How to Build an Agile Marketing Team

2020 Edition

introduction

Hello,

2020 has been quite the rollercoaster ride.

Now, more than ever, it is critical that businesses are able to adapt by investing time and resources into the right marketing activities at the right time.

This can only be done with an agile approach to growth marketing.

In this toolkit, you will learn about growth marketing. We'll cover how you can identify the right growth marketing channels and expertise for your business as well as the importance of continuous data-driven experimentation. You will also understand how to introduce agile techniques to get your growth marketing projects delivered faster and more efficiently.

We have put this toolkit together with one purpose: **to help you grow your business faster.**

I hope you enjoy it, and more importantly, that your business benefits from it.

Stefan Bardega

Co-founder & Chief Growth Officer
Traktion

outline

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(I)
What is Growth Marketing?

Growth marketing is a process of continuous experimentation across digital channels to grow your business.

It uses performance data to inform all decisions and is applied to all layers of the marketing funnel: from awareness all the way through to acquisition, retention and advocacy.

Growth marketing is entirely discipline, channel, and platform agnostic. It brings together a diverse set of specialist capabilities that are interdependent and need to be harmonised for maximum growth.

What are some examples of growth marketing skills?

- Conversion Rate Optimisation (CRO)
- Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)
- Content Marketing
- Paid Search
- Paid Social
- Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Automation

Because growth marketing covers such a diverse range of specialist disciplines, it requires a keen focus on optimisation, not just in-channel but across channels, to ensure you always have the right mix and focus to deliver maximum growth.

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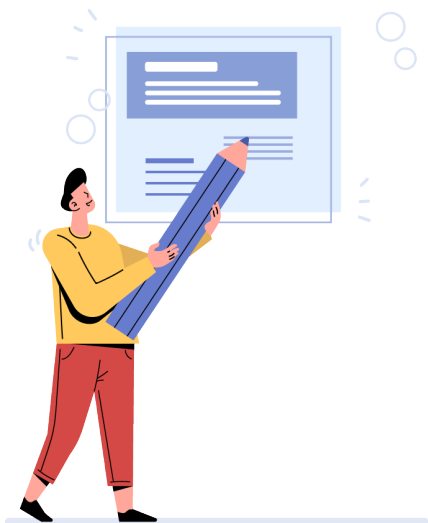
Why is it important to build an *agile* growth marketing team?

Growth marketing is rooted in testing, data and experimentation. Hypotheses and testing frameworks are developed weekly, and optimisation decisions are made regularly, and in many cases automated and in real-time.

Bringing **agile** practices into your marketing team allows you to move at speed to identify new channels, disciplines, technologies, strategies and tactics for growth; to capitalize quickly on tests that are working; and to kill tests that aren't working so that resources are not wasted.

Ways to implement agile work practices such as daily standups, retrospectives and digital kanban boards into your marketing teams will be elaborated upon in *Chapter 2*.

Crafting Your Growth Strategy:
Align Your KPIs

When building your marketing team, you have to be laser-focused on meaningful business metrics.

To get started, here's our recommendations:

- For most companies, the main key performance indicator that will determine which channels and disciplines are working is **profit**. Though there are some exceptions, notably, startup chasing user acquisition and market share ahead of profit.

- Do not be swayed by vanity marketing metrics such as social media likes or followers – focus on the key business metric(s), so your team can orientate itself around tactics that drive the business forward.

- Many successful growth marketers use the following **profit formula**.

This formula looks at profit as a function of 4 key measures: *visitors to site*, *conversion rate*, *short-term value* of each customer over a period, and then subtracts the *variable costs* associated with delivering that activity. These costs include freelancer costs, media, technology and other production costs.

Adjust the formula as needed to suit your business needs.

Calculating Profit

| Visitors to Site		Sales		Short Term Value	Media, Production		£££
Traffic	X	**Conversions**	X	**STV**	- **Variable Costs**	=	**Profit**

N.B. *We deliberately do not use true 'lifetime value' (LTV), as most high growth businesses often need to calculate customer value over a shorter period to can make optimisation decisions on a faster basis. For the majority of high-growth businesses, a 3 to 6 month customer value will be sufficient.*

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Crafting Your Growth Strategy:
Build Your Foundation
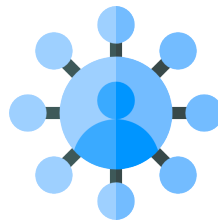
Build out your growth foundation expertise to ensure that your team is ready for growth.

