

Best Practices for Digital Marketing and Social Media for Wineries and Craft Distilleries



Introduction

I am about to share information that can totally transform your business. I'm speaking from experience because it absolutely changed MY business!

I call this booklet "best practices" because, like a lot of things in life, just because you know how to do something or are currently doing something, does not mean you know how to do it well. Knowing how to punch and kick does not make you a black belt. Using these 4 tools well enables you to achieve extraordinary results. Using them in an average/mediocre way will only result in a lot of wasted money, leaving you uttering like so many others, "Well, we tried that, and it didn't work" or "Oh, we already do that now and we haven't really seen much of a return on our investment."

To clarify, "Social Media" is just one of the available channels of Digital Marketing. Just because you're "doing" Social Media, it does not mean you are doing Digital Marketing. This will become clearer as you read on.

It is rare to see a client that is already optimizing every aspect of their Digital Marketing & Social media. And, the key word is "optimizing." You'll hear me use this word a lot! I believe there are two reasons most people do not optimize all these critical components. First, to do it well, the learning curve is very steep. The second and related reason is that doing it poorly is so incredibly easy! Let me explain:

Using tools like Weebly, Squarespace, and Wix, anyone (and I mean anyone) can build their own website. Boosting a post on Facebook is just about the easiest thing in the world to do. You just click one button! So, with very little time or effort, you could, a) set up a website and, b) launch a Facebook Page for your business and now you are, technically, a "Digital Marketer."

One of the tools necessary for "doing it well" when it comes to digital marketing is landing pages. Landing pages are critical to converting the traffic that you drive from your Facebook advertising. Sadly, most people (many of them "digital marketers") have never heard of landing pages, let alone known how to optimize them.

Lastly, email marketing is one of the most under-utilized weapons in your digital arsenal. Most people hate getting email, so they don't understand why they should foist more of it on others. But the reality is, email marketing done well is one of the least costly and most effective platforms to use.

Facebook Advertising

Reality Check: Have you created an ad account for your FB business page? Do you know how to create and use the Business Manager? Do you know how to create the FB Pixel? If so, have you put the Pixel on each page of your website and all your landing pages? Do you know all the different ways to create custom audiences? Do you know how to write ad copy and do you know when to use short copy and when to use long copy? Are you sending the traffic you generate with your ads to a landing page? Do you know how to optimize images to Facebook's standards? Do you know how to find out which images work best?

If you can't answer "yes" to all or most of these questions, you are not in the Facebook advertising game. If boosting posts is your idea of FB advertising, let me be the first to welcome you to the big leagues.

Now, for those of you who employ an outside agency to do your Facebook advertising for you, do you know if THEY can answer "yes" to all those questions above? You'd be surprised how many agencies charge thousands of dollars a month but don't use landing pages and don't know what to do with the Facebook Pixel. I hate to be the bearer of bad news but you are wasting your money! I am not necessarily suggesting you learn to do all of this yourself. Not only is the learning curve steep and very intimidating, but Facebook continually changes the rules of engagement. What I AM saying is if you're going to hire an agency to do your Facebook advertising for you, you'd be wise to arm yourself with the right questions to ask them.

If you are beginning to feel discouraged, let me provide you with some hope and assurance. In the hands of a capable person, Facebook advertising can make your sales explode. I'm not talking about incremental gains here, I'm talking major, life-changing, phenomenal results. And it doesn't matter what you're selling, either. Facebook advertising works for anything. Even for non-profits. But, if there is one industry that needs it desperately, it's the adult beverage business.

Landing Pages

I can segment my business life into two periods: the days when I didn't know about landing pages and the day I started using them to transform my business (and my clients' businesses). The way it works is you drive traffic from your FB ads to a landing page instead of your website and the key word here is *conversion*. When visitors land on your regular business website, they are like a kid with Attention Deficit Disorder. There are so many shiny things to look at and they get bored after 15 seconds. Want proof? Study the Google analytics on your website (more on this later). If your bounce rate is higher than 70%, you are experiencing this phenomenon first hand.

Conversely, when you drive traffic to a single-use, tightly focused Landing Page with a single CTA (call to action), your conversion rates go through the roof. All that effort to get traffic and visitors now stands a fighting chance of becoming revenue. Conversion has to do with what percentage of the people who visit the page take the action you seek. Possible actions include signing up to be on your email list or filling out some kind of "lead form" to get more info, or even making a purchase. Running Facebook ads without the use of gorgeous, professional landing pages is a giant waste of money. Now would be a good time to ask your agency if they use landing pages. Go ahead. I'll wait.

Another great benefit of landing pages is you can "integrate" them into your email service provider (ESP). More on this in the last section of this booklet. There are other things you can do with landing pages like send them to another landing page, very often a "thank you page," where you get them to take other valuable actions like visiting your website or social media platforms.

One last thing about the use of landing pages. There are many different page-builders out there. This is no place to get cheap. If you're going to do it, do it right. I highly recommend [Unbounce](#).

Website

I'm going to have to restrain myself to keep from launching into a big rant here. To keep things simple, let's do another reality check. Is your website optimized for mobile? Do you have a simple, easy way for visitors to sign up for your email list? Do you have the FB Pixel on every single page? Do you have Google Analytics installed and, if so, do you know how to use it? Is your website updated or re-created at least once a year? Do you now how to do all this for under \$1,500?

