



**Altitude**  
MARKETING

# **INTEGRATED MARKETING ESSENTIALS: THE VIEW FROM 30,000 FEET**

**How do you know  
where you're going  
if you have no idea  
where you are?**

When outside factors affecting your business start to feel out of control, it's a natural tendency to focus on what you can control—tactics like launching a website, buying an ad, attending a trade show, sponsoring a charitable event—make it feel as if things are really moving. After all, you're actually *doing something* to promote your business, right?

Unfortunately, that forward momentum is an illusion. It's tactics without strategy. The reality is, if your marketing efforts aren't working together, they're working against you.

So how can you work **ON** your business instead of **IN** your business? By taking in the view from 30,000 feet. Developing a big-picture (strategic) view of your marketing efforts reveals the most effective ways to position and promote your business—and helps ensure you stay within your budget.

If you're interested taking an integrated marketing approach to gain better traction in your marketplace—and save time and money along the way—this guide will help you get started.

- ▶ **Phase Zero explains some of the principles of integrated marketing.**
- ▶ **Phase One walks you through evaluating and aligning different aspects of your current marketing program.**
- ▶ **Phase Two helps you put your new integrated ideas into action.**

**LET'S GET STARTED.**





PHASE ZERO

# UNDERSTANDING INTEGRATED MARKETING



**Integrated marketing is like that Aesop's fable—The father asked each son to bring him a stick. Separately, the sticks could be snapped easily. But when tied together into a bundle, the sticks couldn't be broken.**

The concept of integrated marketing is this: The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. When all of your brand messaging, design and marketing tactics support and complement each other, they will be more successful than they would be in isolation.

Developing a truly integrated plan for your company first requires taking a step back from day-to-day operations and examining a big-picture view of your goals, objectives and budget. Then you need to assess every part of your current marketing—public relations, website, advertising, trade shows, in-store displays, social media, customer service and community relations—and map out how they all tie together. Only then will you begin to increase efficiency, reduce costs and see the effectiveness of your marketing efforts dramatically improve.


### INTEGRATION IN ACTION

Here's a real-world example to put things in context. (See also "Repackage, repurpose, repeat" on page 11.) Let's say you write a compelling case study about one of your client projects. This should kick into motion a series of related events. In short order, the case study...

- ▶ Is immediately posted to your website where all your other case studies live
- ▶ Is promoted through an electronic press release, Twitter and LinkedIn
- ▶ Is submitted to industry awards competitions
- ▶ Is included in the next e-newsletter
- ▶ Is offered to the client to use in their own marketing efforts
- ▶ Becomes part of the info packet to win speaking engagements for your company (and for your client)
- ▶ Is combined with several other case studies into an e-book...
- ▶ ...which is offered as a giveaway to entice prospects to fill out the contact form on your website...
- ▶ ...and which is printed and handed out at trade shows

That's a lot of mileage out of one case study!

And there's "integrated marketing" in a nutshell: Forward-thinking strategy combined with day-to-day process. It's a road map that identifies ahead of time the marketing efforts that you'll be following for the year (strategy)—and exactly how you're going to make them work together (process).



# **ENGAGE IN RIGOROUS REFLECTION**

**PHASE ONE**

**In addition to identifying what you will be doing, an integrated marketing strategy gives you the framework to say “no” to new opportunities that don’t fit the plan.**

As with any journey, it’s hard to get where you need to go unless you know exactly where you are. The same logic applies to your marketing.

Start with the fundamentals—design and messaging—and determine objectively how much consistency there is (or isn’t) in your current marketing. Next, focus on the main tools of an effective marketing plan—website, advertising and public relations—and consider not only how well each piece functions in isolation, but also whether it is working in concert with the others.

### **IS YOUR VISUAL IDENTITY CONSISTENT?**

We’ve seen this many times. Clients who have enjoyed steady growth and expansion often lose sight of their visual identity. As a company adds new personnel, products and communication tools to its everyday operations, collateral evolves. Soon, data sheets, website, presentations, trade show graphics and other collateral fall out of sync with each other from a design and messaging standpoint. They often look like they’re from different companies altogether.

Keep in mind that your logo is not your brand. Maintaining a consistent visual “Brand” identity includes having a common overarching design (“look and feel”), style of photography and graphics, consistent logo treatment, and common colors and fonts.

This doesn’t mean everything has to look the same; designs are functional and should match the media. But adopting an integrated marketing approach means that everything you create should look as if they came from the same family. For example, a person reading an e-newsletter or brochure should see an immediate visual connection when visiting the website. Use a fresh eye when examining every aspect of your company’s visual identity and determine where the inconsistencies lie.