A commonly mistake: starting in the wrong place

It is tempting when starting to build out a growth marketing team to dive deep into demand generation and customer

Many businesses begin growth marketing by hiring a channel specialist to drive traffic to their business, e.g using Facebook and Google Ads.

However, if you have not yet optimised your destination (be it your site, or an app), you can be wasting resources driving customers to a sub-optimal experience.

Build your foundation expertise

Here are some of the key skills needed to build the right foundations.

- **Email Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and Automation:** Build out the tech stack to manage the communications flow between your customers and prospects, such as Hubspot, Salesforce or Pipedrive.

- **Customer Success:** Build out your customer service functions to ensure your customers get their desired outcomes when using your product or service. Your team should have experts in customer services, with good client management skills. Support this with a chatbot functionality like Intercom, Zendesk, or Drift.

- **Analytics:** Build out your analytics function with the right specialist to ensure all growth marketing performance data is captured. Ensure your pixels are set-up, alongside your Google Tag Manager, Search Console and Mixpanel.

- **Conversion Rate Optimisation:** Ensure that your web traffic converts to the desired goal(s). This is the process of understanding how your website visitors interact with your site or app.

Specialism over generalists

Each of the above areas require specialist domain knowledge and platform expertise. If your budget permits, find specialists for each area, rather than generalists across them all.

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Building Your Growth Strategy:
Prioritise Your Channels

With the foundation in place, you should select and prioritise the right growth marketing expertise based on your business challenge.

The 5 priority domain expertise areas:

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)

Search Engine Marketing (SEM)

Content Marketing

Paid Social

Programmatic Display

The combination of expertise you require will be determined by 2 key factors.

1. Category Vertical:

Some verticals are better suited to certain channels. For example, paid search is significant for hotel bookings, because of the audience-fit and scaleability of the channel, i.e. consumers know what deals they want, and use search to find the best deals.

- **Audience Fit**: Can my target audience be found in this channel?

- **Scaleability**: Is there sufficient volume of my audience to be found in this channel?

2. Business Stage:

Early-stage businesses with low brand awareness will likely need to adopt both content marketing and paid social activities to build top-of-funnel awareness and consideration.

Businesses with existing high presence in their industry will focus more of their resources on high intent channels such as search engine marketing.

In the following pages, we will consider in further detail each of the 5 priority domain expertise areas, and their respective roles for growth marketing.

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# Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)

Search engine optimisation is the process of increasing the **volume** and **quality** of traffic to your website from **organic search engine results.**

How does it work?

Google (and other search engines) send a crawler that goes out and gathers information about all the content that it can find on the internet.

The crawler returns all the information found, and it is used to build an index.

When you search, the engine retrieves the best matches from the index and prioritises it using an algorithm.
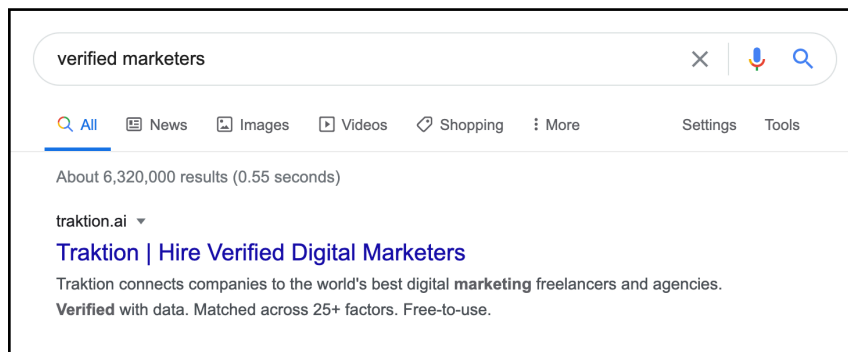
Traktion.ai is the first result on Google for the term "verified marketers".

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What does an SEO expert do?

An SEO expert generally focuses on two key things.

The first is **technical SEO**, ensuring your site is built in a way that enables crawlers to rank you effectively. This includes keyword planning, headline and title tags, and optimising your meta-descriptions.

