



# **A Year in Review: The 12 Months of Digital Marketing**

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December 2014

WSI WORLD

## Introduction

The end of the year is a time when we try to kick back and relax, if only for a few days. The buildup to the holiday season can be intense, stressful and downright crazy, so in the days that follow December 25th, there's always a lull as we prepare for one last party to ring in the New Year. But from the moment the ball drops on New Year's Eve (or perhaps the next morning for those who partake in a beverage or six), we often become obsessed with putting the previous year behind us and 'starting fresh.' New diets, exercise plans and enhanced daily routines geared toward increasing productivity. Forget what happened in 2014, we'll say; this is a NEW YEAR! Let's kick some butt!

This kind of rah-rah attitude works for some people, but for the majority, the energy is short-lived and we eventually slip back into our mundane, not-any-different-from-2014 mindset. If you do something that works, by all means, stick to that plan. We're not here to talk you out of anything tried and true. But if you're here searching for something new - a different way to frame the end of one year and the start of another - allow us to make a suggestion (and follow it up with actionable steps for execution).

At WSI, we don't believe in putting past years behind us. In digital marketing, the *past is everything*. Okay, it's not everything, but reviewing your previous year's digital marketing strategy - including what worked and what didn't - is vital to future success. To guide you through the year that was 2014, we're going to take you back to one piece of WSI content from each month. To honor the season, we'll call it WSI's Twelve Days of Christmas, except on each day, you get to reflect on how you fared in a particular area of your digital marketing strategy. And don't worry if you didn't implement one of the strategies we discuss because who knows: if you follow along, you might just find a new tactic that jives perfectly with your business goals in 2015.

## #1 - January: Website Conversion

**The Resource:** Way back in January, we kicked off WSI's year of content marketing by focusing on website conversion. At the time, we didn't think website conversion was getting a fair shake, and the truth is we still don't believe it receives enough attention. So we'd like to direct you back to [The Beginner's Guide To Understand Website Conversion](#). The gist of our post is the single most important fact about website conversion: a slight increase in conversions can significantly increase your bottom line. What business doesn't want that?

**THE ACTION:** The most effective way to test the conversion design of your digital properties is to use them yourself. If you have any user experience hiccups *at all*, you can be sure that they're occurring for your customers too. The good news is that implementing small changes can drastically improve your conversion rate. For example, using specific landing pages for each conversion is a great way to get things on the right track. At the end of the day, you need to become your own customer; if you can't sell to yourself in a test process, you'll never sell anybody else.

## #2 - February: Pay-Per-Click

**The Resource:** February saw us shift gears and move on to the topic of pay-per-click (PPC) advertising. PPC can be very complex, which is why most companies use an expert to manage their budget. But even if you're going to let somebody else deliver your PPC campaigns, it's important to have a theoretical understanding of what they're doing and why. We wrote a post called [3 Underrated PPC Tips That Will Boost Your Marketing Efforts](#) that offers a great balance of theory and practical application for novices.

**THE ACTION:** At the very least, learn the basics of PPC. Play around with Google's Keyword Planner - it'll help you understand both PPC and the things that drive Google's search engine. Do some tinkering with a few dollars of your own PPC budget; even if you aren't successful, the experience is worth more than a few bucks. Better yet, try out some Facebook and Twitter ads on your own, you might fall in love with the results.

## #3 - March: AdaptiveSEO™

**The Resource:** March's winds of winter (at least up in Toronto) blew in a whole batch of AdaptiveSEO™ resources. The best of the bunch, in our opinion, was our infographic called [Get On The Same Page As Google With AdaptiveSEO™](#). Using a creative acrostic poem, we guide you through the AdaptiveSEO™ process and benefits in hopes that you'll invest in ASEO both now and in the future.

**THE ACTION:** Although it's not a traditional checklist, we recommend going down the line of our infographic and asking yourself, in brutally honest fashion, "Do my marketing efforts reflect these tenets?" Think of your marketing strategy and efforts as an ongoing, adaptable, long-term journey with gradual but meaningful performance increases. Remember, slow and steady wins the race!

