B2B MARKETING USING GOOGLE & PAID SOCIAL

What B2B Companies Need to Know About SEO, SEM, and Social Media Marketing

SAGEFROG MARKETING GROUP

Why marketing with Google is more important than ever for B2B companies

In 2020 and beyond, an effective digital marketing strategy will be more important than ever for B2B companies to ensure their software, products, and services are known to their markets. As the historically long B2B sales cycle continues to become more streamlined and reflective of B2C, marketers need to embrace digital marketing tactics to become more visible, accessible, and readily attractive to decision-makers and buyers.

This Handbook answers the most frequently asked questions about digital marketing and will guide you through some of the most common and effective strategies. We'll begin with crucial need-to-knows about starting a digital marketing effort and address common website concerns. Then, we'll discuss SEO, SEM, and paid social marketing.

Contents

BEGINNING DIGITAL EFFORTS IN MARKETING

The internet has become the go-to source for buyers to research, pursue, and acquire the products, services, and resources they need. Without a solid digital presence, there's little chance you'll be easily found among the highly competitive digital landscape. Beyond just being found, a strong digital presence extends to your reputation as an innovative, advanced, and trustworthy B2B company that embraces technology.

In this section, we'll discuss the basics of setting up an online presence, including the role that SEO and SEM audits play in laying a foundation for a competitive and successful digital marketing program.

Q: What are realistic timelines and expectations for my digital tactics?

Realistic expectations are foundational to any effective digital marketing campaign. Some tactics are designed to produce fast results, while others are long-term strategies that take months to put in place. As you begin planning and executing your digital marketing plan for the year ahead, be sure to communicate realistic timelines and expectations to your team and other stakeholders in your company so everyone is on the same page with what to expect and when.

Use these realistic timelines to guide your expectations and plan:

Content & Ranking on Google

Anywhere from four to twelve months because Google's search algorithms change frequently and bots crawl websites at varying times and frequencies.

Google Ads

Three months to see if ads are effective, tweak keywords, and determine if ads are working as desired.

LinkedIn Campaigns

A few days to see if Sponsored Content is displaying correctly and is relevant to an audience. A few months to judge effectiveness and reach.

Title Tags & Meta Descriptions

Typically, four to twelve months because to display updated title tags and meta descriptions, Google has to re-index the pages, which depends on when Google re-crawls the pages or website.

Q: What should I know before launching a new website or webpage?

As with most digital tactics, the completion and success of websites are contextual; they depend on the complexity of on-page elements, the number of pages, and the nature of the site. These things can all significantly increase the time needed to build a website.

Webpages coded from a preexisting WordPress template take approximately six hours to a day to build. A basic website can be built in weeks while a custom website can take months. If your website requires custom design, copywriting, programming, and QA, while also featuring unique functionality and integrations, the timeline can grow significantly.

**There will always be growing pains with a new website.
Real users need to interact with it before you know what's not working.**

Q: What should I know before launching a new website or webpage? (Continued)

Before you launch your site, a **redirect list** should be created so that users visiting the old site's URLs are directed to the new ones. This list should be completed before the site is live and should be activated once the site is published.

Basic forms take an hour to build with no design changes; design changes can take a long time depending on a variety of factors. If you want to collect email addresses on your website for future email blasts or other marketing reasons, it's **legally required for an opt-in** to be included with the form.

If you aren't getting the form information sent to the email address specified for form entries, no worries! If you have a WordPress site, Gravity Forms keeps all form entry information in the backend of WordPress, meaning that form entry information is readily available with a simple login to the backend of the site.

It's of the utmost importance to test forms as soon as they are launched to make sure they're operating correctly, that information is being collected, and that applicable Thank You pages or messages are displaying when they should be.

Q: What are SEO and SEM audits, and when are they needed?

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Search Engine Marketing (SEM) audits are in-depth dissections of a site and paid campaigns. Audits allow your digital marketing team to explain and dissect critical elements of both the SEO and SEM aspects of your digital efforts. Additionally, they provide recommendations and insight so you can continue to make informed decisions with your marketing agency or to consider and handle internally.

SEO audits address issues like site speed, response codes, and site content.

SEM audits explore campaign settings, keywords, and ad copy.

Your Website's Rank Potential:

Your digital marketing team will use the audits to analyze rank potential and competitors that rank on the first page of Search Engine Results Pages (SERP). Finding your website's rank potential is determining the low-hanging fruit keywords that you can optimize on your site to move up the rankings for that term. These might be keywords you rank at the bottom of the first page or the top of the second page for.