The second is **linkbuilding**, which is building out offsite links back to your site, through content. The more sites that links to yours, the more authority signals it sends to search engines and influences your search engine results pages (SERPs) ranking significantly.

When should I hire?

- Once your website is in place, you should bring in SEO expertise to review and ensure that your site is optimised technically for search. This is a critical first step for most growth marketing operations.

- Thereafter, consider additional SEO resources to help with external linkbuilding on an ongoing basis.

- If you're looking to hire an SEO expert, here's a list of the **top SEO interview questions** you should ask your candidate.

It is important to note that while SEO is usually one of the first growth marketing hires, the results are not usually seen immediately. It can take weeks, up to months, to see results.

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Search Engine Marketing (SEM)

Search engine marketing is the practice of placing paid ads on search engines results pages.

How does it work?

Advertisers bid in a competitive auction process on specific keywords that are relevant to their brand or product.

These ads are then served in a variety of formats, including straight-text copy ads and product listing ads (PLAs), also known as shopping ads.

SEM can be an extremely effective channel because the user is clearly already signalling intent, plus, you only pay when someone clicks on your ad.

Google Ad results for the search keyword 'recipe boxes'

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What does an SEM expert do?

An SEM expert will help you define what keywords to bid on, write or assist in writing your ad copy, set up your campaign, and optimise your campaigns for your business objective.

When should I hire?

Many marketers dream of having such amazing SEO that they do not require SEM. In reality, the two activities often need to work side-by-side.

• Once your basic technical SEO is up-and-running, you should consider starting SEM.

• This is because SEM will get you faster results than SEO and can be used in more tactical ways – you can have faster copy changes in SEM which is helpful when you need your search activity to reflect new products or campaign launches.

Your volume from SEM will be influenced by your brand awareness as well, as potential customers might not click on a brand that they have never heard of. If this is the case, focus on more top-of-funnel activities such as paid social and content marketing.

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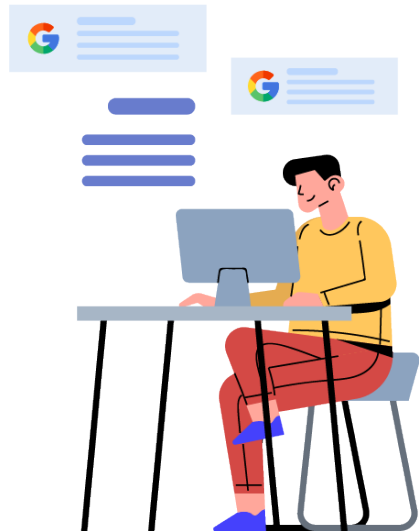
Content Marketing

Content marketing involves the production and distribution of content across different digital channels.

What is content marketing?

Content marketing comes in various forms. This report is an example of a form of content marketing.

Beyond reports, content marketing activities include case studies, white papers, webinars, how-to guides, videos, podcasts, infographics and much more.

Growth Marketing Insights

Every fortnight, we send out a newsletter packed with growth marketing insights from the world's best digital marketers. Straight into your inbox.

Join the Growth Marketing Insights Newsletter.

Enter your email address   **Get Insights →**

By signing up, you agree to Traktion's Terms of Service & Privacy Policy.

An example of content marketing: Traktion's fortnightly newsletter compiles the latest growth marketing activities from the world's experts.

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What does a content marketing expert do?

A content marketer will identify key topic areas that are of interest to your target audience using keyword analysis, often using the same tools that a SEO or SEM expert will use.

They will then prioritise content, focusing on the highest volume areas that are relevant to your business and audience.

The marketer will oversee the production of the content, as well as plan and distribute the content to reach the largest volume of the right audience.

When should I hire?

Hire a content marketer as soon as you begin building your brand.

Content marketing is vital to educate your audience and drive consideration in the middle of your marketing funnel. This is particularly important if you are a new player in the industry and you have to educate your audience about the category as well as your brand.

By starting early, content marketing also brings additional benefits. It can help drive SEO, because people readily share great content – and this generates backlinks and traffic to your site, driving up your SEO domain authority.

It is notoriously difficult to forecast the organic reach of a content marketing piece, and it is often supported by paid advertising to drive critical mass.

