

A Digital Sales Manager

By Bret Talley

Why is the digital world so hard to grasp for some people? It's difficult because some people look at digital or internet marketing as a singularity. It isn't. It's not like digital advertising is like TV, print, radio, outdoor, or any single one of those types of advertising. It is like learning all of them. The digital landscape consists of many different products and services, which each operate as their own industry. Figuring out how to choose the right marketing tool to fit the client's needs correctly takes a long time to learn. Instead of traditional media including print, radio, TV, outdoor, direct mail etc... digital marketing encompasses search, display, mobile, remarketing, social, affiliate and a whole host of other segments which are actually basically whole industries of their own. Most people tend to pick one to focus on... it is hard to know them all inside and out. To add to this... they all change every day.

The game has changed. In most traditional media, creativity wins. Most successful marketers and advertising people are very creative. They sell ideas to clients instead of just advertising time. While this is still true in the digital world, to be a successful digital marketer, you need to possess analytical skills along with the creative mindset. With all the tracking and analytics tools provided by companies like Google, you need to be able to spot trends over time, change things on the fly, and adjust marketing campaigns and dollar allocation based on faults and successes. Most people are not naturally both creative and analytical, although both skill sets can be somewhat trained over time. Not to mention what I think is the most difficult piece of the puzzle: Being able to explain something that is by nature, very complex, in a way that a client with less industry knowledge can grasp and understand. I have seen very intelligent marketers that know the business inside and out lose people instantly by talking too much about optimization or other words that most clients don't even really care about.

So what makes a successful Digital Sales Manager? I think that the DSM needs to possess these traits in order to be successful

Tech Savvy - Half of life is a show... digital is no different. Nobody will buy from someone that isn't up to date with technology and play the part. They also need to read about current events and happenings in the tech world. I have found that clients tend to test knowledge of digital people consistently before deciding to buy.

Sales – Pretty self-explanatory. Sales is a hard thing to teach. You can improve someone's sales ability, but it is pretty impossible to teach someone that can't sell to sell. Before even trying to sell clients, the DSM needs to sell the salespeople. It is hard to sell sellers. This role needs to sell the salespeople at the organization that they know their stuff and can be a resource not only for digital knowledge, but also to close business.

Media Expertise – First and foremost, having contacts helps. Trust is tough to gain from clients who have many choices for digital advertising. Having contacts gives you a leg up on the competition. Also,

to lead the salespeople successfully, they also need to believe that along with digital, the DSM knows the advertising world and the market inside and out.

Analytical Skills – Digital requires a lot of knowledge, statistics and graphs are a major part of determining success of campaigns. DSM requires knowledge and experience working with numbers and trends.

Creativity – Along with analytics, there is still a good amount of creativity involved with the campaigns, and choosing the correct products and services for the right clients. Also approving graphics and track record for setting up successful digital campaigns is essential. Most failed campaigns I have seen have failed because they were set up wrong on the front end.

Web Contacts – While large companies have many resources, none of them have everything. Does the DSM have contacts for web design and development to lean on in case of an emergency?

Business Development – Building a department requires a lot of work, time, and leadership. Has the person done this before successfully? This is basically like building a brand. Brands are some of the hardest things to build, and even harder to keep successful over a long period of time. Has the DSM done this before?

Juggler – This position requires a lot of juggling... Both of time and prioritizing opportunities with the salespeople. It takes a special person to be able to do all of that without annoying the salespeople.

Training – Running training sessions with the salespeople is essential for growth. Making them non-boring and fun is even more challenging. Salespeople normally hate meetings.

Flexible – Digital changes way too fast if you cannot adapt to change and keep up. If you can't... you will fail.

Promotable – This person should eventually become Director of Digital Sales as revenue grows and more contributing employees are hired around them.