Q: What are some common HTTP response codes and their meanings?

HTTP response codes are issued by a server and correspond to how a page is being received and displayed. This brief explanation describes what response codes mean when you're seeing them on your site. When a user tries to access a website's pages, they send a request to the host server. Depending on how the server interprets and processes the user's request, it'll return a response code to the user.

2xx (Success)

A 2xx response code means that the page has been sent, understood, and accepted— that's good news! It means that the server got the user's request, understood the request, and displayed the requested page. 2xx response codes are what you want to see.

3xx (Redirect)

This code indicates that further action needs to be taken by the server to complete the request. Redirects are used to direct a user to one particular page in place of another. They're useful when launching a new site to redirect users who may accidentally visit the old site out of habit, a bad link, or just not being aware of the new site. They're also useful when a page is removed from a website or is under construction. A redirect list should always be prepared before a new site goes live.

4xx (Client Error)

A 4xx error is bad news! It means the page the user is trying to access is not available. Most commonly, you'll deal with 404 errors, which mean the requested page cannot be found. Having 404 errors on your site is a big red flag for search engines, negatively affecting SEO. It disrupts the user experience for those who land there and is an indicator of an unreliable or spammy website. Avoid 404s on your website at all costs!

Q: What is an SSL certificate, and do I need one?

An SSL (Secure Sockets Layer) certificate is a cryptographic key that lets users know that information transmitted between the site and users' devices is encrypted. When a website's URL begins with https:// (as opposed to http://) and a padlock symbol is shown next to the URL, it means the site is using an SSL certificate to securely transmit data between users and itself.

SSL certificates must be purchased and continually renewed a year from purchase.

A site with an expired SSL certificate is shown with a big, glaring, "not secure" notification next to its URL in users' browsers. It's recommended that you purchase and continue to renew an SSL certificate for your website.

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION (SEO)

Search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of optimizing every possible aspect of your website to promote organic growth and a more desirable location in search engine results. You'll want to maximize your digital presence with relevant service and geolocation information so that your clients and prospects can find your facilities, learn about your specializations, and more.

In this section, we'll answer questions about SEO topics such as Google Analytics, link building, meta, and keywords. Use this Handbook throughout your planning and creation stages to get the best results possible for your online presence.

Q: What is Google Analytics (GA), and how do I use it?

Google Analytics is one of the main tools digital marketers use to track website performance and make informed decisions on where to focus future efforts. It allows you to monitor the number of sessions and users and a whole slew of behavior metrics for a given site.

GA can also collect e-commerce info and hold individual goals to keep track of a page or product's performance.

Q: What is link building?

Link building is the practice of pitching content to reputable external websites and publications to get them to link back to your site. Getting these links isn't guaranteed, but the significant benefit of having a link from a high domain site is invaluable in making your website more appealing to search engines.

The goal of link building is to get external websites to link to your own—in other words, build backlinks. The more quality sites that link to your website, the more value Google gives your site when considering what to show in search results and how to rank you among others. Google considers a complex variety of factors when reviewing your backlinks and the domains they come from. In addition to weighing your website's domain authority and site health, Google considers the referring domain's own backlink profile when sizing up your site.

Q: What is link building? (Continued)

Link Building Example:

Suppose you own a website that sells medical braces, and you publish a blog that talks about new technologies and materials in medical braces. Meanwhile, a physical therapist runs her own website to schedule appointments and write about the latest breakthroughs and techniques in her field. While reading about new tools, techniques, and products on your site, she realizes your blog post would be an excellent resource for her readers, so she adds a link to your post for her users. This is one example of a backlink. It could be a hyperlink in the text of a blog post, a link under a resources section, or wherever else makes sense. Backlinks are seldom built so easily, without effort from you and your digital marketing team.

Citations are another form of link building in which you submit pertinent company information to a database. These include sites like Yelp, Foursquare, and other websites that list relevant basic info about your company. Building citations for your business helps increase the accuracy of your NAP (Name, Address, Phone) information on the web, which can help you rank in local searches.

If search engines see your NAP info on multiple reputable citation sites, your chances of ranking for local results increase. Users who are geographically closer to you will see your business when they search with queries like "near me" or a specific city, town, or street address.

Q: What are title tags and meta descriptions?