## #4 - April: Social Selling

**The Resource:** With April showers came...the death of cold calling? Okay, that's a slightly modified version of the popular spring saying, but it's the truth. Cold calling is no longer an efficient way to sell your products or services. Social selling, on the other hand, is turning into a great way to maximize your time, energy and closing rate. Our webinar, [Social Selling: Eliminate Cold Calling With These 5 Steps](#), is the perfect place to start if you're wondering how you can put an end to the mindless frustration of making hundreds of phone calls a day.

**THE ACTION:** Think about how you buy products and services; how many times have you bought something from a person who called you completely out of the blue? Yeah, we didn't think so. Yet people continue to cold call because that's what they've always done and they don't see any other option. But the moment you stop cold calling, you'll realize social selling offers shorter sales cycles and increased sales opportunities in your pipeline. You will still need to get on the phone to close certain deals, but the difference is it'll be with warm leads.  
Don't underestimate that difference!

## #5 - May: Content Marketing

**The Resource:** What a year it was for content marketing, the buzziest of 2014's digital strategies. In reality, content marketing has been white-hot for the last several years, but the thing is, it deserves the attention because it can make *that much of a difference*. But as more businesses and marketers realize they need to incorporate some form of content into their digital strategies, we're seeing an influx in, err, not-so-great content marketing. So back in May of 2014, we created an in-depth whitepaper called [How To Fix The 5 Content Marketing Mistakes You Might Be Making](#). This is an essential resource for businesses looking to pick up on the basics of content marketing in a very short period of time.

**THE ACTION:** Repeat after us, "**Great content - even the best content - doesn't lead readers to an immediate purchase.**" The sooner you shake the expectation that your awesome blog post will turn prospects into customers overnight, the more success you'll have with content marketing. If you can do this while refocusing your content on bringing value to your customers, things will begin to fall into place in 2015.

## #6 - June: Social Media

**The Resource:** If there's a runner-up to content marketing for buzziest tactic of the last half-decade, social media wins in a landslide. Of course, any good digital marketing strategy includes content that's completely integrated with social, so it's no surprise that these two tactics are getting all the attention. Our resources for June 2014 supported our belief that content and social media need to work together, including our infographic called [How To Win The Social Media Jackpot With Share-worthy Content](#) (bonus: the gamblers in the crowd will get a chuckle out of this graphic).

**THE ACTION:** When we go back and look at this infographic, in addition to the stellar design, the one comment that stands out to us time after time is that, "Whatever you have to say will be more memorable to your audience if you tie it together in a meaningful way." And isn't this true in any facet of life? Whether you're telling a story to friends, pitching a strategy to a client or giving a speech to an entire nation, your message will be more effective if you weave it together with a real, relatable and interesting story.

## #7 - July: Email Marketing

**The Resource:** In the sweltering heat of the Toronto summer, we crafted a series of resources focused on email marketing. These email resources were particularly well-received due to the updated Canadian Anti-Spam Legislation (CASL). Once again, to the surprise of nobody who follows our stuff, it was an infographic that stole the show. The graphic, called [How To Stay On The Good Side Of Email Marketing](#), provides a simple and effective way for marketers and businesses to ensure they're following rules, guidelines and best practices in their email marketing campaigns.

**THE ACTION:** To be quite honest, the recommended action when it comes to email marketing is...do it! Email is still an extremely underrated tactic that is often overshadowed by the flashier strategies we often discuss. However, email marketing can become an integrated part of all your campaigns by amplifying your content and increasing your social engagement. Our email marketing resources, beginning with the infographic, are a fantastic gateway into what could be a goldmine for your business in 2015.

## #8 - August: Mobile Marketing

**The Resource:** Move over content marketing, and shove off social media; there's a new sheriff in town: mobile marketing. Just kidding, we still need you content and social media, so don't be mad. But seriously, 2015 will be the year mobile content, design and strategies become a vital component of digital marketing. Why are we so sure? Because customers demand it, that's why! Our customers, your customers, almost everybody's customers use smartphones, and for many of them it's their main Internet-browsing device. Our favorite piece of content from August's set of mobile marketing resources is a whitepaper called [Mobile Marketing: What Does the Future Hold?](#) Spike Jonze's film *Her* sparked a lot of debate last year, and even though it isn't directly about marketing, its commentary about technology is absolutely relevant to any discussion about our increasingly mobile world.

**THE ACTION:** the key to our mobile marketing resources is the underlying assumption that our future is going to be very different than our present. *Her* does a good job of portraying one potential future, which can be a big help if for those who can't envision it themselves. For the analytical people out there, [the other option is looking at the stats](#), which say, in no uncertain terms: get mobile or get left behind.

