



Digital Marketing like a PRO
Prepare. Run. Optimize.

Clo Willaerts

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THANK YOU VERY MUCH

This handbook has the ambition to be digital marketing's ultimate Zen Buddhist pizza: The One With Everything. I wrote it because a wise woman once told me: "Write the book you want to read, the one you cannot find." Now I know why I could not find it: there's a *lot* of content out there about digital marketing – especially on digital marketing's favorite child, the internet. Writing this book would have been impossible without the help of my mentors, peers and friends. Here they are in no particular order:

Kwakye Donkor (South Africa), Peter Hoogland (Belgium) and Benjamin Grange (France) for inspiring and pushing me to write this book.

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And you, for picking up this book. I sincerely hope it will help you make your digital marketing ambitions come true!

Clo Willaerts (clo@bnox.be)



FOREWORD

BY NEIL PATEL

There is more competition for your customers' attention today than ever before. In fact, almost everything has changed since I first dipped my toes in the digital marketing waters.

Imagine this for a minute:

Your parents aren't on Facebook. Nobody knows how Twitter works.

SEO is like the Wild Wild West, where anything goes, and brand-new companies can easily dominate big brands.

Only a fraction of the competition is on AdWords (so it's still super cheap).

You don't hear a single person discussing "marketing automation" or "conversion optimization" because nobody knows what these are.

And the iPhone doesn't exist!

Obviously, things have changed a little bit today. Competition is stiff, and money is often scarce. Complexity and confusion have increased dramatically. You now face an endless onslaught of new information (this shows no sign of slowing down). No wonder you can't figure out where to start with your online marketing!

Here's why digital marketing is more difficult today than ever before: the volume of information and speed of change is overwhelming. Consider what has changed in the 10 years since I started in this industry. Just a few years ago, "online marketing" was a tiny niche. Now there are over 100 million people talking about it! Each day, there are over two million blog posts published and over 269 billion emails sent! That's insane, right?

And we're just talking about *content* here. How about *social media*? Today, Instagram is almost a requirement for businesses. The platform has amassed over 700 million users, so it's an incredibly easy place to get noticed. But it didn't exist a decade ago! Snapchat didn't exist a few years ago, either. Today it's a public company with billions of pieces of content shared daily.

Something else that's surprising? The iPhone just turned 10 years old. Remember trying to access the internet before the iPhone and other smartphones became ubiquitous? The experience was awful, and connection speeds were even worse. You could barely read and reply to emails. Today, mobile internet usage has outstripped internet use on desktops. The majority of Google searches (at least 60%) also happen on mobile devices.

Another thing: your marketing strategies probably didn't vary much 10 years ago. You "did SEO" or you "did PPC" to bring in more traffic and leads. That's not how digital marketing works anymore. For example, the types of marketing strategies you use, and even the type of marketers you need, might be completely different depending on what kind of business you're in. B2C companies might want to focus mostly on scaling their content creation and community management efforts. B2B companies often have completely opposite goals: they're focusing on supporting their sales teams to chase fewer, bigger accounts. They're writing less content but injecting more quality into each piece. And we haven't even touched on the marketers who specialize in marketing automation, conversion optimization, or growth hacking.

The reason marketers keep specializing further is that each discipline continues to evolve and get more complicated (faster than ever before). If you're still performing SEO the same way you did back then, you're probably not generating much interest or converting leads into customers.

So now you can vividly see why digital marketing is so hard today. There's an endless amount of information available. Once you begin to make a little headway, today's 'best practices' no longer work tomorrow. I understand why it's so frustrating for today's marketers.

This is where Clo's book comes in, how it's trying to help. It showcases **some of the best ways to simplify digital marketing**, so you can get up to speed and **start generating customers ASAP**.

Here's a shortlist of marketing tactics in this book that you can learn today:

- Social media
- SEO
- Google AdWords
- Facebook advertising
- Marketing automation
- Email marketing
- Conversion optimization
- Growth hacking
- Content marketing

But be careful when you try out the latest digital marketing tactics (like the ones above). You'll never get traffic or customers without a *comprehensive marketing strategy*. The trick is to learn from existing digital marketing frameworks and break them down into chunks that you can systematize. For example, let's say you want to use referral marketing to turn prospects into customers, and you don't know where to start. One good way is how Dropbox started: by giving its first users incentives to refer the service to new users.

This is just one tactic, of course. But link these together based on your customer's journey from the last step, and your digital marketing strategy will start to become crystal clear.

Conclusion? Digital marketing used to be easy. Questionable SEO tactics could still get you ranked in the first position of Google within weeks (as opposed to months or years). You didn't have to worry about mobile devices — or even multiple versions of your website, for that matter. You probably could have ignored social media at the time, too.

All of that has changed. Things have never been more complicated. And they've never changed so quickly. That makes it nearly impossible to figure out digital marketing if you're just getting started.

There's so much conflicting information, so many nuances, that it's tough to figure out how to make all the pieces fit together to deliver results. The trick is to figure out how your customers are already buying so that you can create

strategies and systems to get traffic, leads and more customers. It's far from easy today. But this book might be a good start.