Title tags are one of the most critical elements of SEO because they're a major factor that search engines consider when crawling pages and choosing which to rank for a particular query. The title tag is displayed in the browser window tab at the top of a webpage and is the large text that appears above all the other elements of a search result:

Full Service B2B Marketing Agency | Sagefrog Marketing Group
http://www.sagefrog.com
★ ★ ★ ★ Rating: 5 - 32 votes
Sagefrog is a full-service B2B Marketing agency that specializes in healthcare and technology marketing for clients in Greater Philadelphia and New Jersey.

For a title tag to be effective, it needs to focus on a specific keyword that you and your digital marketing team agree on and should be no longer than 65 characters total, including spaces. Every page that's indexed by Google must have a title tag and begin with the keyword itself (except Contact and About pages, which should remain titled as "Contact Us" and "About Us" so users can find that information without too much confusion).

Q: What are title tags and meta descriptions? (Continued)

Meta descriptions act as a basic description of the page that displays in the search engine results page, giving users a glimpse into what the result they're about to click contains:

Full Service B2B Marketing Agency | Sagefrog Marketing Group
http://www.sagefrog.com
★★★★★ Rating: 5 - 32 votes
Sagefrog is a full-service B2B Marketing agency that specializes in healthcare and technology marketing for clients in Greater Philadelphia and New Jersey.

The meta description should explain the page's content (except for the homepage, which describes the business), including the services it provides and the industries it serves, all within 160 characters with spaces. The meta description should mention the keyword that your title tag and page focus on. Meta descriptions help search engines decide what results to display for a query. If your meta isn't properly completed, Google pulls copy directly from the page, which looks unprofessional and can be detrimental to how search engines view your pages.

Q: Why do websites and other forms of content need keywords?

Keywords are the words or phrases that users type into search engines to find information or products on the internet. A nurse looking for a new pair of work shoes may search for something like "gray nursing clogs"—which is a keyword.

"Shoes" by itself is too general of a keyword, meaning attempting to rank for "shoes" alone is ineffective. The sites dominating this keyword and appearing first in the rankings for this term are large companies like Zappos or Shoes.com. Smaller businesses have a tough time competing against those with such a large digital presence. Additionally, it's an ineffective and unnatural way to search. Few users approach a search engine with broad singular terms such as "shoes" when they want to buy a pair. More likely, they'd search for something like "slip-resistant nursing shoes" or "black athletic shoes for men."

Longer, more specific terms are called long-tail keywords and are an excellent way for small sites to appear in search results. By targeting specific terms in your website's copy and content, you have a better chance of appearing in results for terms otherwise dominated by giant sites and companies.

Q: Why do websites and other forms of content need keywords? (Continued)

Low-hanging fruit keywords are easy wins when first engaging with SEO. These are keywords that aren't taken by big competitors and don't require a colossal site, budget, or backlink profile to rank. Through keyword research, you can identify variations of keywords used for content or copy that would have trouble ranking for search results dominated by bigger companies.

These low-hanging fruit keywords can be discovered and used to get a site ranking for relevant search terms through on-page copy (webpages, blogs) or content assets (infographics, whitepapers, case studies). By writing a blog or creating an infographic around a set of keywords, search engines realize that your content is mentioning the keywords users are searching for, making it more relevant in the eyes of both search engines and users.

Q: What is domain authority (DA) and why does it matter?

Used by many SEO tools, domain authority is a ranking from 0 to 100 (a higher number is better) attributed to a website based on a series of sophisticated metrics created from analyzing backlinks and the domains linking to a website. A site such as Wikipedia ranks in the 90s, which is rare.

Domain authority is relative to your company and its competitors. Your website should have a DA within the range of your direct competitors.

Multiple factors determine domain authority in a site's backlink profile. It's not necessarily an indication of a poorly made site—it just shows that a website doesn't have a substantial number of referring domains or credible referring domains.

Spammy websites or those with a low domain authority that link to your website aren't as highly valued or "counted" when calculating your own domain ranking. Sites with a high domain authority that link to yours can impact your rank positively. Therefore, **domain authority should be taken into consideration when building links. Reach out to websites with higher DAs when pitching for links.**

Q: What is Google My Business?

Google My Business is an extension of the Google search engine that allows businesses to list pertinent facts about their business, such as its name, address, phone number, and website. It also allows businesses to post about promotions, products, and industry news, which displays in Google results when users search for the company. **Google My Business helps solidify important NAP (name, address, phone) information within Google.**

Users can make suggestions for business listings by updating the information themselves. If a company doesn't have control of their Google My Business listing, Google approves changes to the best of its ability, which can lead to inaccurate information. If you create an account and take control of your Google My Business profile, any edits made by Google users must be approved by the account owner before being published. This process allows companies to reject inaccurate information easily.

