

# International Digital Strategy Guide

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## Webinar script

### Introduction

Welcome to today's webinar on International Digital Strategy, a 101 guide. My name's Sarah, and I'll be talking you through four key areas for a digital strategy.

These are by no means the only routes available, and serve more as an overview of what needs to be considered for international campaigns.

At the end of the webinar, you'll have a deeper insight into what to consider before starting an international digital campaign. You will also know what to consider for a successful SEO campaign that focuses on the technical aspects of a website and the development and promotion of content and campaigns.

We'll then take a look at similarities and differences of PPC campaigns in different markets, before explaining how different digital disciplines can complement each other.

At the end of the webinar, I'll sum up the main points for you to take away and implement another day.

### Before you start

#### Secure resources

- This point seems quite obvious, but the resources needed for an international campaign can be underestimated, so it's better to take a closer look and crunch some numbers sooner rather than later. The resources required will become clearer as we continue.

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#### Don't spread yourself too thinly

- A common mistake when going global, especially on a digital platform, is to launch several new websites in several new markets at the same time.
- While there is nothing wrong with launching several new sites at once, just be sure that you have enough and the right resources to do this.

## Strategise

- You're not just launching a website, you're entering a new market with an audience who may or may not know you. Either way, to be successful, you'll need to give them your time and attention. Tailoring your approach is vital and to do so effectively you not only need a budget, but the right expertise, too.

## Outsource wisely

- You may not have all the resources or expertise you need, and there's no problem in outsourcing to those who do. Just be sure to select your partner wisely.

## Technical SEO

When developing your website ready for its launch, there are some important decisions to make. The two which can be the most common pitfalls are deciding on the country domain and ensuring the website has the most suitable trust factors for the market.

## Country targeting

### Country coded top level domain

- For most European markets, having a country coded top level domain (ccTLD) is the recommended option. However, this isn't always the case and so it's vital to discuss all of your options before fully committing to a domain choice.
- With a new ccTLD, the website will start in the SERPs from scratch, thus needing more resources to build its overall visibility. However, in the long term for the European markets this is the recommended option.

### Other domain options

- Alternatives to this include a subdomain or subfolder, thereby allowing you to hitchhike on your original website's authority. In the long term this can cause restrictions to localisation and lead to competitors who have opted for the ccTLD option to outrank you.

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### Countries with more than one language

- Another consideration for your digital strategy in a new market are the countries which have more than one language.

- Belgium, for example, has areas speaking in French and in Dutch. Switzerland has German, French, Italian and even some Romansh. Even German has the variation of Schweitzerdeutsch (Swiss German), which has its own terms and colloquialisms.
- When choosing domains for this, it's important to be aware of and accommodate for the need for more than one language.
- In other countries the difference between the written form of the language can appear quite trivial to an outsider, but is crucial to the success of a campaign. For instance, in China websites using simplified Chinese will be more successful in mainland China and with Baidu, while a website using traditional Chinese will have difficulties engaging its audience, even though the language is understood and used.

## Emerging domains

- Other markets may still be emerging and defining their best practices. In the Latin American countries there's been a lot of change in the last year alone, with .com/mx still being the recommended domain even with the launch of the .mx domain. And most recently the new .lat domain for all Latin American countries has yet to show if this is the future of ecommerce in Latin America.

## Website trust factors

The second most common pitfall for a new market's website is audience trust factors. Unless you have knowledge or can ask a native from the country with SEO insight, it will be incredibly difficult for you to safeguard against stepping into a trust factor faux pas.

## Long vs. Short Terms and Conditions

- For example, a key trust factor for Germany and the UK is to have clear and detailed terms and conditions.
- Long and wordy terms and conditions in the Spanish market are more likely to be an anti-trust factor, as the audience is more likely to feel like you're trying to trick them by making it overly complicated.

## Images

- The choice of images, particularly for a fashion brand in a new market is very important. Having Caucasian-only images, when you're specifically targeting an ethnically different or more diverse market can be off-putting and send an undesired brand image across.

## Customer Services

- Customer service is important for everyone, but in some markets there are different expectations. In China, for example, having a website which provides instant customer support chat options is standard, while this immediate interactivity is still growing in popularity in the West.

