THE DO'S AND DON'TS OF DIGITAL

A Marketer's Guide to Transforming Digital Experiences

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Transform your digital experience.

Today's marketers are expected to have base background knowledge on all things digital while also keeping up with the ever-changing expectations of consumers. The problem? Staying on top of every trend and gaining in-depth experience in every aspect of the industry is virtually impossible. Marketers are often some of the busiest people at their companies, leaving little time for research on topics that don't regularly grace their inboxes.

SilverTech wants to help you add to your knowledge with information on what we do best: digital transformation. While this may be a broad term, we mainly help companies improve their websites and digital marketing efforts to provide a better user experience for their customers. In this guide, we are sharing our do's and don'ts of the digital age, including tips on user experience, personalization, digital marketing, web development and more.

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Keeping content accessible with intuitive navigation.

One of the cornerstones of a great user experience is an easy-to-use, simple navigation. When users are faced with a complicated, cluttered and confusing navigation, they have no idea where to even start and often click off before finding the content they seek elsewhere. In order to keep your navigation clean and inviting, do not overwhelm your audience with too many choices. While your business may have many facets and its web content may be detailed, you should still keep the top level of navigation relatively simple and expand the options once they are further into their journey through your site.

In addition to the navigation options at the top of your site, it is important to recognize the trends of users. Users have access to millions of pieces of content all around the web. They don't have the time or patience to waste looking for information they can't find. By staying conscious of the new expectations of users and their normal browsing behavior, you can build your site to fit their needs and adapt to them as they change.

Tips for content and navigation.

DO keep top-level navigation for the essential navigation options. Including parts of your site that are not consistently accessed will cause confusion for users.

DO reduce the amount of time it takes for users to get to their desired destination. It should be easy for users to quickly find all that they need.

DO utilize smaller paragraphs and headers for easy scanning. Customers don't read long-form content anymore, so keep your content concise and segmented for easy reading.

DO check your website regularly for critical errors or broken links. No one wants to see the dreaded 404 message and not be able to access the valuable information you promised.

DO put your highest-quality content at the top of the page to encourage scrolling. Entice users with some of the best content so that they scroll for more.

DO emphasize important elements such as call-to-action buttons or login forms so your users can get to action items ASAP.

DON'T sacrifice usability for the sake of preserving an aesthetic. Your website may be beautiful, but is it accessible? If users can't figure out how to navigate your site, they will most definitely be seeking something more user-friendly.

DON'T use large blocks of text that are hard to skim within web content. Unless your copy is particularly amazing, most people will just glaze over it.

DON'T auto-play videos or background music on your site. They are often very distracting and jarring to users.

DON'T use too many different typefaces on one site; it can be confusing and visually unappealing.

DON'T overload your webpage with too many ads because it may outshine the content.

DON'T require your users to jump through multiple hoops and pages to find the one piece of information they want.

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Optimizing your site performance.

There is a sentiment that rings true in just about every industry: customers do not want to be inconvenienced. So, what is more inconvenient than a website that takes forever to load, has broken links and pages, and is impossible to use on a mobile device? When your website is not running as it should, users are likely to click off and explore other buying options. Make sure that your website is up to date on the best content management technology and that it's being regularly maintained to fix bugs and update content and overall optimization.

In addition to improving and maintaining a great user experience for your customers, having an up-to-date and high-performing website also has a huge impact on your SEO and conversion rate. If your website takes too long to load or you have too many high-resolution images clogging up your pages, search engines will rank your site lower than others, causing you to lose valuable traffic and potential sales. In order to be able to compete in the digital space, you first need a website that can handle the amount of traffic you seek.

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Tips for improving website performance.

DO resize and compress your images to ensure that your website loading speed remains quick.

DO reduce your redirects as much as possible. Each time a page redirects to another page, your visitor must wait for the HTTP request-response cycle to complete.

DO check regularly for bugs and broken links. You never want your user to click on their desired page and be met with a 404 error.

DO make sure that your website is responsive and translates across all devices. With the amount of people using smartphones these days, it is imperative that your website and brand translate to a mobile platform.