### **WHAT DOES YOUR BRAND MESSAGING REALLY SAY?**

Start to answer that question with this simple test: Grab text from your home page, “About Us” page, sales letters, press release boilerplate—any creative materials your company has produced in the last two years.

Remove any references to the company name. Can you still tell that you’re looking at materials from the same organization? Is the tone similar throughout? Is there consistent nomenclature when it comes to identifying sub-brands and different products? If so, you’ve already cleared the second hurdle of integrating your marketing efforts.

**Try not to be impatient. It can be oh-so tempting to bypass the important self-analysis phase because it takes a level of brutal honesty that doesn't often come easily.**

Ultimately, you shouldn't have to rethink your brand messaging every time you need to write a sales letter, update a PowerPoint, add boilerplate to a press release or run an advertisement.

Effective brand messaging is focused on differentiators: Why should someone purchase your products and/or services and not a competitor's? Ideally, company leaders should strive to remove the internal blinders by asking their customers what makes the product/service special—and then carry these core themes throughout all marketing efforts.

### **IS YOUR WEBSITE MOBILE-FRIENDLY?**

Take a good look at your site on the largest desktop you can find, as well as on the most compact smartphone available—whatever the device, your site should be easy to read and use.

Traffic to websites is increasingly coming from mobile devices like smartphones and tablet computers. If your site doesn't display correctly on various screen sizes, you're missing out on valuable traffic.

Fortunately, modern coding languages (not Flash!) offer a cost-effective solution known as "responsive design." It's a design and programming technique that alters how a page renders depending on the device accessing the site. And because responsive design does not entail creating a separate mobile website, it's an economical and forward-thinking solution no matter what device is released next month or next year.

### **ARE YOUR PRINT AND DIGITAL ADS CLEAN OR CLUTTERED?**

In the age of 140-character tweets, attention spans are short—and marketing needs to be visually impactful and succinct. With a fierce competitive landscape, it's easy to understand why some companies try to jam as much information as possible into their advertisements.

But consider the impact of this approach on the consumer. Looking at an ad with crowded text and too many visual elements leads to information overload—eyes opened wide and glazed over. We call this the "Glazed Doughnut Effect" and it's the very last reaction you want from an ad. It is a sure sign your audience is experiencing total mental shut down and has completely tuned out whatever information you were trying to convey.

Stick to your call to action (call, visit the website) and keep graphics clean to get your message across. Consistent branding will get your message across much better than blinking text and paragraphs of details any day.

**Here's something  
you can count on:  
Once an integrated  
process is set up  
internally, and your  
employees all buy in,  
the whole concept  
will soon become  
second nature.**

### **ARE YOUR SEO AND PR EFFORTS WORKING AS A TEAM?**

As every company strives to have its link hit the first page of a Google search, Search Engine Optimization (SEO) has created a marketplace that's akin to the Wild West. However, there are good practices (ones that your customers appreciate and Google likes) and bad practices.

Beware the "Black Hat" SEO charlatans who promise you the first page on Google overnight. While some of these groups—many of them based overseas—can give you a temporary blip in your search ranking, the damage could be long-lasting. For example, some firms will help you advance your Google rank by spamming links into thousands of blogs and forums—including some (such as "adult" websites) that run counter to the image you want associated with your company.

The possible bump in ranking would pale in comparison to the potential PR nightmare. Be aware that Google no longer places the same heavy emphasis on these links that it once did, and it's easy to see why.

Make sure your website is properly programmed, has meaningful content and is regularly updated—and you are 90% of the way toward "Grade A" SEO. Our tried and tested SEO formula includes a solid PR strategy that consistently gets your company's name out there. With an integrated approach that includes a focus on PR, you'll see your search rankings steadily improve. Round this out with an investment in testing a pay-per-click campaign and you'll have 99% of your search bases covered.



An aerial photograph of a dense urban area, likely New York City, showing numerous skyscrapers and buildings. A network of thin white lines connects various points across the image, creating a digital or interconnected feel. The entire image has a blue color cast.

PHASE TWO

# PUT IDEAS INTO ACTION



**An old boss once described her job as “Vice President of Repeating Herself.” And she wasn’t being facetious. She took great pains to make sure every one of her employees bought into the company’s integrated plan.**

In working through the questions presented in Phase I, a bevy of new ideas have likely emerged. And that’s great news. You’re unlikely to get where you want to be if you rely on an old game plan. But you can’t tackle all of those great new ideas at once. So where do you go from here?

