign promoting it. Those ads are "paid media" – you pay for time or space. For another example, imagine that someone on your social team tweets an observation that goes viral and is shared by a million people. Your tweet is owned media; all the shared tweets are earned media.

EBOOK:

There's a lot of overlap between eBooks and white papers. They can have the same goals: to educate, inform, or persuade; to demonstrate thought leadership; to extend branding; to establish a company as an authoritative source in its field; and more. The best illustration we can find comes from the 2012 book, [Content Rules](#) by Ann Handley and C. C. Chapman:

WHITE PAPER CHARACTERISTICS

- Long, linear and deeply researched in a single topic
- Data-centric and based on quantifiable research
- Text-focused with minimal graphics
- Formal, almost scholarly in tone

EBOOK CHARACTERISTICS

- Formatted into scannable "chunks" of text to accommodate the time-strapped reader
- Concept-centric, keyed to recent industry trends
- More visually focused with generous callouts, images and graphics typical of a magazine article
- Casual and more engaging in tone.

EMAIL MARKETING:

Using [email](#) to establish and/or maintain business relationships with prospects and customers.



INBOUND LINK:

(aka "backlink", "back link"):

A hyperlink from one domain to another. Links are inbound from the perspective of the link target, and outbound from the

perspective of the originator. This [link to Wikipedia](#) is outbound from Act-On's perspective, and inbound from Wikipedia's.

INBOUND MARKETING:

Focuses on creating awareness and attracting people who are looking for what you're selling. In essence, this is a way for prospects to self-select as being interested in you. This is done through a mix of [content marketing](#), search engine optimization, social media, and other tactics designed to attract attention, which Forrester Research has called "the fine art of being found." After the marketer has optimized, published, and promoted content, any subsequent action is generally taken proactively, by the prospective buyer. This is in opposition to "outbound" marketing, which is the term used for push tactics such as email and advertising.

INTEGRATED CAMPAIGNS:

Marketing campaigns that use an array of channels or tactics in a coordinated fashion. Examples include [integrating inbound and outbound tactics](#) (e.g., social media, landing pages, and email); integrating online and offline tactics (e.g. pay-per-click and direct mail); integrating paid, owned, and earned media (e.g. pay-per-click, landing pages, and news stories).

INTERRUPTION MARKETING:

This is a term used for marketing that "interrupts" a person's day or experience. Pop-up ads and telemarketing qualify; some experts consider email to be interruptive.



KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:

These are selected signals used to "indicate" whether a program or business activity is on track (its "health", if you will). KPIs make

performance more understandable by reducing a complex number of variables to a small and simple set of easily understood indicators. KPIs are derived from metrics and proxy sources, but are not themselves actual measuring devices. A KPI is also not diagnostic – it cannot tell you what is wrong, only that something does (or does not) meet a goal you have set.

To use a physical example, imagine you're driving on the freeway, and the speed limit is 65. Most cars measure the rotational speed of either the wheels or the transmission using a drive cable. So the drive cable does the measurement, and sends the raw data to the speedometer. The speedometer is the KPI: In a simple, unambiguous manner, it displays the information you need to make a judgment about whether your car is moving too fast.



LANDING PAGE:

A single web page that appears in response to a click, usually in an email, an online ad, or on another web page. [Landing pages](#) are generally used to promote a

single idea or action; they often offer something of value in return for the visitor filling in contact information. As an example, a registration page for a webinar is a landing page.

LANDING PAGE OPTIMIZATION:

The process of testing and revising a landing page so that it becomes more effective over time.

LEAD FUNNEL:

(aka "sales funnel"): A representation, usually graphic, of the stages of the sales process. Terminology varies from company to company; one popular set of stages is: inquiry, lead, marketing-qualified lead (MQL), sales-accepted lead (SAL), sales-qualified lead (SQL), opportunity, closed.

LEAD GENERATION:

The practice of attracting and acquiring individuals as leads through marketing programs. Typically focused on the beginning of the funnel; one facet of demand generation.

LEAD MANAGEMENT:

A defined set of processes to manage a lead from attraction through delivery of the qualified lead to sales, all the way to closing the sale, with the lead becoming a customer and entering the customer management phases of retention, loyalty, advocacy, and/or re-purchase.

LEAD NURTURING:

Most leads are not sales-ready. "[Lead nurturing](#)" is the process of maintaining and nurturing a relationship with a potential buyer until such time as the lead becomes ready to buy. In practice, this usually means using a series of "touches" to connect with a prospect. These touches are most often emails and phone calls from the marketing team, the sales representative, or coordinated efforts from both. Good lead nurturing has two main effects: it helps the buyer answer questions and gain confidence in choosing a solution, thus progressing toward sales-readiness; and it positions the vendor as

desirable according to factors the buyer values, such as expertise, trustworthiness, and/or reliability. According to Forrester Research, companies that excel at lead nurturing generate 50% more sales ready leads at 33% lower cost.