DO minimize the number of JavaScript and CSS files you have on your website because it can lead to large numbers of HTTP requests when visitors request to access particular files, slowing down your site.

DON'T expect your website to be running perfectly 100% of the time. Bugs and broken links happen, and there could be multiple reasons why. The important part is making sure those pages are back up quickly and running as they should.

DON'T bombard your pages with too many multimedia elements like videos, photos, audio, etc. If your pages load too slowly because of these elements, your users are unlikely to even stick around to see them in the first place.

DON'T skimp out when it comes to deciding where to host. While going with the cheapest option is cost-effective, it will impact your speeds and performance.

DON'T add too many plug-ins to your site without understanding what they do and how they function. These third-party apps are meant to add more dynamic content to your website, not slow it down. Make sure you are only integrating as many plug-ins as you absolutely need and that your server can handle.

DON'T use too many fonts or typefaces on the pages of your site. Multiple fonts can slow down the site and are generally not very visually appealing either.

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Finding the right CMS platform.

One of the first steps to designing an effective website is making sure you're on the right content management system (CMS) for your business and goals. There are multiple options when it comes to technology partners with industry leaders like Kentico, Progress Sitefinity, Sitecore, Drupal, and WordPress.

The right CMS ensures that you will have a scalable, manageable platform that is performing at the highest level with custom integrations that will improve user experience. With an advanced CMS or digital experience platform (DXP), you can build custom design integrations and modules that are built specifically for your business or industry like locator modules, interactive chatbots, team member portals and much more.

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Tips for successful CMS integration.

DO consider multiple options when it comes to deciding on a CMS partner. Certain CMS platforms are better equipped for your industry compared to other tech partners, and that is why the strategy portion of the discovery process is so important.

DO look for easy-to-use modules that your business can manage internally. No coding knowledge required, here.

DO choose a CMS that offers omnichannel integrations easily via an API. If not, it can be a huge headache to link all these implementations to your site.

DO make sure that your site can function across multiple devices. This seems like a no-brainer, but it can be difficult to match web experiences when you switch from desktop to mobile.

DO offer multilingual support when building your site if you have an audience that represents multiple native languages. By making sure all users can access your information, you are widening your net of potential customers.

DO go with a CMS that can grow with your business as it evolves. If you try to cut costs with a less advanced CMS, you might find yourself quickly outgrowing your new site as you grow as a business.

DO understand that it usually takes months to develop, build and launch a new website. There are many small steps from start to finish that result in a large, custom integration for your site.

DON'T think you have to scrap your existing site to implement a new CMS. There are ways you can integrate new modules and tools on your new site to preserve the existing aspects that you love.

DON'T build a fully coded website that can only be updated with the help of a developer.

DON'T think that advanced CMS' and site builders like Squarespace or Wix are synonymous. While beneficial for smaller companies, larger companies with advanced needs require more integration than a traditional site builder.

DON'T forget who this CMS integration is for: your users and customers. Make sure that modules are built with user experience at top of mind.

DON'T overcomplicate your pages with integrations that will be hard to manage. Keep modules clean and simple.

DON'T choose a CMS that is integrated on aging versions of the technology. Having the most up-to-date versions ensures that you have the best tactics available and minimal issues integrating new technology.

DON'T believe a CMS website is a one-and-done solution. To stay relevant, you want to keep your tactics and content fresh. It is important to constantly evolve and tend to your CMS to keep it secure and effective.

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Leveraging data effectively.

If you're not leveraging customer data to better personalize and serve your customers, you are already behind your competition. While data can tell you valuable insights about the demographic information of your users and customers, it can also track their interaction on your website. Depending on your businesses' level of security and its data privacy laws, this valuable information can tell you exactly who your customers are, what motivates their purchasing decisions, and how you can cater your website to fit their needs.

Understanding and interpreting data can seem daunting if you don't have the right tools or team managing for you. There are multiple apps and services that will help you track data and interpret it for your benefit. While these apps are beneficial, having a digital partner that assists you in interpreting and developing effective strategies from this information will help you create changes in your business that can be backed and trusted by analytics.