### **STOP, DROP, CREATE A PLAN**

Regardless of the size of the company or the industry focus, the compulsion to jump straight to tactics often overwhelms the more effective and sustainable strategic approach. That’s why strategic plans are not optional. They are essential tools that set a business up for success. Without them, there’s no cohesion. Goals aren’t clearly defined, and employees aren’t provided an opportunity to be challenged, learn or grow.

Simply put, the time you invest in planning will result in a more accurate vision of reality for everyone in your company. There is always a million dollars’ worth of ideas—but rarely the time or capital to invest in them all. Strategic planning helps prioritize and separate wants from needs, could-dos from must-dos. From there, goals, budgets and resources can be set accordingly. If everyone has a clear sense of where the company is heading, how it’s going to get there and what roles everyone plays, a better, more exciting and stable future is easily envisioned and attained.

### **TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR WEBSITE**

If you’re still paying your web developer (or relying on your overworked IT staff) to make changes to your website, you’re wasting money and time—and missing opportunities. Modern website management systems allow anyone with knowledge of word processing and web surfing to update a site. That’s good news, because the ability to quickly and frequently update your website with fresh, meaningful content is essential to search engine ranking—and in keeping customers and prospects informed.

If you have to send a requisition to your web developer every time you need to post a news release, add a blog entry or repurpose press coverage, what is the real cost? Three weeks and a few hundred dollars? Over the course of the year, you could be spending as much money updating your content as it would cost to redevelop your site entirely with a modern content management system.

Lag time and lost opportunities have financial impacts as well, and those figures are sometimes impossible to calculate. We believe in giving a client the keys to the website kingdom so they can be responsive—making web changes quickly and efficiently without running the meter.

**It takes less time to create a plan and then make sure everyone follows it than it does to run around like a chicken with its head cut off trying to figure out what to do next.**

## REPACKAGE, REPURPOSE, REPEAT

Of course you work hard to communicate with your customers, but are you working smart? Every piece of content you develop—a blog post, case study or video—should be used in as many places as possible. Take a look at your most effective single-use ads, email blasts and stories that were never used again. If something's good, find a way to use it over and over.

As part of the strategy, create an editorial calendar to leverage content that works. For example, why not borrow copy from a well-received case study and repurpose it for an e-newsletter? An excerpt of that same content may serve you well on LinkedIn. While you're at it, you could probably fashion a series of nuggets from it to tweet, too.

Are you trying to land speaking engagements or awards nominations? Use portions of the case study in your pitch letters. Naturally, the same logic applies if you're aiming for trade publications. You can easily create 12 months worth of marketing fodder—all from one case study.

Social media is another powerful tool that can garner considerable attention for a lot less money than it used to take. To illustrate, imagine you've just acquired a marquee customer. Standard PR procedure would be to issue a press release, post it to both companies' websites, and send it to a group of industry publications and blogs. But why let the news stop there?

What if this new client has 200 employees? Most of those people would be tied into industry groups via LinkedIn and other business networking groups. Think of the added exposure for this good news if there was a standard operating procedure that spelled out what employees should do with the news. If half of them share it on LinkedIn, and each has an average of 250 connections, the impact of the announcement would be exponentially greater, while requiring about two minutes of each employee's time.

## THE TRADE SHOW DATE IS NOT THE DEADLINE

Trade shows represent a significant investment in both time and dollars. Still, many companies fail to manage trade shows with an integrated, long-range strategy. How long is long-range? Ideally, a well-designed trade show strategy begins to take shape six months before the event. That's when you need to start thinking through what you're going to promote, how you want to position yourself and, especially, how you're going to use your other marketing channels to raise visibility and awareness in the weeks leading up to the show.

Here's a sample trade show timeline that we implement for our own clients:

- ▶ **Four months prior**—Pitch story ideas to the leading trade publications to get coverage in their pre-show issues.
- ▶ **Three months prior**—Make dinner and lunch reservations in the trade show city and arrange for a personal visit from the chef.



**If your staffing requires you to outsource key marketing tactics, keep in mind that somebody has to manage the vendors and keep them in sync with each other. And that somebody is usually you.**

- ▶ **Two months prior**—Create print ads to run in the show issue that point to a show-specific landing page on your website.
- ▶ **Six weeks prior**—Confirm trade show display is on message and matches overarching visual identity.
- ▶ **Five weeks prior**—Send email and postcard to prospects, inviting them to stop by the booth.
- ▶ **Four weeks prior**—Send out a customized invitation to top prospects inviting them to lunch or dinner during the show.
- ▶ **Three weeks prior**—Set up the process to capture contact information at the show.
- ▶ **Five days AFTER the show**—Send out press releases to key trade media and post press releases on the website immediately after distribution.
- ▶ **Two weeks after**—Create a follow-up ad in the post-show issue of the key trade magazine and thank show organizers.
- ▶ **Two months after**—Conduct a profit-and-loss to see if the show was worth the investment and whether you should attend next year.

