



The DTC Handbooks

Subscription Marketing & Advertising



ReCharge



From Our
Partner
Agencies

Marketing and advertising can be expensive and time consuming. But without it, customers may miss out on knowing who you are. It all goes back to making data-driven decisions to what, how, and where you should strategically promote your brand.

Marketing is the way you can stand out from the crowd and build a true community. In today's saturated market, use marketing and advertising to your advantage by getting creative and finding ways to communicate who you are and what you stand for.

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We often hear a lot about niches, but niches don't allow you to have a strong enough message in an increasingly competitive marketplace. Now is the time for 'micro-niches'. So for example 'Sneakers for busy doctors', 'Supplements for new mums' etc. By having a more targeted offer, the market is smaller but brands can be sure to deliver a stronger, less diluted message.



Adam Pearce
CEO at Blend Commerce

Cutting through the noise can be done in several ways, here are a few easy steps brands can take to get their messages to the right audience: create highly relevant content, write copy that touches on emotions and humanizes a brand, target your audience accurately, and have an amazing customer experience.



Adena Merabi

Strategic Partnerships at MuteSix

This should go without saying, but get to know your audience - it's all about data-driven marketing. Learn who they are, what they want, what problems they need solving, where they spend time (both on and offline). From here, you can decide how best to market to them.

Work on building a strong, differentiated brand presence on the platforms where they hang out most. Then, use what you know about your audience to serve targeted content they can relate to - content that aligns with their needs and desires, demonstrating the value your subscription product can provide.

Another way to deliver your message to the right audience at the right time is by leveraging social media influencers - a tried and tested tactic for subscription box marketing that's only going to increase in popularity throughout 2021. By collaborating with influencers in your niche, you can deliver your message

to a ready-made tribe of receptive, engaged followers. Plus, not only are you getting your brand in front of the right people, this is a tactic that will build trust in your brand from the get-go.

You can also reach out to specific box bloggers who review subscription boxes for a living. Choose a blogger in your niche who has an established following that matches up with your target audience.



Matt Abbott

Head of Growth at Swanky



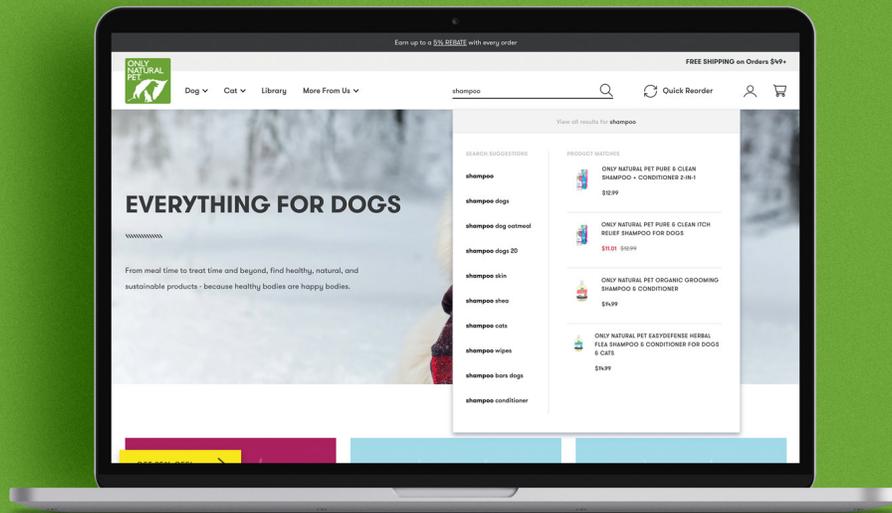
Suzannah Cranwell

New Build Service Team Lead at Swanky

Brands stand out when they have a content and testing strategy in place. Successful brands tell the right stories at the right time and are constantly reevaluating the tools they use to reach their consumer.

A personalization strategy is also critical to any brand looking to stand out in an oversaturated market. Tools like Dynamic Yield and Nosto help brands test custom hero images and copy to target different user segments. Providing customers with personalized information whether they're returning or logged in is critical to long-term success. Our client FIJI Water implemented Dynamic Yield to personalize the experience of returning users.

Zehner's client, Only Natural Pet, uses Findify to show consumers recommended products that are relevant. Findify's strategic rulesets enable the user to see custom information based on a dog or cat owner. While working with Only Natural Pet, we also conducted user interviews to identify which upsells were valuable to pet owners.



Mick McCarthy
Chief Design Officer at Zehner

It's a combination of having a clear, memorable brand that your target audience can relate to, and being savvy about where and how your marketing dollars are being spent.

The first step is being heard. Don't be afraid to think creatively when it comes to advertising channels. Traditional Facebook and Instagram ads are all well and good, but those platforms are, themselves, noisy. Maybe you should consider hiring an Instagram influencer to promote your brand instead of opting for in-feed ads. What about strategic partnerships? Or, is it time to invest in better SEO and content marketing?