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Tips for leveraging data effectively.

DO start small and build momentum off initial success. You don't have to boil the entire ocean at once. Take small steps that will amount to larger successes down the line.

DO develop goals for your business and track the success with data. Analytics are a reliable way to see how effective your website and business strategy currently are, and a great way to test the effectiveness of new tactics.

DO consolidate your streams of data to be all in one place. It can be difficult to keep up with your streams if you are utilizing too many apps for tracking.

DO utilize the cloud to be able to access data without internet and with security measures in place.

DO have a clear idea of what trends and data you are searching for because it can be overwhelming without direction. Raw data can be hard to interpret. Make sure you have a plan going in.

DO create alerts that will notify you when you hit certain important goals or milestones. These alerts can tell you quickly if something is going wrong or right on your site.

DO create a comprehensive plan for your business with your marketing objectives and synchronize the plans with your team, keeping the tools and strategy for data analysis in mind.

DON'T delay data leveraging until the "time is right." You will lose valuable time and data. If you have ever been looking for the "right time," it's actually right now. Start collecting and utilizing data as soon as you can. Your users will thank you.

DON'T break your customers' trust and hurt your business by violating data and privacy laws. You don't want to be hit with a hefty lawsuit later.

DON'T assume that a more expensive software is better than a more affordable one. Expensive does not always equal higher quality. If you can gather the analytics you seek on a cheaper software, save your dollar.

DON'T always react to data outliers that are mostly insignificant for the day-to-day. Unless there is a large trend or shift that you see, don't fret until you need to.

DON'T assume the most ambitious approach will garner the best return. Not every effective strategy has to be the most robust.

DON'T collect data without a strategy in place. Know what kind of data you are looking for and the purpose behind it when seeking data.

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Personalizing for your users.

Personalizing your website for your users is the key to getting them to stay on your site and engage with content. The more you know about who they are, what they like, when they visit, and how often, the better you can serve them.

We live in an age where users expect personalized experiences when they visit a website and with the state of our world post-pandemic, user expectations are only increasing. Therefore, it's important to create a user-friendly design that can be customized by visitors and provide them with the content they want in an intuitive way.

There are many popular methods when it comes to web personalization including cookies, geolocation, behavior targeting, browser fingerprinting and many more, with new methods being developed all the time. Personalization will not only help your business reach success by targeting your users directly, but it can also help develop a relationship between you and your consumer.

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Tips for personalizing your website.

DO update your personalization strategies regularly. What may be the best practice today, could be ineffective tomorrow. If you stay on top of the trends, you will likely garner great success with your strategies.

DO propose extra content for users based on their initial preferences. If a user is interested in a particular topic, it is beneficial to push more content to them that surrounds that topic in order to keep them engaged on your site.

DO utilize engaging content like calculators, quizzes, contests, business locators, and more to increase overall site engagement and collect more data to leverage.

DO the crawl, walk, run approach for personalization because you don't have to do everything all at once. Starting small, collecting data, analyzing and optimizing are the best ways to approach the first steps of personalization.

DO personalize beyond just email. While email is one of the easiest ways to personalize, it is important to personalize your digital marketing and website as well. Creating a seamless experience across all mediums of communication is imperative.

DO test out your methods with A/B testing. Businesses can test the effectiveness of a subject line or strategy by pushing out different options to users. This data can show which line or method works best for your audience.

DON'T be creepy with your level of personalization. This may seem obvious, but users can feel like their privacy is violated when an ad or website is too personalized. You want them to feel welcomed, not intimidated.

DON'T just personalize the home page feature area. In order for personalization to work, you must commit to a consistent strategy that scales across your entire digital experience.

DON'T personalize just because you can. There must be some sort of strategy or reasoning behind your efforts. It will be ineffective if you are personalizing without rhyme or reason.

DON'T settle on a strategy too quickly. Like most aspects of marketing, innovation is always driving new, interesting ways to meet customer expectations. You might find a strategy that fits your business better.