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Paid Social

Paid social is the planning, placement and optimisation of ads on social media platforms.

The largest of these platforms is obviously Facebook (which also owns Instagram), and has ubiquitous scale in most countries.

How does it work?

Paid social advertising enables brands to deliver a large volume of personalised messages, using different formats of ads, on both mobile and desktop.

Formats include Carousel, Video, Lead Gen and many more.

Businesses can integrate their own first-party data with paid social platforms. This enables them to create *Lookalike* Audiences or *Custom Audiences* that enables them to deliver tailored sequenced messaging to existing customer segments.

Paid social operates mainly on an auction basis, with the price you pay determined by the ad quality of your ad, which will be determined largely by your response rate.
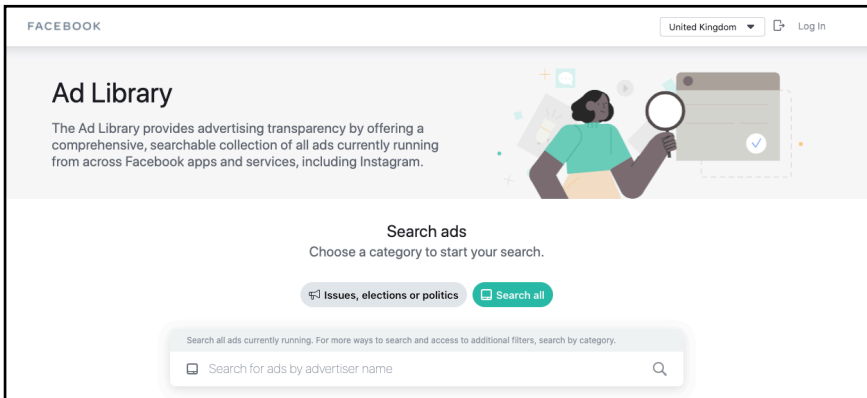
Use Facebook Ad Library to view ads of your competitors.

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What does a paid social expert do?

A paid social expert will set up your campaign structure on these platforms, advise on the targeting and creative, set up your analytics and pixels, create and customise your audience segments, and also report and optimise your performance.

When should I hire?

Paid social is the fastest emerging growth marketing channel. Its large scale reach, matched with almost infinite behavioural targeting options makes it a key part of most marketing plans, working well across most areas of the funnel.

It is an effective channel to build awareness given its large-scale reach, and so is **good for brands launching a new product or service**.

It is also excellent at driving acquisition for most B2C products and services. The ability to seamlessly integrate not just your audience data, but increasingly your product data direct from e-commerce platforms makes it a frictionless and effective bottom-of-funnel personalised sales channel.

While Facebook can work well across all stage of the funnel, businesses should be careful not to become too reliant on any single platform. If this happens you may find yourself exposed to cost inflation with no alternatives. For this reason, when hiring paid social talent, it is good to consider experts with experience in alternative platforms, e.g Pinterest or TikTok.

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Programmatic Display & Video

Programmatic display and video connects publishers' inventory to advertisers' demand via a real-time auction bid.

How does it work?

Advertising using programmatic enables brands to extend their reach beyond paid social platforms.

While the behavioural data and targeting with programmatic is generally considered less granular and effective than paid social platforms such as Facebook, it offers a sizeable alternative plus offers contextual relevance that you can't buy on paid social platforms.

As with most other growth marketing channels the buying model is conducted on an auction. Advertisers bid for impressions. How much you would pay is determined largely by the competition for that audience.

Advertisers are usually be prepared to pay more for tightly-targeted audiences which they know will convert better compared to broad-reach audience targeting. In addition, the ability to buy real-time on a specific site or collection sites can affect the price you pay in the auction.

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What does a programmatic expert do?

A programmatic expert will set up campaigns and targeting options in the demand side platform (DSP), manage any direct publisher deals and optimise campaigns through to business outcome.

When should I hire?

Programmatic display and video offers a good alternative to paid social platforms.

For brands that have become over reliant on Facebook this represents an important option to diversify and create more optimisation points.

Advertisers wanting to advertise in specific types of content should use programmatic to target their ads contextually. This is particularly useful for brands that need to drive consideration in order to fuel growth ambitions.