Once you've determined a "right place right time," you have to nail the message you're delivering. Is it memorable? Is it eye-catching? Is it unique or valuable? How can you stand out? (We're fans of the return to direct mail when it's done cleverly--everything old is new again!)

You might be better off pursuing a creative, highly-targeted marketing campaign that's more expensive on the surface, but has a better chance of converting, instead of a cheaper mass-market approach.

When it comes to meaningful marketing messaging, our guiding principle is, "How would *I* like to be advertised to?" Always, always, always put yourself in the customer's shoes. It works.



Z
Founder at Tako Agency

The best way to put the spotlight on the brand is not to just sell products, but to be a contributor to a customer in a much greater way. To invite them to the community of people who share the same passion - dogs, wine, survival, fashion, skateboarding, etc. That community, that same perspective, will evoke the emotion of being able to relate.

In a saturated market, trust and value are two of the most important variables. A merchant has to position themselves as a subject matter expert in order to gain prospect's and customer's trust. But, how to grab their attention? Leverage the sources they trust within the same or similar market. One of the easiest ways to do that is to leverage human capital - friends, family, and current customers, especially power users.

The screenshot shows an email marketing dashboard. At the top, there's a preview of an email with a subject line: "Do You Like Being Advertised To? (I Don't)". The email content is partially visible, mentioning "Creative Director of Tako Agency" and "building out a content team". Below the preview, there are two tabs: "Performance" (selected) and "Recipients". The "Performance" tab shows "Sent to 18" and a bar chart for "Open rate 50%". Below the bar chart, there are sections for "Unique opens" and "Total opens". At the bottom right, there's a label "DESKTOP 75%".

All of these want to help, but most of them are waiting for the merchant to ask. People trust people and starting with power users, and family and friends, it will provide a boost.

There is no such thing as waiting for perfect timing. Perfect timing to target the right audience is always a moving target, a dynamic target. One that changes all the time because potential customers are always looking for solutions to their challenges. Staying top of mind as much as possible through different touchpoints will maximize the probability of having a touchpoint at the best possible time to not only catch the attention of the prospect but also to convert them.



Amer Grozdanic

Co-founder & CEO at Praella

Brands shouldn't have to worry about saturation if they are solving a problem for consumers better than competitors. And if you aren't bringing something new to the market - better product, customer experience, brand, etc. - you probably shouldn't be launching a brand.

As an agency we're careful with the clients we take on, because at the end of the day, good media buying can't fix a mediocre product or stale brand. This is generally where we would recommend focusing efforts before kicking off marketing - ensuring your product (or overarching experience) and brand are built in a way where they will cut through the noise. Creative and storytelling tend to be the biggest needle movers in terms of cutting through the noise in the current digital advertising landscape:

- A lot of the messaging and content out there feels sterilized. Understand how your customers communicate and mirror their style. State why your brand exists and what you believe in.
- It's natural for growth marketers to base campaigns on what's worked in the past, but if you want to cut through the noise, look at the landscape and ask yourself what you don't see.
- Adhere to creative principles (grab attention, mobile first, design for sound-off) while testing a diverse range of concepts.
- Once you have a strong sense of what selling point is driving customer acquisition, try to communicate it visually. Plan for ad to landing page continuity to create a frictionless experience.
- Really focus on your first welcome email and post purchase, where you can quickly solidify a relationship and have 100% of someone's attention (these should be two of your highest open rate emails).

Beyond these tips, which really pertain to paid ads and the standard marketing mix, you should think out of the box.

Too many brands rely entirely on paid social advertising and influencers to drive their acquisition efforts. What other unique ways can you bring your message to the right audience - grassroots and “guerilla” marketing efforts can always be a fun change of pace or help a new brand really grab someone's attention.

For example, one of our food clients ran funny ads on trash cans across various cities and then utilized geo fencing and showed the trash can visuals in their digital ads in those areas. This campaign really grabbed people's attention and ended up being a top performer that year.

From a targeting perspective we use an app called Prove It to run post purchase consumer insight surveys and get a better understanding of who our purchasers are or where they're coming from. Using consumer insight survey tools to narrow your targeting can really help ensure you're hitting the right audience.



Pierson Krass

Founder & Managing Partner at Lunar Solar

While each brand will need to lean on its own strengths, there are some universal truths that any business can capitalize on to cut through the noise and stand out. One of these truths is the importance of 'authority' on the internet. Having a brand with perceived authority for an industry not only resonates with customers first-hand, but it is the new 'high water mark' for SEO growth strategy. There are lots of factors that play into garnering this heightened 'brand authority' and the enhanced organic reach that comes with it and building this attribute takes time and patience.

Having a thorough knowledge of your target audience and carefully crafting your brand story both impact your brand authority. When building your brand, all touchpoints—products, site, social media, or customer service experiences—should have a consistent tone of voice, user experience and design aesthetic. Assuming you've done that leg-work, how do you know your brand has authority? The way to measure this can be challenging, but there are some key metrics that help fill in the gaps. One of these is Google's 'authority' ranking.

