

2021 Digital Marketing Blueprint Prepared for Indiana-Based Businesses



RANK BRAIN MEDIA LLC

We are a small, trusted digital marketing agency located in Central Indiana. We have over 15 years of experience in digital marketing, web design, SEO, user experience, conversion optimization, paid search and much more.

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2021 MARKETING BLUEPRINT

2020 Was A Year That Tested All of Us

We're still here. But things have changed.

Customers have shifted to online more than ever. Their expectations have increased.

They search differently, buy differently and engage differently.

You must market differently.



9 SHIFTS IN HOW YOU MARKET IN 2021

We will cover the following topics and how you adapt your marketing to prepare for the year ahead.

1. THE DEMISE OF COOKIES

2. EMAIL MAKES A COMEBACK

3. CONTEXT IS QUEEN

4. USER EXPERIENCE

5. BIG SEO CHANGES

6. QR CODES

7. PREDICTIVE MARKETING

8. END OF GROWTH HACKING

9. VISUAL COMMERCE



SHIFT #1 - THE DEMISE OF COOKIES

First-Party Data

With Google Chrome ending its support of third-party cookies in 2021, you'll need to shift from reliance on third-party data for audience targeting and campaign measurement to a new model.

In 2021, the secret to delivering better digital marketing lies in your ability to unlock the data at your disposal and leverage it to deliver hyper-relevant messaging and a unified buying experience.

By leveraging your CRM data – something you must adopt quickly if you don't have a robust CRM of customer data – you can leverage this data to deliver relevant and timely messaging to grab the consumers' attention, engage them and guide them through the entire buyer's journey.

It's Only A Problem if You Don't Adapt

Mass adoption of CRM systems this year will enable platform businesses to enhance their targeting and user experience capabilities in the months and years ahead.

Deeper insights into customers increases targeting abilities to provide greater accuracy and more personalized customer engagement. This can help to drive smarter marketing, increased growth and better overall user experiences.

The image shows a CRM interface with a contact profile on the left and a timeline of activities on the right. The contact profile includes a name, email address, and a list of properties. The timeline shows a series of events for the contact, including form submissions and lifecycle changes.

Contact Profile:

- Name: Laurie Aquilante
- Email: laurie.aquilante@hubspot.com
- Phone: (508) 555-1234
- Address: 123 Main St, Boston, MA 02101
- Company: Acme Corp
- Job Title: Marketing Manager
- Source: Organic Search
- Lead Status: Lead
- Created: 05/01/2016
- Last Modified: 05/01/2016
- Properties: Laurie Aquilante submitted Ebook Form on Home, Laurie Aquilante submitted Ebook Form on Big Data Trends 2016, Laurie Aquilante was added to Developer Dave Persona - All Contacts, Laurie Aquilante was added to Developer Dave Persona - Leads, Laurie Aquilante lifecycle changed to "lead", Laurie Aquilante submitted Ebook Form on Big Data Trends 2016

Timeline:

- MAY 2016
- Laurie Aquilante submitted Ebook Form on Home 05/01/2016
- No properties updated.
- Laurie Aquilante submitted Ebook Form on Big Data Trends 2016 05/01/2016
- No properties updated.
- Laurie Aquilante was added to Developer Dave Persona - All Contacts 05/01/2016
- Laurie Aquilante was added to Developer Dave Persona - Leads 05/01/2016
- Laurie Aquilante lifecycle changed to "lead" 05/01/2016
- Laurie Aquilante submitted Ebook Form on Big Data Trends 2016 05/01/2016

SHIFT #2 - EMAIL MAKES A COMEBACK

Reinvention of Email

Since the beginning of COVID, there has been a shrinkage of channels due to the shutdown of face-to-face events, phones going unanswered in empty offices as employees are now working from home, and commuters no longer listening to advertising or seeing billboards designed to steer our desires. This change steered marketers to email at an intensity that has never been seen before.

2021 shows no sign this will change any time in the first half of the year – potentially even longer as people's interest in safety outweighs the benefits of in-person activities.