Good integration with search can also make it a valuable channel for retargeting.

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Channel-Based Prioritisation

Once you have selected your key growth marketing channels to test, you will need to prioritise them in order to decide **what** expertise you need and **when**.

The prioritisation of channels requires careful consideration across 3 key variables.

1. Volume

What is the volume opportunity for this channel? Consider audience behaviour and interrogate appropriate platform data to guide your decision.

2. Cost

What is the cost of executing activities in this channel? Benchmark the relative cost of acquiring customers on each channel for your business. Some channels are logically more efficient than others.

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3. Time

What is the time required to deliver results in this channel?

Some channels can be turned on-and-off at the flick of a switch, such as your paid social and search.

Others have longer lead times, such as SEO, which can take weeks to months to come to fruition.

Growth Channel	Tactics	Cost	Sales Per Month	Time vs. Money	Priority
Search Engine Optimisation	Technical optimisation of site to grow organic search queries / Linkbuidling	£	10	Time	High Priority
Conversion Rate Optimisation	Optimise site journey / Conversion path / check out process	£	5	Time	High Priority
CRM	Newsletter, marketing automation, retention	£	5	Time	High Priority
Content Marketing	Blog, eBooks, podcasts, webinars, videos, influencer outreach	£	15	Time	High Priority
Paid Search	Search Ads to landing pages on relevant keywords	££	30	Money	High Priority
Paid Social	Targeting / Retargeting on Facebook, LinkedIn, Google /YouTube	£££	20	Money	High Priority
Outbound sales	eMail	££	10	Money	Medium Priority
Affiliate Programs	Commission based partnership deals	£	10	Time	Medium Priority
Sponsorship	Podcast Sponsorship	£££	5	Money	Low Priority

Lay out these data in a table to visualise your key priority areas to hire for, and agree this with key stakeholders. Once this is completed, you are ready to hire.

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(I)
What is Agile?

Agile is often seen as a ubiquitous buzzword. It means much more than to "move fast". It is an iterative approach to project management that focuses on continuous value delivery.

It has its origins in software development.

The *agile* framework focuses on delivering projects in small, continuous cycles – where the project scopes are flexible and adapts to circumstances, while the *waterfall* framework focuses on delivering projects in one sequential cycle – the scope of these projects are determined from the beginning.

Why should we switch to agile?

Traditional marketing plans far in advance and ensures everyone on the team sticks to the plan.

It is precisely for this reason that traditional marketing moves at a glacial pace.

A traditional marketing team might have struggled to adapt their marketing campaigns during the advent of COVID-19 back in March.

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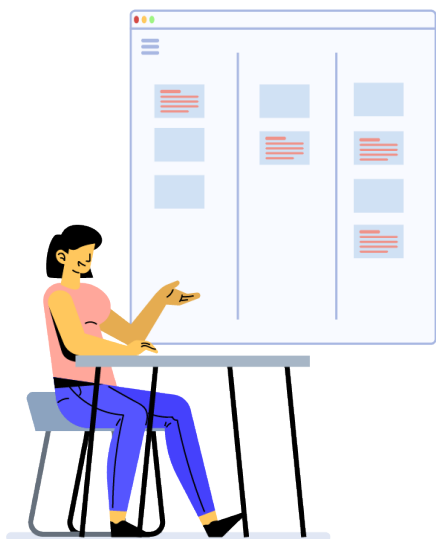
Agile marketing teams, however, will have been able to adapt their short- term strategy accordingly, from readjusting the messaging and copy of existing ads at short notice, to implementing a content strategy focused on what customers value at that time, and working alongside other business units to serve the customers' needs and drive the business' core metrics.

At Traktion, using agile processes allowed our team to launch & adapt numerous campaigns in the space of a few weeks:

- **Complimentary COVID-19 Consultancy Sessions**
- **Specific COVID-19 marketing insights for our newsletter**
- A free **Dashboard Analytics tool** for our clients
- A free **Remote Working Tools directory** to help companies transition to remote working

*Traktion launched free **COVID-19 Marketing Support** with marketing experts to help businesses adapt to the new normal.*

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(II)
Agile for Marketers

The agile marketing approach is complementary to a growth mindset in that it sets the processes for you to rapidly test and optimise across your growth channels.

