

Content experience toolkit

6 Priorities for digital decision-makers in 2021



Shifting global landscape demands strategic changes

Every year, digital leaders and marketers are faced with new industry trends and developments to incorporate into their marketing strategies. The sheer volume of disruptive events that have occurred in recent months is virtually unprecedented.

External forces like Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the ensuing 2020 economic downturn, have forced a radical rethinking of how to best approach their digital strategies. With digital becoming the new normal, it's more important than ever for organisations to deliver the best digital experience possible, starting with their websites.

At the same time, marketers and digital teams are faced with increased pressure to do more with less. According to a recent IPA Bellwether Report, 64% of surveyed panel members **reduced their marketing budget in the second quarter of 2020**. Overall, UK marketing budgets dropped 50.7% during that time frame, the lowest level recorded in the report's 20-year history.

With so many new economic, geopolitical and industry developments to account for, digital-focused teams, including marketers and web stakeholders, can barely afford to stop and catch their breath.

Use this content experience toolkit to map out your 2021 digital strategies, prioritise the most important developments and excel in the digital age.



1

Make SEO a priority to deliver great customer experiences

It's no secret that Google sets the performance standards that every website needs to meet to provide a user experience that stacks up with the competition. That should be good news for organisations that want to appeal to an increasingly demanding and discerning digital audience. **A 2019 Ekata survey found that 92% of consumers expect digital experiences to be quick, frictionless and secure.**

Every refinement to Google's algorithms raises the bar for your website, weeding out poor performers and elevating the best websites that offer a great experience for visitors. The next major change is just around the corner: Google plans to roll out a new update in 2021 that **will target a holistic view of page experience**, with page speed becoming increasingly important in particular, reinforcing existing search signals and incorporating Core Web Vitals.

Specifically, the company will consider these seven factors as search signals going forward:

- Largest content paint (LCP).
- First input delay (FID).
- Cumulative layout shift (CLS).
- Mobile-friendly interface.
- Safe browsing protections.
- HTTPS support.
- Lack of intrusive interstitials.

By giving more weight to these page experience factors, the search engine will incentivise companies to meet new benchmarks when it comes to providing a fast, secure, and mobile-friendly website.

With only months to prepare, there isn't much time for web teams to become familiar with these benchmarks and make sure compelling content is working together with a dynamic user experience. In fact, only 55% of businesses **test their online page experience**. Google's page experience update is an opportunity for organisations to not only boost their online presence and organic search ranking, but provide a better user experience that will keep visitors engaged.



Only 55% of businesses test their online page experience.

▶ Next steps

- **Conduct a full audit of your website** across the five key factors of page experience: mobile friendliness, safe browsing, secure encryption, intrusive interstitials, and page speed.
- **When looking at page speed**, pay special attention to how your web pages perform in accordance with Google's Core Web Vitals — largest contentful paint (LCP), first input delay (FID), and cumulative layout shift (CLS). Each of these metrics has best practice load times.



2

Consolidate your marketing technology

Great digital marketing requires a wide range of technology to meet every need and cover every channel, but an organisation's MarTech footprint can spiral out of control if it's not kept in check. According to Moz, **two-thirds (67.7%) of marketers rely on anywhere from two to five search engine optimisation (SEO) platforms, while 12% use at least six.**

That kind of technology sprawl can produce inefficiencies and redundancies that prevent marketing departments from running at optimal levels. A lack of consistent workflows and processes also present problems, since stakeholders may use different platforms to tackle the same work. Workfront's 2020 Global Marketing Report found that 75% of marketers believe their MarTech setups actually **make tasks more complicated and difficult.**

Siloed systems, duplicate platforms, and custom processes can prevent marketing teams from running as effectively as possible. According to a 2018 Research Partners survey, 52% of marketers listed their inability to integrate disparate MarTech systems **as a key barrier to success.**

Consolidating MarTech greatly simplifies technology environments, which helps boost productivity and efficiency while cutting down on unnecessary costs. Untangling existing tech stacks and identifying which systems can be safely removed may be difficult, but it's worth the effort.



52% of marketers listed their inability to integrate disparate MarTech systems as a key barrier to success.

▶ Next steps

- **Audit your technologies** — assemble a list of everything that is being used amongst marketing and sales (and sales enablement) teams.
- **Assess** how marketing, development, content, and user experience teams interact in the production of campaigns, engineering sprints and brand updates to see how the technology you have in place is being used during key initiatives.
- **Create a visual diagram** of how the technologies interact to deliver business outcomes. This will help you identify gaps and measure ROI versus budget.



3

Make your website accessible to everyone

With 22% of people in the UK reporting a disability, website accessibility is a major concern for the nation. Very few websites fully conform to industry and government standards, however. For instance, 98% of websites do not comply with the latest Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) on menu navigation.