DON'T get too personal unless you have the data to back it up. Getting to know a user takes time, and personalizing content based on vague data or assumptions will not garner great results.

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Building personas for improved personalization.

The most successful companies in the world are those who have a deep understanding of their customers. They know what they want, how they think, and what motivates them to buy. This is why businesses need to create personas for their customer base.

Personas are fictional representations of your company's target audience that can help you better understand who your potential customers are as well as identify marketing opportunities and sales strategies that will resonate with these consumers more easily than others. It's necessary to know who your target audience is in order to appeal to their needs and make them feel like the site was designed with them in mind, leading to increased conversion rates and higher return on investment (ROI).

For an effective persona profile, you need to include information about their age, gender, location, interests, personality traits, etc. You can use this information when deciding what content should be included on the site as well as how it should be presented.

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Tips for persona building.

DO utilize data and resources to build out your persona. These fictional personas represent real consumers, so you should use real consumer data to help accurately point you in the right direction.

DO give your persona a name to represent a real buyer in your business. It might seem silly at first, but using names like "CEO Sally" or "Frontline Worker Freddy" will help you market better to these groups.

DO identify your primary personas. When you think of your usual customers, there are probably a few different demographics that come to mind. Make personas for all major demographic groups, but make sure you know which ones are your primary customers.

DO interview real customers. You can receive their opinions on your business or industry without having to conduct interviews face-to-face. Send out surveys, read reviews and get testimonials from real users.

DO make sure that your entire team is on board and understands the different personas. If everyone in our organization is versed in your personas, that knowledge will come in handy in other aspects of the business.

DON'T build a persona based on your assumptions. Utilize streams of data that will give you concrete facts and figures, helping you weed out the most important information.

DON'T give your persona too many jobs. Personas are meant to represent individuals who your business wants to target, and by keeping the gap too wide you will have trouble personalizing content for a specific group.

DON'T create these personas and then just abandon them. If you continue to utilize them and update them as expectations change, you will continue to stay on target with your identified personas.

DON'T have too many personas. You want to represent all of your users within your personas. But, if you segment them into too small of groups, it will be hard to target all of them.

DON'T talk to one individual and assume every persona with the same job title has the same objectives. Just because two people fit the same persona does not mean they will have the same outlooks, ideas, and expectations.

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Utlizing digital marketing.

Digital marketing is a fast-paced, ever-changing industry. Covering everything from social media to email, digital marketing is an umbrella term for all the different ways companies use technology to reach their customers. Digital marketing can be used in various aspects of your company, including website development, online advertising (such as pay-per-click), email campaigns, search engine optimization and content creation.

Digital marketing has gone from a niche industry to one that now influences almost every single decision made by businesses and marketers alike. From creating content to measuring ROI, digital marketing will continue to be important as society shifts towards an increasingly connected world where people have access to more information than ever before.

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Tips for effective digital marketing.

DO be involved in developing your digital strategy. Your business and its strengths, weaknesses, and goals are unique to you. Whether you utilize an outside agency or rely on internal staff, leadership must be involved in helping to develop a strategy that reflects your business in the best possible way.

DO keep in mind that content is always king. If you have great content reaching your audience at the perfect time, you have the recipe for a perfect marketing strategy that is bound to generate clicks.

DO create high-quality blog posts daily. If you are consistently posting content like blogs that are high quality, you will likely get engaged readers that are searching for topics surrounding your posts.

DO invest in paid traffic. While organic traffic is always important, paid traffic brings your business clicks and awareness that they would not receive otherwise.

DO add more video to your marketing mix. With apps like YouTube and TikTok dominating the digital world, video has proven to be an effective tactic and content strategy.

DO get help from experts in the field. When you're looking for marketing assistance and have no idea where to start, sometimes it's better to let the experts handle it. Digital partners like SilverTech would be happy to assist you.

DO set up email workflows that help nurture relationships and take the everyday burden off internal marketing teams.

DON'T assume that what works for your competitor will work for you. Your competitor may not have the same goals and target demographic as you.