Benefits of agile in marketing

- It incorporates marketing data from your analytics regularly to inform your next marketing move.

- Agile improves the speed of your project launches. Imagine going from launching a marketing project every few months, to running hundreds of tests and projects a year.

- Marketers that adopt agile practices at work are more likely to be satisfied with their work processes and are likely to be more productive.

- Agile is also a better way of managing distributed teams and ensures everyone on the team is aligned with the core business goals.

Moving into agile marketing teams

For agile processes to adopted, this needs to be stewarded by management, by implementing training and development of existing staff in agile processes.

Management can also actively recruit talent that are already well-versed in agile practices. An agile marketing team will be able to work across business functions – from sales and product teams.

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Technology is vital for agile teams

Your data and analytics infrastructure needs to be able to support an iterative process of launching marketing projects.

If you test a new Facebook ads project next week, you need to have the data from the entire funnel ready next week, to decide whether to continue investing and iterating in the project.

Cross-functional team members also need to be able to communicate with each other quickly.

Use project management tools like Asana or Monday, and analytics supported by tools such as Segment and Mixpanel. Support ease of communication with a platform like Slack or Basecamp.
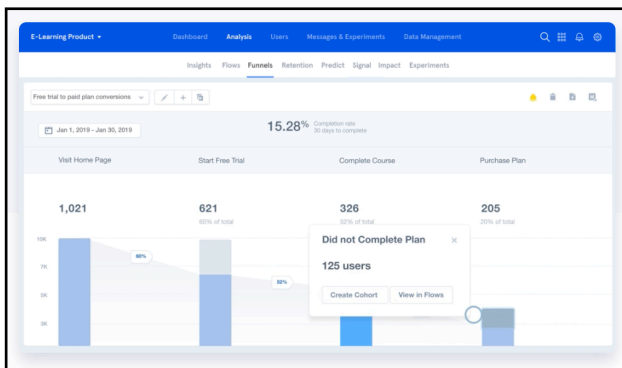
*Use a tool like **Mixpanel** to understand how to better convert, engage, and retain more users.*

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5 Agile Marketing Processes

Use the following agile practices in your marketing teams to move faster.

1. User Stories & Scenario Planning

User stories and scenario planning will help your business understand the customer in a detailed way and prepare you to respond well to change.

Though you can't plan for everything this detailed understanding of both the customer and their environment will enable you to move faster and more

Use the following framework to create your user stories:

When
(situation happens)
_____,

I want
(value proposition)
_____,

So I can
(outcome)
_____.

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2. Daily Standups

These are daily, quickfire strategy sessions that shouldn't take more than 15 minutes. It happens at the same place, same time, daily.

This ensures all components of a project are moving quickly and the team identifies any roadblocks early, and pushes for individual accountability.

Each team member answers 3 questions:

Standups can easily be done virtually. Simply set a time, such as 9AM every morning via a Zoom call.

What did I do yesterday?

What will I do today?

This allows for your specialist talent to join in daily, even if the team is remote and distributed.

What do I need help with?

Zoom works really well for daily standups. Simply pop a regular 15-min meeting invite to the calendar for your marketing team.

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3. Digital Kanban Boards

Kanban boards are workflow tools to visualise all the different moving parts of all your marketing projects.

Its visual flow allows you to focus on continuous improvement: you can regularly adapt the tasks on the Kanban according to the business needs of the period.

Use a tool like Asana (seen below) or Monday for your Kanban. It allows you to quickly identify bottlenecks and improve team outputs.