LEAD SCORING:

"[Lead scoring](#) is a methodology used to rank prospects against a scale that represents the perceived value each lead represents to the organization. The resulting score is used to determine which leads a receiving function (e.g. sales, partners, telesprospecting) will engage, in order of priority." (SiriusDecisions) In practice, this means that attributes (such as "title") and actions (such as viewing a pricing page on a website) are considered signs of likely buying capability and/or advancing sales-readiness, and are given numerical values according to how such factors perform historically. Salespeople often use lead scoring to help determine lead prioritization. Leads scores aggregate, but when time is factored in, some long-past scores could be deleted.



MARKETING AUTOMATION:

This term is applied to integrated software platforms that field multiple complementary technologies, such as email marketing, website visitor tracking, and automated programs (e.g.

lead nurturing, lead scoring, etc.). The integration means the tools can all be managed from one dashboard, making management easier. It also means that all the lead and contact data flowing in from different tools is merged into consolidated histories, for real-time intelligence (on both individuals and segments) that both sales and marketing can use. [Marketing automation](#) offers a way to build and manage relationships at scale – and both sales and marketing have visibility into those relationships. It also enables the measurement of campaigns and channels. Key capabilities include customer segmentation, lead generation, nurture campaigns, prospect scoring, and closed-loop analytics.

MARKETING-QUALIFIED LEAD (MQL):

A lead that marketing has deemed worthy of handoff to sales. Characteristics may or may not include attributes such as demographics or activity and/or an assessment of the viability of the prospect as an opportunity. The main categories looked at are fit, based on explicit criteria such as title, industry, and revenue; and engagement, based on activities such as webinar attendance and white paper downloads. It's important that marketing and sales agree on the criteria and definition. See Sales-Accepted Lead; Sales-Qualified Lead.

MICROSITE:

A mini-website within a larger site. Often used to promote a specific product or service.



OPTIMIZATION:

The process of reviewing (and/or testing) and then revising an asset so that it performs more effectively (e.g., more traffic, more conversions, etc.). All kinds

of assets can be optimized; for just three examples: email subject lines can be optimized to increase open rates; landing pages can be optimized to convert more; web pages can be optimized so that search engines understand more clearly what the page is about and so direct more of the right traffic.

OWNED MEDIA:

These are media that your organization creates or controls. Your web pages and landing pages, your blog, and all the content assets you create for any channel is owned media. Everything you post on your social networks is owned media, including tweets, images, videos on YouTube or Vimeo, and so on. Once other people begin distributing your content, it will become earned media.



PAID MEDIA:

Here, you pay (usually for time or space) to leverage a third-party channel. Tradeshows, outdoor advertising, pay-per-click ads on websites and search engines,

newspapers, TV, radio, magazines, signage, movie screens, sponsorships, direct mail, etc., are all paid media. Paid media is often important for creating awareness, an early step in demand generation.

PAY-PER-CLICK:

(PPC, also called cost per click): is an internet advertising model used to direct traffic to websites from search engines, advertising networks, content websites, and blogs. You pay the publisher only when your ad is clicked. With search engine advertising, advertisers typically bid on how much they will pay per click for keyword phrases for their ads. Content sites commonly charge a fixed price per click rather than use a bidding system.

PERMISSION MARKETING:

Explicit permission happens when you disclose how you plan to use a prospective subscriber's email address (such as when someone subscribes to your newsletter and also checks a box accepting promotional emails). Implied permission happens when someone shares their email address with you in the course of normal business communications (such as filling out a form to register for a webinar). (Adapted from John Arnold's [Email Marketing for Dummies](#)).

PERSONALIZATION:

Traditionally, this has been an email marketing targeting tactic in which an email message appears to have been created for a single specific recipient. Techniques include adding the recipient's name in the subject line or message body, addressing known concerns, making an offer on a product the recipient has looked at on your website, referring to transaction history, etc.

PRIVACY POLICY:

"A clear description of how your company uses the email addresses and other information it gathers via opt-in requests for newsletters, company information or third-party offers or other functions. If you rent, sell or exchange your list to anyone outside your company, or if you add email addresses to opt-out messages, you should state so in the privacy policy. State laws may also compel you to explain your privacy policy, where to put the policy statement so people will see it and even in form the policy should be displayed." ([The Email Experience Council](#)) If you're marketing internationally, note that different countries have different legal requirements for privacy policies.

PROGRESSIVE PROFILING:

The practice of serving multiple successive forms to the same lead. The first asks for minimal information. Subsequent forms ask for additional information. The goal is to gain a multidimensional picture of a lead without asking for too much information at any one time, so the ask is both less intrusive and more appropriate as the relationship develops.



SALES-ACCEPTED LEAD:

This is a lead that marketing sends to sales which sales agrees is qualified, and agrees to follow up with. In some organizations,

there are teams of sales development reps who specialize in qualifying leads further by getting potential customers to take some pre-defined next step(s). Marketing may support this step with nurturing programs for leads that are sales-worthy but not sales-ready. See Marketing-Qualified Lead, Sales-Qualified Lead.