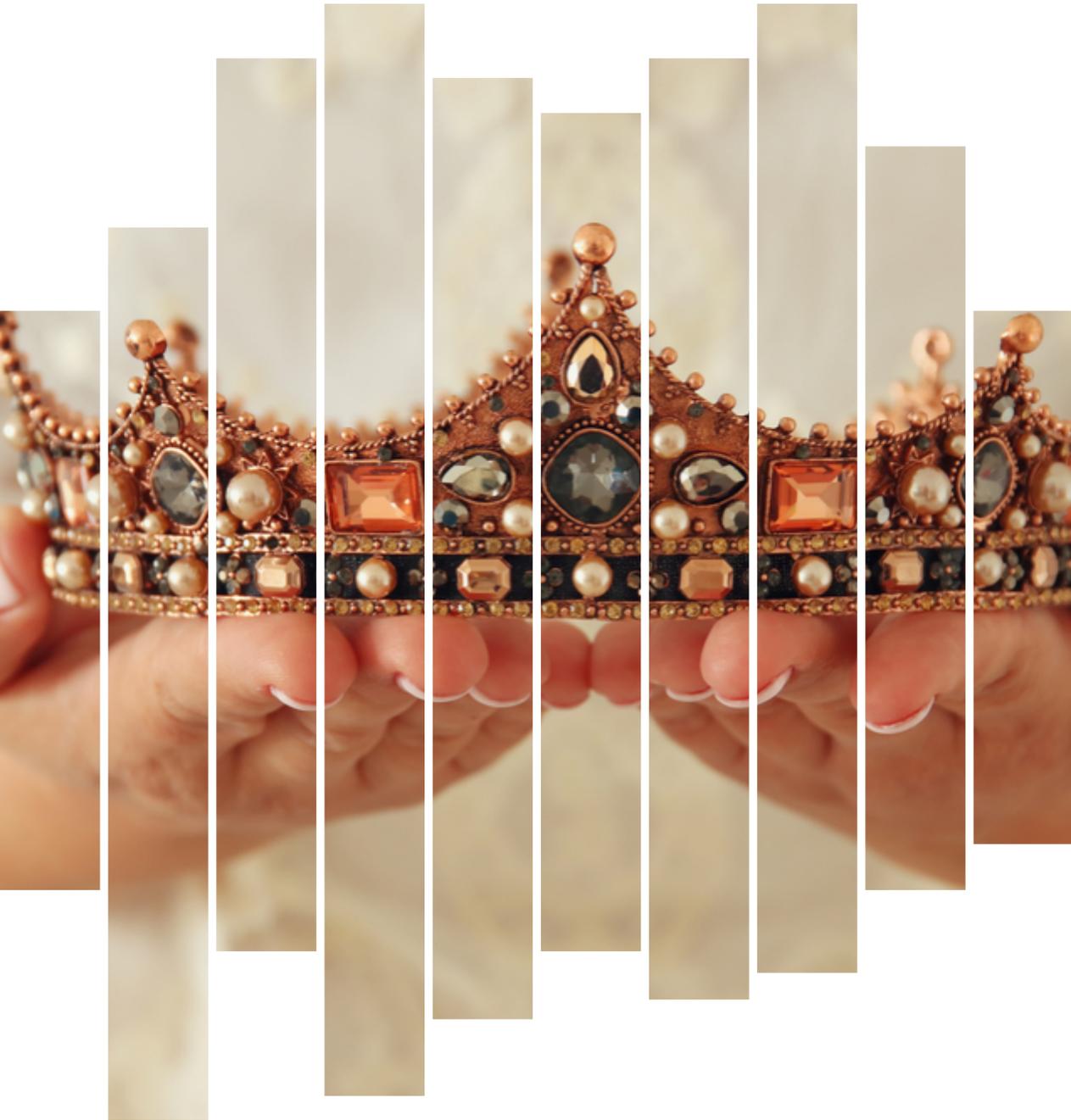


But Don't Email Just Because We Said So

While the data supports that reinvention of email, don't just start sending emails again to check this box.

Invest in the right email automation system, invest in creating the right content at the right time and make sure the email hits your target audience's inbox.

With these tools in place, you can reach more people via email now than you could in the past, and your email marketing analytics should give you more insight into the individual buyer's journey and experience based on what they engage with and when.



SHIFT #3 - CONTEXT IS QUEEN

Tell A Better Story

If Content is King, in 2021 Context will be Queen.