## Product Reviews

- Product reviews are a growing trust indicator in the UK and in France. In Germany, however, they can be make or break between a product being bought.
- While review stars of a product are vital, this audience will also look at negative reviews. If criticism is based on something that isn't that vital to the particular customer, such as colour, then even a product with a negative review can be bought. If the criticism is something fundamental, then expect to see fewer conversions until the issue is resolved.

## Content and online PR

No matter which market you're in or about to enter, you'll need a content and online PR strategy, which complements what you wish to achieve overall as a brand, but also offers creative ways to engage with your target audience.

### Content:

### Challenges

- Some of the challenges of any content and online and PR campaign are to not only ensure engagement with a suitable brand voice, but to build the brand's visibility.
- In a completely new market, there can be a huge difference between what you may perceive as your brand awareness and what the relevant audience actually sees as your brand. Content goals for this new market may be changing a perception of a brand, or creating brand awareness completely afresh. Comparing success of this content campaign with that of a different market doesn't give the truest of pictures, as content goals should be adapted to the individual markets in order to be successful.

### Adapting content

- If you were looking after several brands, you wouldn't have the same content strategy for a technology brand as you would a fashion brand. Likewise, for the same brand you wouldn't

use the same information distribution with a young demographic as you would an older demographic.

- Even though the brand and the image you wish to create may be the same in all markets, it's still necessary to adapt your content to the individual markets to ensure you get the most out of this strategy. If you don't commit to this market all the way, then your audience can tell and will feel like an afterthought.
- Part of adapting your content is being aware of seasonal dates and differences, such as knowing that your spring and summer collections for Australia need to be launched at the same time as the Winter/Autumn collections for the Northern Hemisphere.
- It's also about being able to comment on and react to topics, concerns and trends happening in real-time in that market. Opportunities can be missed, if you're not aware of what is happening right now in each market, and if you're overseeing six or seven markets, then that's a lot for you to keep track of.

## Universal Content

- There's a fine balance between when to adapt to the market and when you have something that is universal and is liked because your audience have something in common.
- Having only adapted content runs the risk of fragmenting your brand, and forgetting what it is people from different cultures agree on about your brand.
- Content which universally speaks to your audience is just as powerful and important as adapted content. For instance a guide about travelling to Britain is relevant for a German, French and Italian audience. If there's a particular event happening in Britain, which is of more interest to the French and Italian audience, such as the Rugby World Cup, then you'd require a different content plan for the German market.
- Look at each content idea, and decide what is universal and what needs adapting.

## Online PR:

## Publications in the markets

- If someone said to you that they've been interviewed for The Times, you'd likely be impressed. If someone else said to you that they've been interviewed for El Pais, you'd be less impressed, as you'd need to enquire what this is first.
- While it's not up to you to know all the different publications in different markets, it's vital for your team or agency to know and to target the most relevant ones for the strategy at hand. Matching audience to publication is important practice in PR, but when it's in an unfamiliar market, you'd be surprised to see how this practice can be neglected.

### Knowing who the influencers are

- Just as there are different publications, a different market will also have different key influencers. To gain more visibility it is helpful to work with those who already have some visibility, but there needs to be a match and mutual benefit.
- Gaining advice on who these influencers are and where to find them is important for your PR campaign.
- Likewise, what we perceive as the most relevant social media channels may not be in the market you're targeting. In Germany, for example, Twitter isn't a key player in the social landscape just yet, while Facebook continues to dominate but private settings are preferred. It may also be that the market uses completely different social media channels altogether, such as Sina Weibo in China.

### Understanding the value behind a link or piece of coverage

- As mentioned before, you can't compare apples with oranges. Well, you can, but you'll end up missing out on seeing the value you're actually gaining through a campaign in a market, you may not know inside out.
- If your brand has started with different KPIs in a new market, then it's more advantageous to keep track of how it is doing on fulfilling these rather than directly comparing it's progress with a different market.

## PPC

Like any digital strategy, you want to ensure that you're using the most suitable channels for your audience in harmony with each other. A PPC campaign can help drive traffic and revenue to your website, and can serve as a useful channel for an international strategy.

### **Best Practice**

- When developing your PPC campaign, keep in mind the similarities and differences of international campaigns.
- General best practices of ensuring that you have good copy also applies to international campaigns. Some tips include avoiding a one-size-fits-all template for ads, as you'll be able to gain a higher click-through rate through messages which engage your audience. Remember it's not about "what" you're saying, but "how" you say it, which also ties into the importance of a clear and creative message.