## #9 - September: Social Relationship Management

**The Resource:** in September we attended HubSpot's massive INBOUND 2014 conference in Boston. Aside from the unbelievable amount of people there, the conference was fun, informative and very social. So when we got home, we were inspired to write a post called [Humanize Social Media By Sharing Relationship Management](#). At the core of this post is the realization that a brand or team of marketers can share the burden of social relationship management, thus lessening the load for everybody involved.

**THE ACTION:** Essentially, social media is now the new frontline of customer service. And if you think customer services matter less now because we're in a 'digital age' you're dead wrong. In fact, customer service probably *matters more* because it needs to be promptly available when customers need it most. On top of that, all signs indicate that when customers reach out for help in 2015, it'll be because they're nearing a purchase and need that last little bit of information from you. Don't make the mistake of being socially absent because it could end up costing your real dollars!

## #10 - October: Display Advertising and Remarketing

**The Resource:** Along with the tricks and treats of October, we handed out a selection of tasty resources on display ads and remarketing. [Our infographic](#) was once again a highlight of the month, but we want to focus on our video called [4 Good Reasons Why You Should Consider Remarketing](#). For reasons unbeknownst to us, many businesses and marketers aren't aware of the benefits of remarketing. October's digital marketing video series entry sheds light on how remarketing helps grow your brand's awareness, increases website conversions and gets the most out of your marketing budget.

**THE ACTION:** The key to display ads and remarketing is figuring out where they best fit into your larger digital marketing strategy and its goals. If you're creating a lot of content aimed at answering your target audiences questions, then social ads are your best bet. But if you're selling a product or service that consumers are searching for and reading reviews about, a mix of remarketing and retargeting sounds like a recipe for success. Like everything else in digital marketing, the best course of action for your business depends on *you and your customers*.

## #11 - November: The Digital Landscape of 2015

**The Resource:** As the year hurtled toward Thanksgiving at breakneck speed, we turned our attention to 2015. Let's face it, when the digital marketing space moves fast, so it's never too early to start planning ahead. We decided to have a little fun and write [5 Digital Marketing Predictions for 2015](#). More than anything, the goal of our predictions post is to get businesses and marketers *thinking about the future* (which you'll notice is a common theme of ours, if you've been paying attention!).

**THE ACTION:** don't just *read* predictions, act on them, or better yet - use ours to form your own set of predictions that's specifically relevant to and focused on your business and customers. We predicted that technology experts will start getting jobs in marketing departments, so the question is, ***is that information relevant to your team?*** If so, start looking into some technology experts and how they could help or expand your business. If you're a small team or a solo operation, maybe you can simply devote some time and energy to new technology. They key is always relating it back to your own operation.

## #12 - December: Bringing It Together

**The Resource:** You're reading it! This is the conclusion of our whitepaper, which itself is our culmination of 2014. We had a great year and we hope we made a difference to the businesses and marketers who read our stuff. The world of digital marketing can be tough, complex and frustrating, but at the end of the day, the tactics and strategies being employed in the digital space are the very cutting edge of marketing. There's no better way to connect, engage and bring value to customers than digital marketing.

**THE ACTION:** Go through the best content we had to offer in 2014 and, whether you used a particular strategy or not, ask yourself if that strategy could make a difference for your business in 2014. If the answer is no, move on to the next one. If the answer is yes, well, you know what to do!



## About WSI (We Simplify the Internet)

WSI is a digital marketing company with a strong international presence. Our Digital Marketing Consultants use their knowledge and expertise to make a difference for businesses all around the world. Headquartered in Toronto, Canada, we also have offices in over 80 countries. We're a powerful network of marketers who strive to discover, analyze, build and implement digital solutions that win digital marketing awards and help businesses succeed online.

Over the last 20 years, WSI has won multiple digital marketing awards for our solutions by adapting to the constantly shifting landscape of the Internet. We take pride in helping businesses make the most of the dollars they spend on digital marketing.

Ready to move ahead and discuss a project with a local Digital Marketing Consultant? Get in touch with one of our experts now by visiting [www.wsiworld.com/get-in-touch-with-an-expert](http://www.wsiworld.com/get-in-touch-with-an-expert).