Google My Business profiles can include pictures, videos, and product information that can help users interact with a company in a fast, accurate manner.

Q: What is mobile-first indexing, and why does it matter?

Google recently started implementing mobile-first indexing, which indexes a website's mobile pages while disregarding its desktop pages entirely. This means **Google is basing its analysis of your site—and determining whether it's going to display your site in response to a search query—on the health of your mobile pages.**

More than half of searches completed in Google are carried out on mobile devices.

Does this mean that your desktop pages don't matter? Absolutely not! **Both versions of your site must be up to spec, fully functional on both platforms, loading fast, and serving the purpose of your site's users well.** But now, mobile pages dictate how much Google values your website, so they need to be in good shape.

SEARCH ENGINE MARKETING (SEM)

Search engine marketing (SEM) is an effective form of paid digital marketing that helps position your website within search engine results. It guarantees that users who are actively searching for your relevant keywords and terms will see your content. No matter your natural position in the SERPs, you can pay to show up right at the top of the list.

SEM can be especially effective at getting users to a landing page where you could offer highly specialized offers, such as a free demo about your company's innovative management software.

This section discusses the creation of landing pages, Google Ads, email campaigns, and campaign tracking.

Q: What do I need to create a landing page?

Landing pages are webpages (usually separate from a website or not included in the main navigation) created with a specific goal or conversion in mind, typically developed to partner with a Google Ad campaign.

Rather than linking directly to a company's website, a Google ad should link to a separate landing page because Google can analyze these pages and determine their usefulness to users visiting them via the ad. Poor landing pages can affect the quality scores and the frequency of your ads' appearances on the internet.

An effective landing page includes these components:

It starts with a **compelling call-to-action (CTA)** that makes users want to fill out a form or take another action on the page. Forms should have relevant fields, but the longer the form, the less likely users are to complete it. **Your form needs to be short** while still giving you the necessary data to review leads that you can follow up with later.

It's professional and **visually appealing** and should contain **more information about the offer mentioned in the ad**. One of the main advantages of using a unique landing page as opposed to an existing webpage on your site is that the landing page caters to a particular offer or service. An existing webpage, on the other hand, offers general information that may not speak to the offer or promotion that initially attracted readers.

Q: What do I need to create a Google Ad campaign?

There are two essential components to any successful Google Ad campaign: time and money.

Time is needed for:

- Researching keywords

- Researching the ads that competitors and other businesses in your bid space are using

- Writing and designing ads

- Building campaigns and ironing the finer details

- Conducting weekly maintenance

- Adding negatives to avoid wasting money

- Adding keywords to compete

Money is needed to fuel the campaign:

Your ads show if they're able to match the amount required to display for a specific keyword.

The minimum budget is contextual, as each industry's keyword costs are different. It costs $0.24 to bid on some keywords and $350 to bid on others.

Research should be conducted to determine what kind of budget recommendation is appropriate for you. The rule when it comes to ad spend is generally the more, the better. Ads should run for two to three months to see if they are successful and to see what types of conversions are coming from which campaigns and ads.

Q: How can I monitor goal tracking, call tracking, and conversions?

CallRail is a dependable software option that lets marketers monitor incoming phone calls through various channels. It can also record the calls to help you address concerns regarding the type and quality of leads or how your sales team handles calls. These types of software options let you record and learn company names and contacts for lead generation. You can organize your leads and inbound calls, as well as respond to any missed calls. If you have call tracking, you can get access to a data board dedicated to calls and call metrics.

You can track goals through Google Analytics and conversions through Google Ads. Conversions are actions taken by users once they access your site or landing page through an ad by filling out a form, for example. Goals are usually destination goals, such as thank you pages after users submit information. Google Tag Manager is available to set up more sophisticated goals, such as button presses, users watching videos, and more.

Q: What do I need to create an email campaign?

Mailchimp and HubSpot are ideal for running email campaigns. Email campaigns can have many objectives depending on what section of the funnel you want to address. They're great for building awareness, nurturing leads, and promoting news and content assets.

What's the perfect size for an email list? There's no right answer; it largely depends on the quality of leads and what part of the funnel you're focused on. A list of 70 strong leads is much more effective than a list of 3,000 contacts that may have no interest in your company. We don't recommend buying lists.

Many purchased lists turn out to be mostly or all filler contacts that have no real value, wasting your money and time.