### **Differences**

- Even when following best practices there are still some important differences to be aware of:

#### **Character length**

- Different markets, especially those with different search engines may have variations on character lengths.
- In Russia and China for instance, this is a key consideration. Russia's search engine, Yandex, allows 33 characters for the headline compared to 25 in Google, and 75 characters for the description compared to 70.
- In China, due to being a "double-width" language, you have a maximum of 12 characters for the headline, and 17 for the description lines.

#### **Preference of ad styles and messages**

- In the UK and US you can have more sales-prone messages and in some industries even get away with quite a pushy message.
- In a lot of European countries it's beneficial to avoid having an overtly sales-like and pushy message, and rather focus on the information or value you're offering. Going in straight with the sale, can put this audience off.



## Uppercase or lowercase

- It's also important to know the country's preference for capitalisation. In the Netherlands for instance, lowercase is the norm compared to the UK's uppercase ad format.

## Plurals or singular term search for different phase in buying process

- It's well known that a search using the same term can have a different purpose behind it. Someone may be searching to purchase or may be looking for more information first. In some European countries it is common practice to use the plurals of terms during the re-search stage and then the singular term, when ready to purchase. This needs to have an impact on your ad and bidding choices.

## Formal and informal pronouns

- A further language difference to keep in mind when developing PPC campaigns, is that the majority of international markets have a formal and informal pronoun for the word "you". In German, there's the formal version "Sie" and the informal version "Du".

## Always keep localisation at the heart of your PPC campaign.

- As you can tell, there's more to an international PPC campaign than translating into the right language. By keeping localisation at the heart of your campaign, you're sure to engage your audience and gain a positive ROI.

## SEO and PPC and Marketing

### All together now

- Through strategically using different channels and disciplines you can maximise the chances of your target audience responding to your messages. More than one discipline in-line with what you wish to achieve can be especially beneficial in a new market.

### Integration of campaigns

- While PPC and SEO are two completely separate disciplines and mediums, they can work well together if done strategically, especially for an international strategy.

- PPC and SEO can work together to enhance your visibility, for instance to gain insight into how a brand may perform in a new market. You can develop a PPC campaign focusing on some of the key products and test what kind of a reaction it receives. This insight not only serves to optimise your PPC campaign, but can then be used to maximise and develop your SEO strategy.
- In order to be successful, it's also important to ensure that the KPIs you develop or agree on are in-line with your overall marketing goals, too. In order to enhance your brand, you'll need your brand to be represented and this to in turn run through all of your campaigns.

### **Avoid cannibalisation**

- SEO and PPC are naturally competitive with each other, and both have different strengths and weaknesses. To avoid cancelling these strengths out, have specific targets for both, and use these mediums alongside your overall marketing plan to your advantage.

### **Don't forget to set specific goals**

- Goals of the campaigns are likely to need to vary from market to market, and your SEO and PPC work will need to reflect this, too.

### **Takeaways**

- There's no exact guide or answer for your needs out there. Your strategy will have different needs in different markets, and the only guide that makes sense for this, is one which can adapt to the situation at hand.

### **Resources available**

- To gain ROI on an international campaign, you need to make sure you have the right resources in place, and that you get the most suitable advice. Resources can span from budget, to staff, to outsourcing.

### **Localisation needs to be at the heart of your campaign**

- The saying "fail to prepare, prepare to fail" fits well with international campaigns. Campaigns which fail to localise often struggle or completely fail in a new market.

### **Separate yet together**

- While you will need different campaigns and tactics to be successful in a new market, you'll also need to integrate overall goals and, of course, you're overall brand voice. Different KPIs may well be needed in different markets for different disciplines, such as SEO and PPC, but the goal of being successful in said market and how to portray your brand will be universal.

### **International expertise**

- Deciding that you're ready to go global is just half the battle. Once you've entered a new market, you'll need experts in this market to help and support you, and you'll also benefit

from experience on what potential challenges may await you when going global. Entering a digital market can be quick and simple. Staying in the market and growing in it is where expertise matters.

## Thank you

- And that brings us to the end of today's video. I hope you find the information useful. Thank you for your time today and for listening in.