How to Drive Marketing Results When You're Facing Budget Cuts



You need to get a whole lot better at SEO to get more bang for your marketing buck.

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Budget cuts may be a necessary evil in uncertain economic times. But even declines in funding don't take the pressure off your marketing team to deliver results. If anything, hitting key metrics becomes even more important to your company's future.

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Along the way, there's a personal cost: Stress results when you're afraid your head is on the chopping block, and you aren't certain what kinds of resources you have to work with.

If you find yourself in this position, the advice below – based on my years of engagement with companies in these financial circumstances – may help.

Be clear about your goal during tough times.

The first thing you need to know is that, during tough times, it isn't just your tactics and strategies that need to change. Your whole approach to marketing needs to change, as well.

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So, rather than stretching and testing new channels, your goal should be to take the ambiguity and risk out of marketing. Learn how to pull data insights out of the information you have in order to achieve results.

Here are six ways to do that . . .

1. Put out the fires first.

Start by proactively identifying any past marketing strategies that could put your future profits at risk.

As an example, I recently worked with a company that had hired a different SEO agency in the past. Unbeknownst to the company, the old agency ran a black-hat back-linking campaign which pointed thousands of spam links to the client company's site.

The company began to notice the results when the strategy was first executed; but the company's leaders were put into a

precarious position, since 85 percent of their customers were coming from organic search. At best, they knew their links would be devalued at some point in the future, causing them to fall in the rankings and lose business once the links were removed.

At worst? They were risking penalties that could literally put them out of business.

So, don’t let this happen to you; stay on top of this risk. Fix problems like these before you invest in more proactive marketing, prioritizing them based on both their likelihood of occurring and the potential impact they could have on your business.

2. Rethink the way you do SEO.

While we’re on the subject of SEO, whether you’re facing budget cuts or not, it’s time to start looking beyond keyword research.

Look at the questions being asked in real time to understand your customers’ linguistics and the pain in their voices. Cross-reference what you’re seeing with Google Trends and PPC data. By getting better at honing in on the language your customers are using, you’ll be able to laser-target the strategies you execute and get more bang for your SEO buck.

3. Make more informed content decisions.

Be as critical about your content investments as you are with your SEO. There’s a ton of information out there. Get as much of it as possible before coming up with and executing on content ideas.

See which websites in your industry have the greatest impact

in terms of voice. Try to see why things are ranking well. Understand what your content needs to achieve in order to be successful. Reverse-engineer content that's performing well, so that you can be certain that there's a hungry audience already looking for the work you're about to produce.

4. Look for strategies that pull double duty.

No matter how you decide to invest in SEO or content, look for opportunities to maximize the value of your marketing investments.

Which content pieces do you have that can be repurposed into new formats? Which ones can be submitted to new publications, online or offline? How can you work existing content into your lead-nurturing sequences?

The more uses you can get out of a single content asset, the lower your average cost per use will be.

5. Get more comfortable with your data than ever before.

I mentioned the importance of data above, but the truth is that when budget cuts are in the works, you have to be able to justify the value of every decision you make. That means knowing your:

- Organic traffic click-through rate (CTR)
- PPC cost-per-click
- Average customer acquisition cost (CAC) by channel
- Average conversion rate by channel
- Customer lifetime value (LTV) by channel

There are plenty of different tools and tutorials online that will help you find these numbers. There’s no excuse not to use them.

6. Bring the right partners on board.

Finally, understand that budget cuts don’t necessarily mean “DIY’ing” your marketing. You may actually get better results – whether in terms of greater revenue, speed or something else – if you bring on specialists, versus trying to learn something new from scratch.

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It’s up to you to have a clear understanding of your organization’s metrics and the strategies necessary to move those forward. After that, consider carefully whether you or a new partner will be the best person to get there.

What other tips would you add, based on how you’ve driven marketing results when facing budget cuts? Leave me a note below with your thoughts:

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