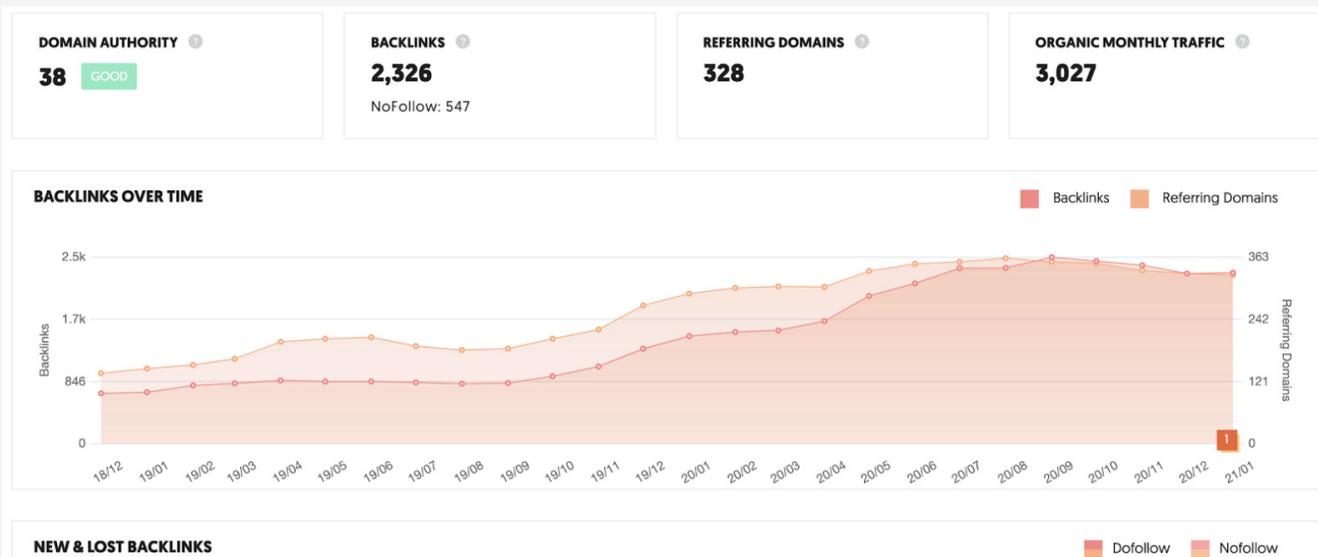
While this is chiefly an SEO term, both the 'domain authority' and 'page authority' scores are a sum of many factors that shine a light on all elements of a brand. The following list explores the top five ways that these authority metrics are calculated:

- **User experience** - How long do people stay on your site and what do they do when they are there?
- **Backlinks for valid domains** - Are major domains linking to your site?
- **Technical prowess** - How fast is your website? Is it secure and free from malware?
- **Content freshness** - How often do you update content like products, blog posts or pages? Instead of authoring something new, consider refreshing existing content to breathe new life, and relevancy into your content.
- **Other activities outside of the domain** - How active is your brand on social media? How many reviews do you receive from valid review sources?



Tate Lucas
CEO at DotDash.io

Pictured: Admin panel in Ubersuggest, and SEO analysis tool, showcasing domain authority growth over time, total backlinks and referring domains.



Here's the gist

Marketing is more than just a commercial or paid ad. Whether you use guerilla marketing tactics or traditional routes, the key to success remains the same: **Know your audience** and speak to them in the way they speak.

Once you get them in the door, keep up with that communication. Stay relevant regardless of what stage of the buyer's journey they're in, and you'll increase LTV.



Explore the rest of the **Powerful & Profitable Subscriptions series** to gain insights from 12 different agencies on a variety of topics: from building a community, to scalability, and everything in between.

Thank you to our partners

We're thrilled to collaborate with the most successful and fastest-growing agencies in commerce to create this playbook. If you're interested in contacting one of our partner agencies, please use the links below.

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blendcommerce.com

The logo for scoutside, featuring a blue circular icon with a white outline of a person and a dog, followed by the word "scoutside" in a blue, sans-serif font.

scoutside.com



presidio creative

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The logo for eHouse Studio, featuring a blue icon of a house with a square window, followed by the text "eHouse Studio" in a blue, sans-serif font.

ehousestudio.com

The logo for MUTESIX, featuring the word "MUTESIX" in a blue, sans-serif font with a stylized 'X'.

mutesix.com

The logo for swanky, featuring a blue circular icon with a white infinity symbol, followed by the word "swanky" in a blue, sans-serif font.

swankyagency.com

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takoagency.com

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The logo for LUNAR SOLAR GROUP, featuring the words "LUNAR SOLAR GROUP" in a blue, sans-serif font, flanked by two blue diagonal lines.

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The logo for ZEHNER, featuring a blue diamond shape with a white 'Z' inside, followed by the word "ZEHNER" in a blue, sans-serif font.

zehnergroup.com

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bvacommerce.com