Email Send Time:
If you're launching the email campaign on your own, be strategic about the send time! Sending an email blast at 4:30 p.m. on a Friday will result in low open and read rates. Your marketing team can always provide insight on when an email campaign should be launched according to the content and intent of the email or launch.

HubSpot

mailchimp

PAID SOCIAL MARKETING

Paid social marketing, or social media marketing, is an effective method of ensuring your business gets noticed by the right audience. You're able to effectively promote offers like downloadable catalogs, demos, or limited-time offers. Paid social campaign budgets are flexible so you can customize and adjust your spending as necessary. Common types of paid social marketing campaigns could include LinkedIn Sponsored Content and InMail, Facebook Ads, promoted Tweets, and Google Ads.

Here we'll talk about creating LinkedIn Sponsored Content and InMails, as well as Facebook Ad campaigns so that you can target the right businesses, professionals, locations, and other demographics of your audience.

Q: What do I need to create a LinkedIn campaign?

LinkedIn offers the opportunity to create ads much like Google Ads or other social media platforms. There are several types of LinkedIn ads, but the two main types we recommend are InMail and Sponsored Content (in the form of posts and image carousels). Sponsored Posts are like Facebook ads: text, an accompanying image and an offer or form that targets LinkedIn users.

InMails are email blasts in the LinkedIn network: a message and an offer or form that can be sent directly to LinkedIn users. InMails can be constructed in LinkedIn or built from an imported contact list that you already possess, which should contain contact names, company names, and any other criteria appropriate for reaching the type of users you'd like to target. Build LinkedIn audiences by targeting professions, job titles, companies, geographic locations, and other aspects that can be used to segment your customers.

The size of your audience dictates the budget, and each campaign is different. A Sponsored Content budget starts at $1,000 and an InMail budget starts at $300. Campaigns should run for two to three months to expend the budget and generate impressions and leads.

Q: What do I need to create a Facebook Ad campaign?

Facebook Ads come in a few different flavors: photo ads, video ads, carousels, messenger ads—the list goes on. The message you want to send dictates what type of ad gets selected for your Facebook campaign.

As far as budget goes, your needs and goals, the type and size of the audience, and the ad type dictate the spend. For the time duration, two to three months is needed to gather enough data to determine how ads are truly performing.
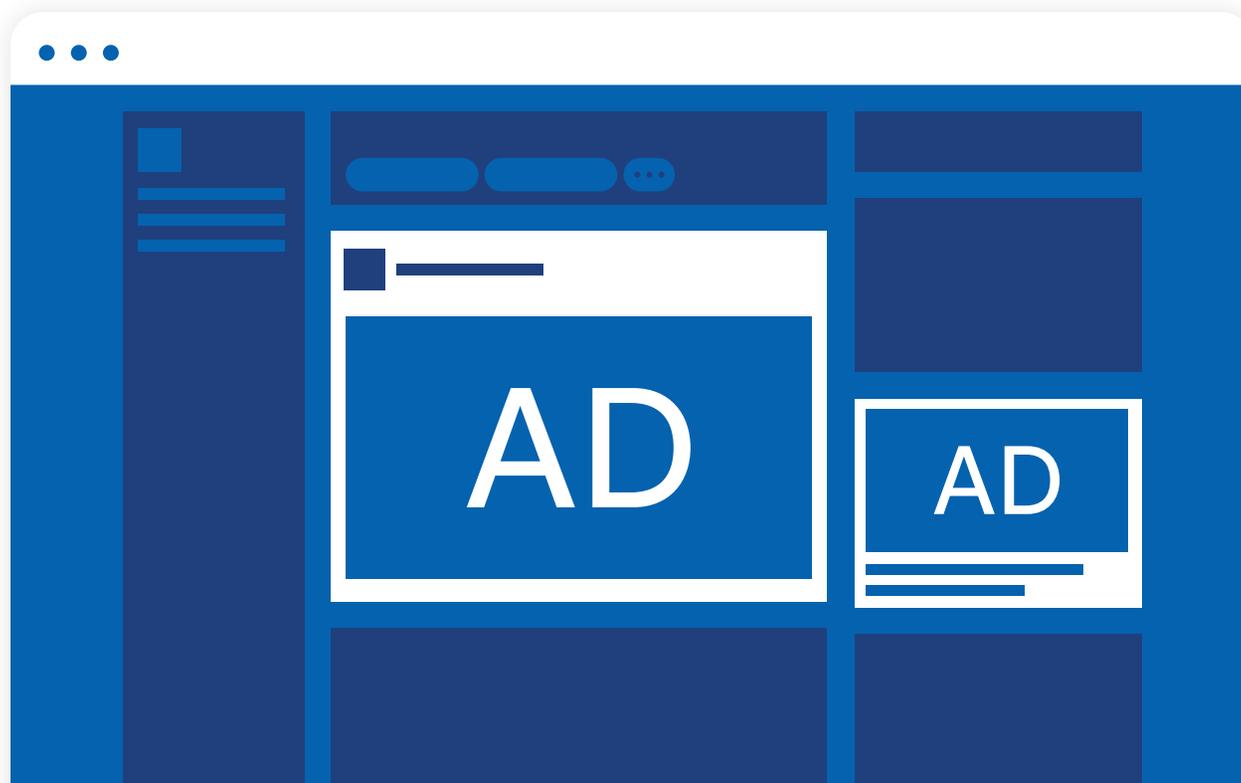
Getting Started with B2B Marketing