Content marketing will remain a key priority in 2021, but there will be a sharper focus on storytelling – for both B2B and B2C. 2020 was a disruptive year and the amount of digital content has exploded since the world went into lockdown and still remains in various stages of home isolation.

We have been inundated with information, and compelling content will be critical to cut through the noise in the market. Storytelling marketing will allow your organization to connect and engage more effectively with customers and prospective clients.

Get Personal with Your Brand

Customers are looking for a personal and emotional connection when making their purchasing decisions, and a story that resonates strongly with them will help organizations establish that initial connection.

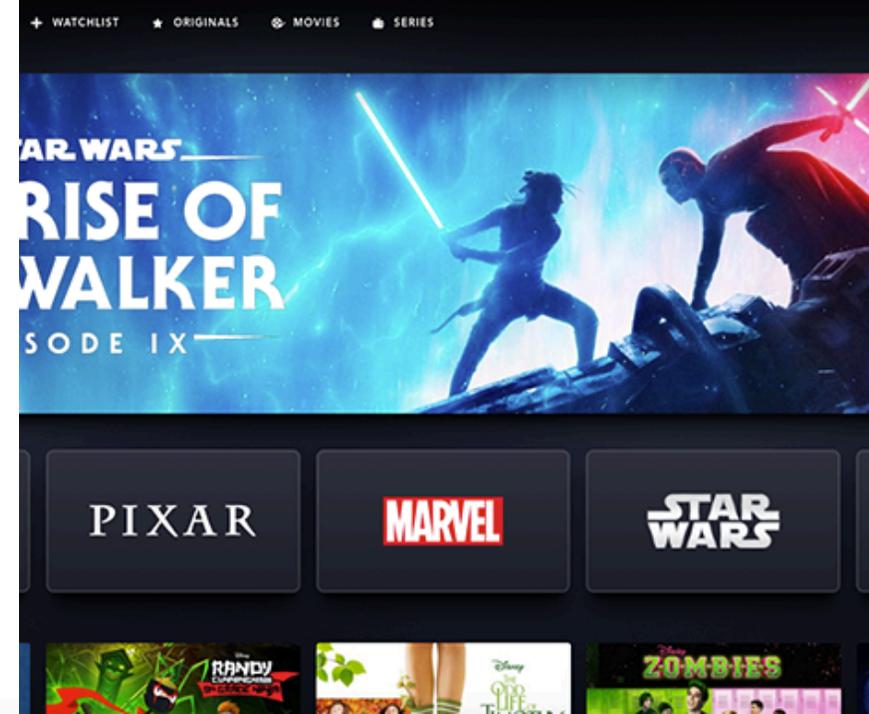
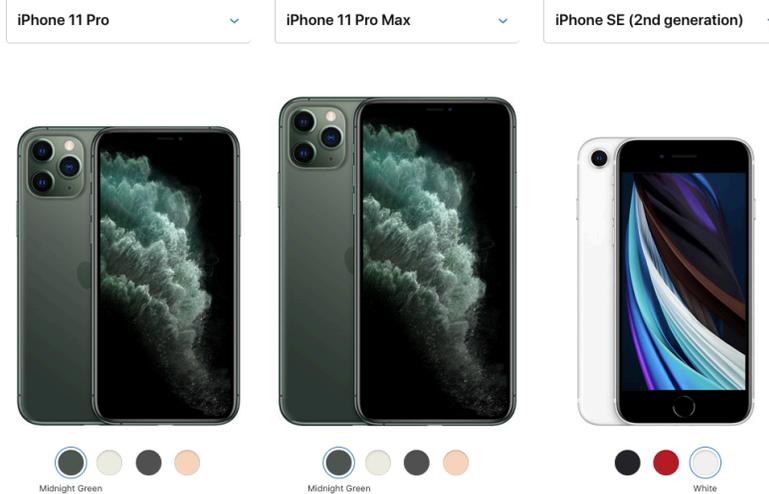
Beyond that, consumers have already seen an uptick in messages meant to reassure them on how brands are protecting customers and employees amid a pandemic. In 2021, the expectation for reassuring messages will continue as consumers become more selective in their spending as economies slowly recover from COVID-19 impacts.