SALES-QUALIFIED LEAD:

This is a lead that has passed the Sales-Accepted Lead stage with some degree of engagement that allows sales to believe this lead is both qualified and likely to buy within a certain amount of time. Marketing may support this step with bottom-of-funnel materials and other specialized collateral. See Marketing-Qualified Lead.

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION (SEO):

The name of this practice is actually a mischaracterization; you can't optimize a search engine, but you can optimize your website to increase the volume and/or quality of traffic directed to your site by search engines. All search engines make their money directly or indirectly by satisfying searchers; this means their number-one goal is to find and return the content that most directly matches a searcher's intent. Your goal with optimization is to use the methods which will assist Google and other search engines to discover your content. Of all the things you can do (e.g., linking, keywords, schema, authorship, etc.), the one tactic that trumps all is: Create quality content that people want and search for. Recent research indicates that almost 80 percent of B2B buyers use search to begin their information discovery process for a business purchase; [SEO](#) is critical to your website being found by those buyers.

SEARCH ENGINE RESULTS PAGE (SERP):

When someone initiates a search on a search engine, the engine will return pages of results. According to [Search Engine Watch](#), page 1 results garnered 92 percent of all traffic from the average search, with traffic dropping off by 95 percent for page 2.

SEARCH ENGINE MARKETING (SEM):

Using search engine optimization (SEO) to generate organic traffic and/or search engine advertising to generate paid traffic, to your website.

SEGMENT:

The action of slicing a list into segments determined by various attributes or factors. You can segment by demographic and firmographic factors (job title, location, company size, industry), behavior (website visits, webinar attendance, email responses, form submissions, purchasing activity), or any other factor that makes sense. Segmentation allows targeted campaigns and supports personalization.

SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT (SLA):

This term is usually employed as part of a service contract, often in any vendor-customer situation where downtime is critical and can turn contentious (e.g., telcos and internet service providers). Increasingly, sales and marketing teams are using two-way service level agreements to outline mutual understandings of what constitutes a qualified lead, how and when the lead will be handed off, and what efforts sales will put forth to follow up. There are usually time constraints as well, such as: "Sales will follow up a sales-qualified lead within 12 hours." The goal is to foster mutual understanding, cooperation, reliability, and maximize the potential of as many leads as possible.

SOCIAL MEDIA:

Internet-based applications that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content, such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Google+, etc.

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING:

Using [social media](#) strategically to drive traffic to a website or achieve other marketing goals.

T

TRACKING CODE:

Information typically included in a URL (or on a web page or in an email) that allows you to track something. It's used in advertising to estimate the effectiveness of various aspects of an ad, such as search terms and referring search engines. It's used in website visitor tracking to identify visitors and their behavior or your site. Note that if you create and track additional URLs for a web page and distribute each different URL to a different channel, you can track the source of visitors more easily.

TRIGGER EMAIL:

This is an automated email, sent in response to an action taken by a person or in response to a calendar date. Examples include welcome message sent to new subscribers as soon as they join your list; instructions sent upon webinar registration; or an email confirming a download. These can be one-offs, or an automated series of emails.

TRUMP RULES:

Rules that are put in place which allow for a lead to bypass all lead scoring criteria and be routed directly to sales. A lead who fills out a contact form and indicates a desire to speak with a sales rep is one example.

W

WEB FORM:

A form, on a web page or landing page, used to collect information on a buyer or customer. Fields usually include name and email address, and may include other details such as title, company name, company size, physical address, area of interest, readiness to buy, etc. See [Progressive Profiling](#).

WEBSITE VISITOR TRACKING:

This is an application that reports who visits your website by IP address and geographic location, and often by company (if the company is large enough to have its own internet service provider). If the IP address is already in your database, the [website visitor tracking](#) report will display the visitor's name. For known visitors, the page-visit data automatically feeds into the lead or contact's activity history, giving sales and marketing visibility into the person's specific page visits. If the IP address is not already in your database, you may be able to identify an anonymous visitor through an integration with a business directory (such as Data.com). Many marketing automation systems incorporate website visitor tracking.

WHITE PAPER:

An authoritative report or guide helping readers to understand an issue, solve a problem, or make a decision. White papers are commonly used in B2B and B2G marketing. As to the differences between white papers and eBooks, here's a list of them from the 2012 book, [Content Rules](#) by Ann Handley and C. C. Chapman:

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About Act-On Software

Act-On Software is a marketing automation company delivering innovation that empowers marketers to do the best work of their careers. Act-On is the only integrated workspace to address the needs of the customer experience, from brand awareness and demand generation, to retention and loyalty. With Act-On, marketers can drive better business outcomes and see higher customer lifetime value. The Act-On platform provides marketers with power they can actually use, without the need for a dedicated IT resource.

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