DON'T choose quantity over quality. Sacrificing great content for multiple pieces of "okay" content will not translate well to your audience or keep them engaged.

DON'T think you need to have a presence on all platforms. If you know that your target audience does not frequent a certain platform, there is no point in putting effort and dollars into a less than fruitful endeavor.

DON'T ignore email marketing. While many believe that email is dated and dying, it is actually the tactic that delivers the best ROI among all other digital marketing channels.

DON'T focus too much on the number of followers you have on social. While it would be great to have as many followers as possible to increase awareness, it is the quality of the followers and engagement on social that makes all the difference.

DON'T forget to diversify your strategy. It is not wise to put all your eggs in one metaphorical basket, and as trends change, you must remain agile.

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Having a digital partner is key.

You may have found the right CMS for your business or developed a high-level digital marketing plan, but they can be difficult to manage and implement on your own. While CMS platforms make it easy for marketers to manage internally, there are many aspects to building a site that requires expert knowledge and custom integrations. That is where a digital partner can be crucial for smooth implementation, custom widgets tailored to your industry, and ongoing maintenance for your site.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution when it comes to choosing a digital partner; instead, companies need to examine their needs and choose a company with expertise in those specific areas. Digital partners are experts in digital technologies, data, social media, SEO, content marketing, conversion optimization and more. Your digital partner will work with you to build your website from the ground up or redesign it so that it incorporates all these aspects into one cohesive unit.

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Tips for finding the right digital partner.

DO find an agency that listens to gain an understanding of your current and future goals as well as roadblocks your business may face.

DO check out a digital partner's past work with companies in your industry and gain an understanding of what they could possibly do for your business.

DO build a lasting relationship with open communication about what is and is not working with any prior partnerships. If you feel comfortable talking about the not-so-fun-stuff, your partnership will be stronger for it.

DO reference former client testimonials when looking for a digital partner. You want to make sure that other businesses feel the agency is great to work with.

DO make an effort to meet members of the team from the potential digital agency to understand who would possibly be working on your project. Your personalities, style and approach have to align.

DO understand that website rebuilds and custom integrations take months to strategize, build and design. If you have a tight timeline, be upfront about your expectations.

DO choose an agency whose experience aligns with the work you need done. Looking for an agency that works within the financial services space? A digital partner like SilverTech may be for you.

DON'T choose a partner that makes you feel like another client or number on their roster. Your business is valuable, and it should be treated as such.

DON'T feel like you have to choose just one digital partner. Many companies have multiple agencies they use for different aspects of their businesses, and your digital partner should be accommodating to these other partners.

DON'T have the expectation that your digital partner will be perfect. Like all of us, digital partners and businesses make mistakes, but how they choose to handle these missteps is what makes the largest difference.

DON'T overcommit to a budget or project you cannot afford. There are many digital partners with different price points, so find the best one for your business and budget.

DON'T count out an agency forever just because it doesn't exactly align with your current goals or budget. You can always keep them on the back burner for when your needs and circumstances change.

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In conclusion...

It can be difficult to be a master of all things digital. Most marketers have trouble juggling all the tasks they have on their plate while also trying to predict and follow the industry's hottest trends. Use this guide as a reference point as you begin to drive improved digital experiences for your business.

If you're looking for additional help and more tips from the professionals, our team at SilverTech would be happy to assist you with any of your web development and digital marketing needs. We have the team and tools to help your business live up to its fullest potential, and the industry knowledge to make sure you are on top of current trends. Contact us to learn more about how we can transform your digital landscape for your users.

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SilverTech is a digital marketing and technology company redefining how businesses engage with their customers. Founded in 1996, SilverTech delivers digital strategies and solutions that connect user experiences with innovative tech to maximize results. With services such as digital consultation and strategy, website design and development, content management implementation, custom application development and full-service digital marketing, SilverTech provides an unexpectedly enjoyable experience to solving even the most complex business problems. SilverTech has worked with national and global brands such as Segway, Drexel University, Nova Scotia Power, Fulton Bank, State of New Hampshire Travel and Tourism, and Conservation International.

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