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You've visited our Homepage twice... Do you have any questions for us?

Knowing you're from the United States, the weather is cloudy and cool today, you're on an Apple Computer, and you've arrived to this page directly are just a few examples of how Dynamic Yield can help you tailor personalized experiences based on any data you own — across web, apps, and email.



SHIFT #4 - USER EXPERIENCE

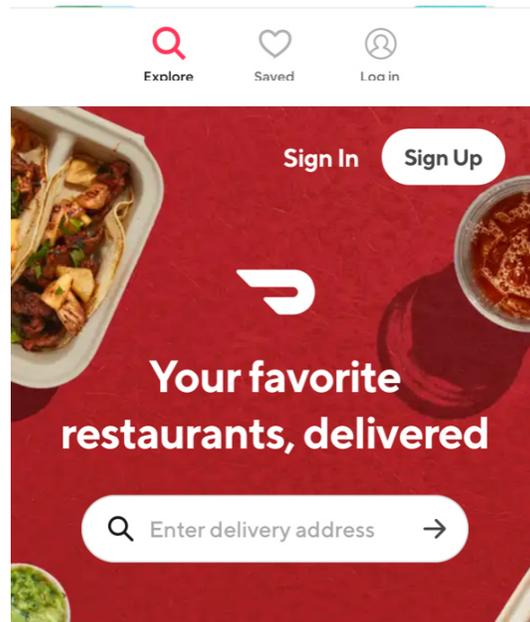
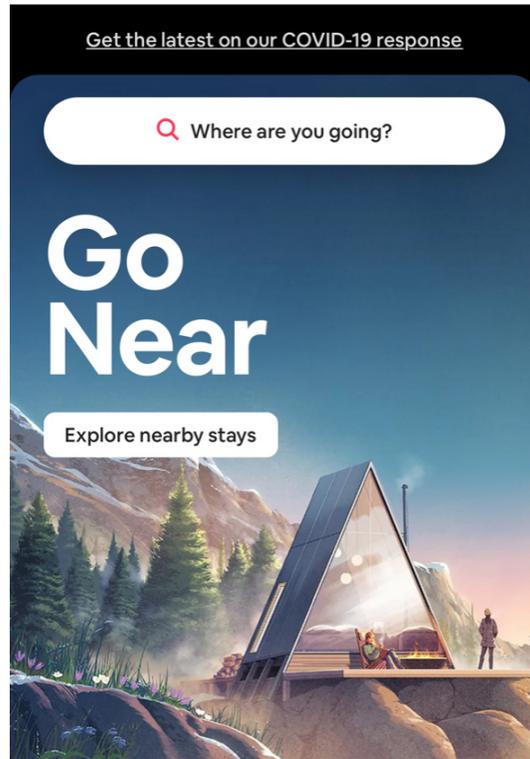
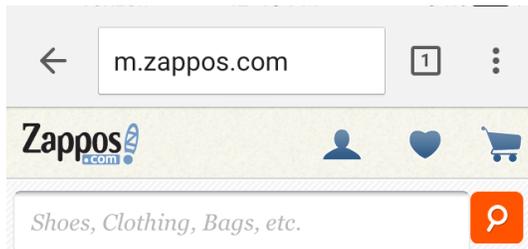
Users Want the Apple Experience Everywhere

Even the technophobes among us have had to get used to living our lives online this past year. As more people learn how to order groceries with a tap on an app or organize a family video call, they'll become less forgiving of clunky technology and user experiences. That will have big implications for advertisers



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Take A Hard Look at Your Website

As users have gotten more used to digital tools from the big brands like DoorDash, Instacart, Netflix and so on during the pandemic, their expectations for that user experience have risen – even for the local mom and pop website. That means no broken links, confusing CTAs, slow pages, or desktop-only websites. You should put a ton of focus in 2021 on creating a delightful and functional end-to-end website experience.

SHIFT #5 - BIG SEO CHANGES

SEO is Anything but Dead

The last six months of 2020 have reaffirmed what a lot of veteran SEOs already know: that SEO doesn't have an on/off switch. It requires ongoing focus and investment and long-term planning. Some companies learned this the hard way, but in the end, they realized how important SEO is in the broader marketing strategy and mix.