The crucial role of the Head of Marketing or a Manager is to monitor these workflows and ensure each team member meets their targets and deadlines.
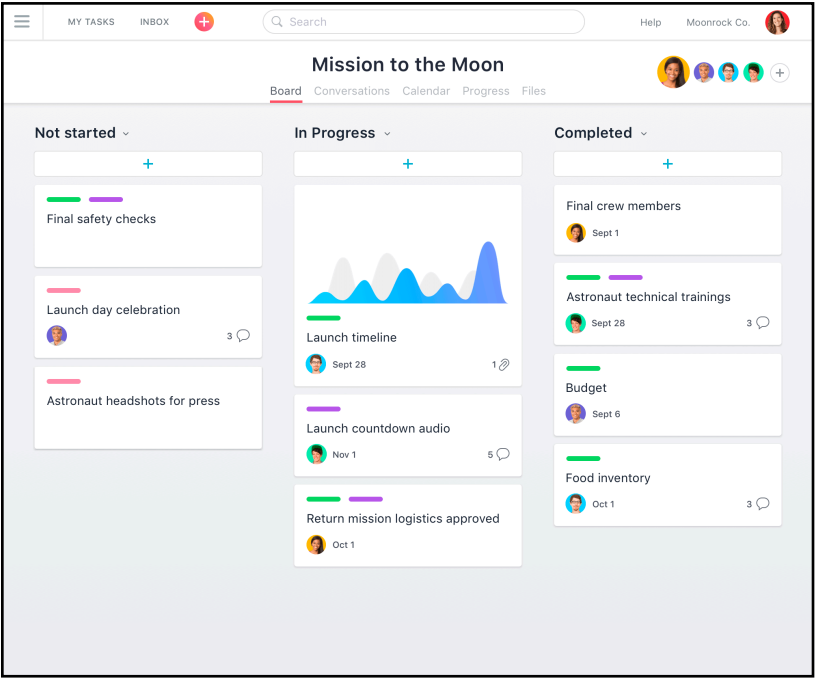
*Use a tool like **Asana** to build digital Kanban boards: a visual way to plot your projects and workflows.*

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4. Run Sprints

Sprint is a term originating from software management, referring to Scrum teams. However, these can also be applied to marketing teams.

In a sprint, a team works together for timeframes of 1 to 4 weeks.

Each day in a sprint has a specific goal or activity assigned to it and a corresponding result. The process of working increases efficiency, enabling projects to be released frequently on a regular basis.

By working in sprints, you are able to continually iterate and prioritise items on your Kanban boards based on market conditions and business needs.

Do note that larger keystone marketing initiatives might not fit into a sprint. Sprints are useful for testing new ideas and marketing campaigns, quickly, cheaply and efficiently.

An example of how a 1 week marketing sprint looks like, day-by-day:

- **Monday – Strategy Day:** Delineate the marketing plan, stakeholders and corresponding deliverables.

- **Tuesday – Creative Production:** Create the relevant marketing materials including graphics, copy, marketing lists and other documents.

- **Wednesday – Test Campaign:** Run a small A/B testing campaign to test creatives and content.

- **Thursday – Launch Campaign:** Launch the campaign early in the day, engage in all promotional activities.

- **Friday – Optimisation of Campaign:** Use the results from the day before to further optimise the campaign.

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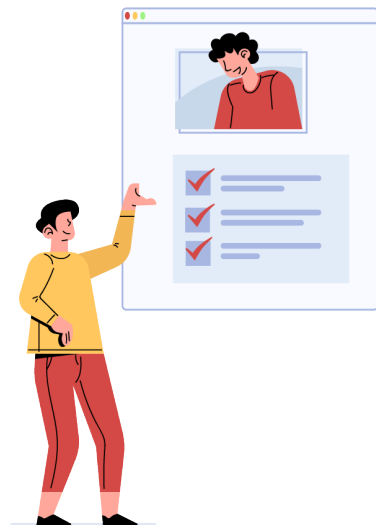
5. Retrospectives

This is a regular meeting after each marketing project to reflect on whether the marketing project has met its objectives.

Analyse the marketing data to identify outliers, pain points and opportunities.

This can be data from small marketing changes, the effect of A/B testing the call-to-action in your email campaigns, to larger projects such as the launch of a new content marketing project.

Use a technique like the *Sailboat Retrospective Technique* which identifies 3 key factors:

- **Anchors**: What's holding you back?

- **Wind in the sails**: What's pushing you forward

- **Rocks**: What are the potential risks moving forward?

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Find the best freelance marketers to help you grow.

We understand how difficult it is to find a marketer you can trust.

This is why we're on a mission to help you discover and hire the best freelance marketers.

From SEO to SEM, content marketing to paid social, Traktion has verified specialist talent with experience across 45+ industries.

Every Traktion freelancer has been independently verified.

Submit a brief and get matched to the best freelance marketing talent to help your business grow faster.

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