Neil Patel (www.neilpatel.com)

About Neil Patel

Neil Patel is a *New York Times* bestselling author. *The Wall Street Journal* calls him a top influencer on the web, *Forbes* says he is one of the top 10 marketers, and *Entrepreneur Magazine* says he created one of the 100 most brilliant companies. He was recognized as a top 100 entrepreneur under the age of 30 by President Obama and a top 100 entrepreneur under the age of 35 by the United Nations.

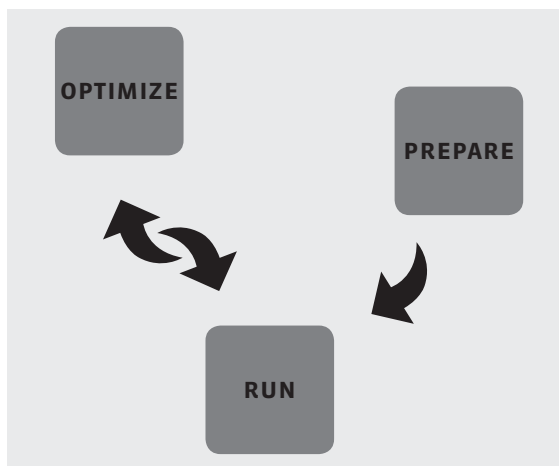


INTRODUCTION: PREPARE, RUN, OPTIMIZE!

Don't say Neil Patel didn't warn you: digital marketing is hard work.

Nowadays it's possible to customize and personalize advertising and messaging depending on the context. Literally every step you take in the digital marketplace can be measured and analyzed. Also, remember when we were all hoping to start a global conversation with consumers?¹ Well, *now they will not shut up!*

So how do you do manage to accomplish your growth ambitions without wasting money, resources and time? Simple: *by asking yourself the right questions.*



The Prepare-Run-Optimize flow

PREPARE: by designing strategies and setting objectives to feed your marketing plans.

Situation analysis – Where are you now compared to the rest of the market?

Digital marketing strategy – What will your long-term focus be?

Target audiences – Whose behavior are you trying to influence?

Objectives and KPIs – How will you quantify your growth ambitions?

RUN: by implementing measurable tactics in the right channels using the right tools.

Tactics that work – How will you implement your strategy?

Channels and tools to select – Where and how will you be present and active on digital platforms?

Keep an eye on budgets – How much will it cost?

OPTIMIZE: and never stop improving until you get the right results.

Digital marketing optimization – How can you sustainably optimize your efforts?

What is the point of a one-off old-school marketing plan, anyway, when each product or service must continuously develop trust, to maintain its reputation, and increase sales, revenue and profitability. This is the only sustainable way to be viable in the ever-evolving marketplace.

And why digital marketing, you ask?

The explosion of digital communication channels and smart devices (such as web, email, social, search, mobile, AR/VR, gaming consoles, billboards, and so on) has led us all into a brave new world of blogs, vlogs, tweets, snaps and likes.

And yet, **digital marketing is not about technology; it is about people.** The technology is only interesting when it allows the marketer to connect with the target audience more effectively. And it *will*, because that same audience is already online.

Another good reason to go the digital marketing route: you can **measure results** (and ROI) more accurately. The digital sphere is almost entirely measurable, and often data comes in real time. You can see precisely how various campaigns are performing, which channels have the most benefit, and where to best focus your efforts. Sometimes results provide painful insights, but there's a positive side to it, too: you have the opportunity to refine and adjust your strategy.

Furthermore, digital is highly useful for **time-sensitive** services, products and events. You can measure results more efficiently (and adjust your campaign on the fly if needed). Your marketing spend becomes super cost-effective!

And one final pro-digital argument: your audience can be **segmented** with precision, even down to factors like current location and recent brand interactions, which means that messages can (and must!) be **personalized** and tailored to them.

Of course, like everything, digital marketing also has its downsides.

Given the relatively new nature of digital marketing and the democratization of the internet, there is a flood of **information overload** as well as myths and make-believe, which can cause painful misunderstandings and disappointment. Some examples:

“Digital marketing is only for big business.”

“We need to be on every imaginable social platform in order to not miss out.”

“We need an app.” – “Why?” – “Because we need one.”

“If we upload this TV ad to social media, it will go viral.”

“Email marketing is dead/spam.”

As you will learn throughout this book, **digital marketing is for everyone**, even the startups with tiny marketing budgets, but it does have its own specific uses and strategies. In other words: **digital marketing is the new marketing**. In a digital age, you simply cannot conceive of a marketing campaign without at its core a digital strategy that connects, enables and empowers each part of the overall campaign.

Here is just a glimpse of who will find this book – and specifically the Prepare-Run-Optimize model – of use...

- You are a **college or university student** taking a digital marketing course. Some of this handbook might be a bit advanced for your needs, but it can serve as a resource for anyone who wants to learn more about specific digital marketing subjects. You might want to jump straight to Part II, where we explain the channels and tactics you will need to learn about before getting started.
- You are a digital marketing **trainer**, using this handbook as a guideline for what you teach. You will find a lot of definitions and frameworks in here