Users have turned to search engines (read: Google) more than ever this year with no signs of that slowing down. And with over 30% of clicks going to the #1 ranking website, it is absolutely vital that you don't have a presence – you have a top-ranking presence.

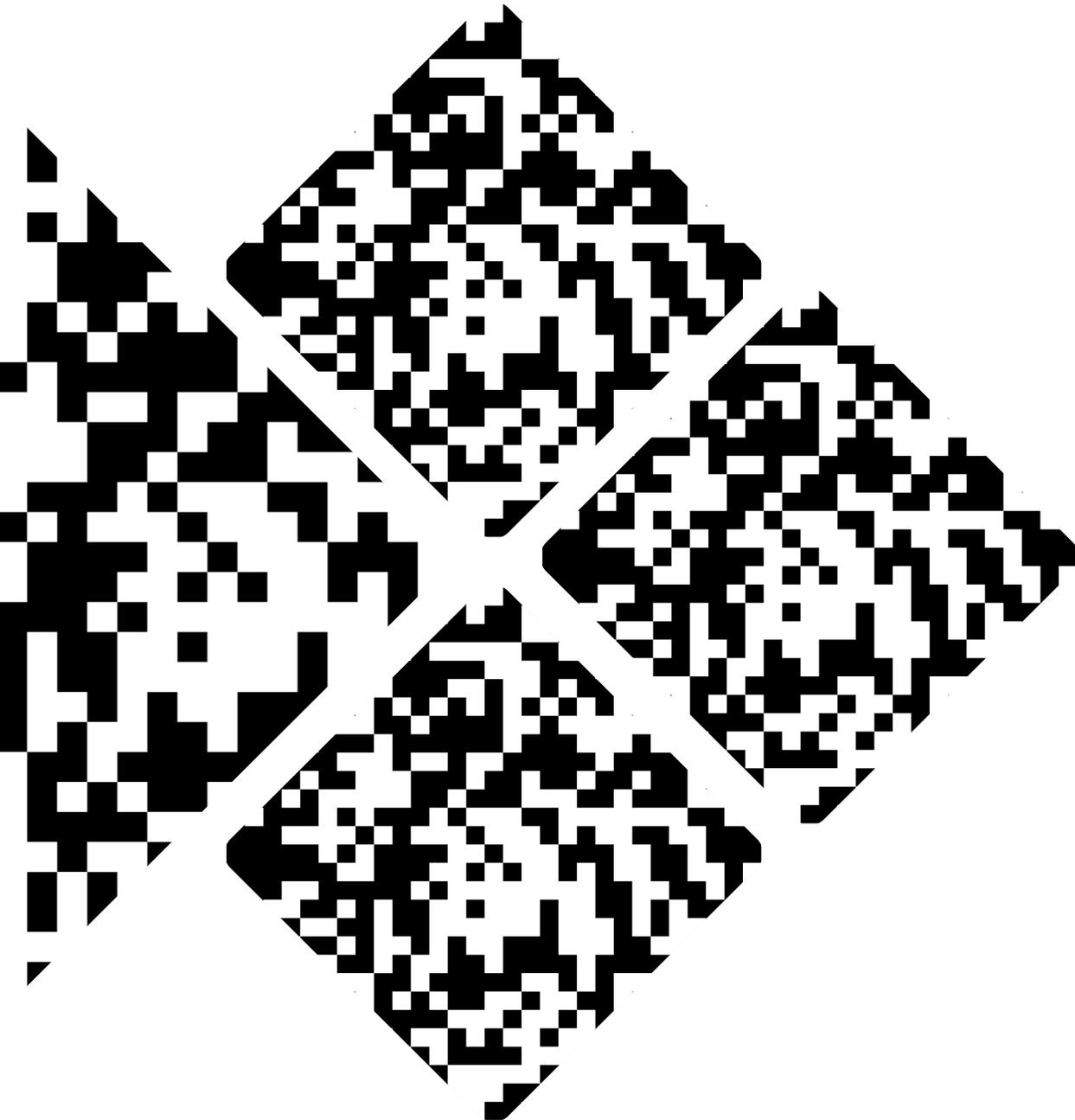




**UX WILL DICTATE
SEO MORE THAN
EVER BEFORE**

Google announced details around its Core Web Vitals update, which will be rolling out in March 2021. This impacts how a site is evaluated, and includes speed, interactivity, and whether things move around too much on the page. It will be a crucial UX and SEO trend that you need to start focusing on now.