B2B companies that successfully master digital transformation have 8% more shareholder returns and five times more revenue growth than their peers.[1] So, as we look at the top areas of marketing spend for B2B companies in 2020, we're not surprised digital topped the charts.

Make sure your 2020 marketing program is on par with your industry standards. If you're not sure how to execute on a certain trend or need help tailoring tactics to your audience, contact us.
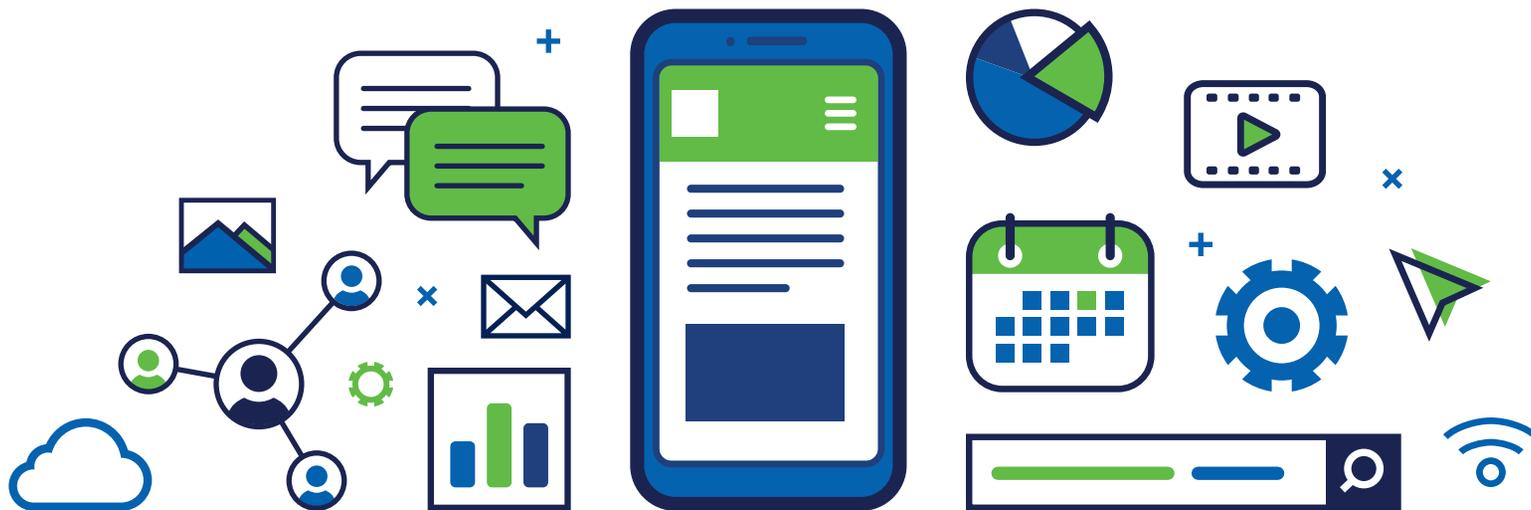
About Sagefrog Marketing Group

Sagefrog is a top-ranked B2B marketing agency that specializes in healthcare, technology, industrial, and business services. We have offices in Doylestown, Princeton, Philadelphia, and Lehigh Valley, and we're dedicated to accelerating our clients' success through brand building and integrated marketing. Our services include branding, websites, digital content marketing, public relations, social media, and traditional tactics, which are strategically integrated and optimized through our proven process, JumpStart™.

Contact us to put the insights from this Handbook into action for your company.

Are you ready to leap ahead?

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Sources

1. How B2B digital leaders drive five times more revenue growth than their peers, McKinsey & Company