### **DECIDE WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ACTUAL INTEGRATION**

As you develop and refine your marketing strategy, you may consider outsourcing some marketing operations. Whether you decide to hire a web firm, a PR agency or a design firm, be wary of creating a logistical nightmare for yourself by trying to incorporate contract work from multiple vendors into a comprehensive, integrated plan.

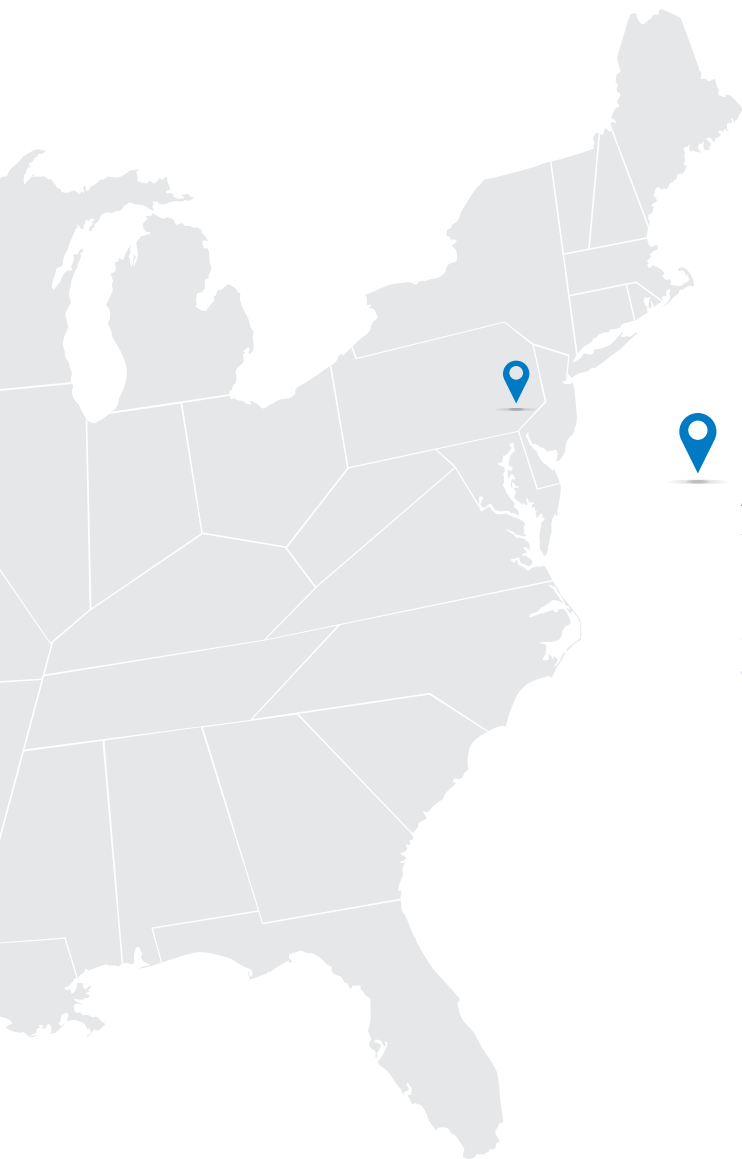
In taking this route, YOU are assuming responsibility for managing both internal and external resources and ensuring their efforts work together at all points along the way. Not surprisingly, given the inherent complexity of this approach, mixed-resource strategies typically result in inflated production costs, extended timeframes and missed opportunities.

Hiring a firm that specializes in integrated marketing and is equipped to assist across all areas of your operations means fewer moving parts and unknowns. And as you would expect, the results are far more cost effective compared to working with multiple vendors—so you can get an entire marketing team for less than the cost of one full-time marketing executive.

# Welcome to Altitude Marketing

Altitude Marketing is an integrated marketing agency serving the unique needs of business-to-business companies.

Since 2004, Altitude has worked with more than 100 early-stage and established clients in complex, highly technical industries. Our proven methodology ensures that we get smart quickly about complex concepts so we can translate them into meaningful market positioning, compelling brand messaging and lead-driving strategies.



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