Search habits can change dramatically. Topics that had little to no importance six months ago have surged in importance. Search intent has shifted for different keyword categories and [consumers are] asking questions they haven't before. Those who are monitoring these trends are winning in the long term. Set up to be nimble and react quickly to provide the most accurate, timely, transparent and relevant answers to customers.



SHIFT #6 - QR CODES

No, Seriously!

No one could have predicted QR codes would take off in 2020. It's just one many things about the year of COVID that have change.

QR codes are on the rise because they provide consumers contactless delivery, pickup and payment options - necessary for our current public health protocols. Brands should use this adopted consumer habit to their advantage by tracking engagement via their advertising and marketing tactics.

Many years ago, whether it was codes on pack or actually embedded into advertising, QR codes were starting to appear in droves around us. Then they disappeared. Consumers refused to get on-board, putting QR codes firmly in the 'too hard' basket, allowing them to sit unscanned and underutilized. COVID has changed all that.

2020 was the year that millions of Americans finally got on the QR code train creating familiarity with the technology - and more importantly- lasting behavior.

However, we predict the QR code's moment of glory will be short lived, disappearing in line with changing restrictions and legislation.

Until then, though, while QR codes still have a moment of popularity, leverage them to gain data on your customers.

For instance, brands could use QR codes in 2021 to track engagement via product packaging, direct mail and OOH ads to mirror consumer behavior and better understand what's working and what's not. This will put additional information about products and services in the hands of consumers and help you improve your strategies in the future.





SHIFT #7 - PREDICTIVE MARKETING & VOICE

Listen to Gen Z

Love em or hate em – your target audience or not – Gen Z will shape a lot of our future in the digital world.

Many industry pundits see Gen Z paving the way in shaping predictive technologies and personalization in 2021 and beyond. Gen Z has the highest expectations for these technologies in the future, with 84% believing all software and websites will incorporate digital learning and AI capabilities within the next five years

Hey, Alexa?!

Gen Z is also more enthusiastic about leveraging new technologies like voice to power digital experiences than any other generation, so you should consider following suit by increasing your investments in voice and visual search optimization



SHIFT #8 - THE END OF GROWTH HACKING

Digital Marketing Has Matured

Gone are the days of making sure your meta description is between 140 and 160 characters at all costs. As search algorithms improve, optimizing your digital assets is becoming less and less about trying to hack Google and more about focusing on creating authentic and positive user experience.





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*Love your beverage
or let us know.
We'll always
make it right.*

Back to Basics

Similarly, with PPC and social, it seems self-serving ad platform algorithms are finally purging themselves of lucrative but lazy ad creative and favoring campaigns with healthy engagement metrics. Investing in creative and finding a way to say something novel is going to be any business' best shot at delivering returns.

But this should really feel like a return to marketing fundamentals more than anything. Communicating an impactful brand promise that is clearly aligned with a strong value prop and a robust business strategy to support it should be the main priority, and that's nothing new.

SHIFT #9 - VISUAL COMMERCE/MARKETING

Get Out Your Camera

With the risk of sounding like a broken record – online shopping has changed in 2020.

But we don't just mean eCommerce stores. The shift to less hands-on shopping – whether it's for new shoes, a new roof or a new conference room – users want to see visuals of what to expect on their screen.

In 2021, assess your website and social media platforms, and invest in larger images, better images and video.

You should also repurpose user-generated content to generate interest and harbor human connection.



STRATEGY

Now that you have read through the 9 shifts we are seeing and continue to see in 2021, how can you best use this information?



01. Assess Current State

What are your current priorities? What gaps do you see? Have you made the necessary adjustments?



02. Adjust 2021 Marketing Strategy

If your 2021 strategy doesn't address the relevant shifts mentioned here, think about making some adjustments.



03. Tap into Internal Resources

Who on your team can assist with these marketing priorities? Leverage their time and skills if you can.



04. Invest in External Resources

If you don't have the time or resources, invest in experts. That's what we are here for!