Again, if you can't answer yes to all or most of these questions, you are languishing in website purgatory. You are "all hat and no cattle," as we say in Texas. The lights are on but nobody's home – quite literally!

The purpose of a website in 2018 is very different than it was 10 or even 5 years ago. What kind of website you need depends on what business you are in and what you are selling. "Modern" websites share three major traits:

- 1) They have only what you need and nothing you don't. They are "clean, lean, and mean."
- 2) They are optimized to convert visitors to something valuable like an email address or a product purchase.
- 3) Since just over half of all web traffic worldwide is viewed via mobile device, your website must be optimized for mobile viewing.

Perhaps one of the most important things your website can do for you is collect email addresses that can be used via traditional email marketing or uploaded to Facebook to use as a custom audience.

So, you've got to make it as easy as possible for visitors to "opt in" to your email list. To do so, adhere two best practices: 1) ask only for first name and email address and 2) provide a good reason to join your list. On my website, it says, "Enter your email below and get info on how to dramatically grow your sales." I love what Keller Estate Winery says on theirs: "Join our journey and share with us new releases, vintage library sales, winemaking and vineyard milestones and our ongoing road to sustainability." Wow – sign me up!

Also, thanks to the FB Pixel, everyone who visits your website will be captured by FB and you can re-market to them as a custom audience. You won't know who those people are but FB does and they keep track of them for you. The Facebook Pixel is really the secret sauce that ties all of your digital and social media advertising together. It allows you to track, measure, optimize, and retarget to your fans and visitors.

Email Marketing

The rumors of email Marketing's demise have been greatly exaggerated. This is great news for small-to-medium sized wineries and craft distilleries; email is not going anywhere! You can be highly successful engaging buyers of wine & spirits (both trade and consumers) using email. Here are some keys to winning with this powerful platform.

Subscribe to an email service provider like Constant Contact (my preferred choice) or Mailchimp. There are several important reasons to use an ESP. First, it will keep your emails from landing in your audience's spam folder because these tools are in compliance with the CAN-SPAM Act of 2003. Email tools like Gmail and Outlook work very hard to keep SPAM out of people's in-boxes. But, using an ESP will go a long way towards avoiding this pitfall. An ESP allows you to segment your contacts by interest or purchase history, so you can *target just the right content* that people want to see. I won't take time to list all of the benefits of using an ESP in this email, but I do want to mention one more. It can be very powerful to use specific *calls to action* (CTA) in your emails to get people to do things like visit your website, follow you on Social media, or even forward your email to a friend!

Only send email to people you know. The biggest key to effective email marketing is taking the effort and time required to cultivate a loyal following which means getting people to "opt in" to be on your email list (see section above about doing this via your website). Once you build their trust, you can obtain additional data points over time (like zip code, birthdate, etc.). You should also be collecting business cards at trade shows and events. The goal here is not quantity but *quality*. When someone hands you their business card, you should ask them directly if it's OK for you to add them to your email database to be kept up to date with your brand/company. Then write a note on the business card that says, "opted in." Over time, you will have lots of high-quality contacts in your database. And, since you are using an ESP, you can segment consumers and trade contacts.

Content is king! Once you are SPAM compliant and you're committed to only sending emails to people who have voluntarily provided their email address to you, it's time to focus on providing great content that is *targeted* to each segment of your audience. "Value" isn't always a discount, or something given for free. "Value" can also be useful (and timely) information. Give, give, give – that is the mantra of great email Marketing. Don't use your emails to sell, sell, sell. That's a great way to get people to "unsubscribe." If executed correctly, sales will happen naturally. Effective email

Marketing is about building lots of loyal fans and ambassadors of your brand -and this takes time, so be patient and keep working at it. Loyal customers (both trade and consumers) follow you on social media, visit your website and tell their friends about your brand. And, yes, they very often PURCHASE your products. But remember – the best kinds of sales are those that are the by-product of a much larger relationship. Work on building that relationship first and the sales will follow.

Remember, email marketing works together with all your other digital marketing tools. Automated emails are powerful and easy to setup! When someone opts in to your email list, you can have it setup to “fire off” an automatic email saying, “Thank you” and offering other benefits like downloading documents or sending them to your social media platforms so they can opt in there.

Even if you are using email marketing now, your skills and practices could always be taken up a notch and there are many great books to help you along on your journey. My favorite is *The Constant Contact Guide to Email Marketing*.

Summary

If you are not already acutely aware, it’s getting harder and harder to sell your wines & spirits through the traditional distributor tier. There are more wineries and craft distilleries than ever before in history and, to make things worse, far fewer distributors. So much of this is completely beyond your control! So, what CAN you do? At Salisbury Creative Group, we teach wineries and distilleries how to optimize and leverage digital marketing and social media, so you can reach consumers and trade buyers directly. There’s never been a better time to take more control of your own *destiny*. But, you may need a little help getting started and that is where we come in.

About the Author

Ben Salisbury is the Founder and President of Salisbury Creative Group, Inc. which specializes in helping wineries and craft distilleries achieve high levels of sales effectiveness. Leveraging his knowledge and experience from three decades in the industry, Ben and his team deliver sales, marketing, and distribution expertise to a wide array of adult beverage clients. Prior to starting his own company in May of 2014, Ben spent 17 years as VP of On Premise National Accounts for both Ste Michelle Wine Estates and Constellation Brands.

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