The WCAG is just the tip of the iceberg — there are multiple accessibility guidelines that UK marketers and digital leaders need to consider:

- Equality Act 2010.
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995.
- Web Accessibility Directive.

In addition, public sector websites must align **with the latest government accessibility standards**, as the UK set a September 2020 compliance deadline for any public sector site built before 2018. A deadline for private sector websites won't be far behind.

Adhering to these standards is important for compliance purposes, of course, but digital leaders should also consider the impact that accessibility has on their bottom line. **According to the 2019 Click-Away Pound Survey, UK businesses lost £17.1 million in potential sales due to accessibility issues.**

Complying with the latest accessibility guidelines also supports SEO best practices since the two often overlap. For instance, accessibility standards stress the importance of image alt text — a ranking factor for SEO — for visually impaired visitors. Accessibility standards, search ranking strategies, and user experience are often inextricably linked in this way.

£ 17.1 million

In 2019, UK businesses lost £17.1 million in potential sales due to accessibility issues.

Next steps

- **Assess your organisational readiness;** develop user personas based on user needs/ disabilities, walk through your current designs to discover where you may be causing barriers to the experience.
- **Use the Responsibilities Methodology (ARRM) team exercise** to assign ownership to accessibility fixes.
- **Once a plan is in place** — design, write, develop, and test your websites regularly to ensure accessibility practices are being upheld.



4

Align content creation with business objectives

Every marketing decision — including content creation — should be validated through hard data and key performance indicators (KPIs). That's not always the case, though, as **65% of marketers are unable to show the impact of their efforts through quantitative metrics.**

Further complicating matters is the fact that the digital landscape is more crowded than ever. Nearly 5 million new blogs are published every day alone. Across organic search, social media, email marketing, and paid search, high-performing competitors continue to push out low-quality, irrelevant or poorly targeted content.

Marketers need to align their content performance assessments with the ROI metrics that accurately measure their commercial goals to ensure their content is targeting the right audience, competing in an increasingly competitive space, and producing real business value.

However, content creators rarely focus on the commercial metrics that marketers use to measure performance, instead tracking KPIs like organic traffic, search ranking, and bounce rates. These teams need to adjust their strategies so they focus on the same metrics as digital decision-makers and align content marketing goals with overarching business objectives.

High-priority KPIs to track include:

- Marketing qualified leads (MQL).
- Sales qualified leads (SQL).
- On-site conversions.
- Cost per lead / acquisition.
- Total conversion value.
- Inbound marketing ROI.

Tracking the right KPIs can guide more effective content production and ensure every stakeholder measures content performance through the same lens. Marketers should work with their content teams to think strategically about their work and incorporate commercial metrics into their processes.



65% of marketers are unable to show the impact of their efforts through quantitative metrics.

▶ Next steps

- **Design a content performance framework** that targets distinct metrics based on business outcome, customer journey stage and persona. Benchmark every piece of content you produce according to those KPIs.



5

Deliver the right content, to the right audience, at the right time

With both the offline and online shopping mix in a state of flux and uncertainty for the foreseeable future, businesses need to take every opportunity to appeal to their target audience, strengthen relationships, and build customer loyalty. In this new era, customers may be willing to share more data, and be recognized across marketing channels, but they want brands to “know” them. Searches that contain “for me” in the phrase have steadily risen in support of this trend. Additionally, a 2020 Engage survey revealed that **92% of marketers believe customers expect personalised experiences from their brand interactions.**

Such carefully crafted and tailored engagement strategies are great for business: According to Epsilon, 80% of consumers are more likely to buy from brands **that offer personalised and unique experiences.** The results of a 2020 Dynata survey point to even greater commercial benefits, with 70% of respondents stating they **would be “highly likely” to shop exclusively with brands** that understand what they want and can consistently deliver a personalised experience across the entire customer journey.

Leading content management systems (CMS) provide a variety of personalisation tools to tailor content to different audiences. Taking advantage of these features will enable brands to craft a wholly unique user journey every step of the way.



80% of consumers are more likely to buy from brands that offer personalised experiences.

▶ Next steps

- **A CDP (dedicated customer-data platform)** can streamline customer data collection, making it easier to gather information across various marketing channels. Consider bringing one board so marketing teams can understand what drives every customer to purchase.
- **Create meaningful audience segments** that will be the foundation of personalised content for current and prospective customers.
- **Conduct an assessment of your website** — looking at factors such as page speed, meta structure, duplicate content, and internal/external links — to build a strong digital foundation.



6

Stay compliant in a post-brexit world

Failing to comply with the latest security standards can be devastating to an organisation. Take the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), for instance. **DLA Piper research found that, as of January 2020, the new regulation has produced more than £97 million in penalties.**

£ 97 million

As of January 2020, GDPR has produced more than £97 million in penalties.

UK organisations must comply with a variety of regulations depending on their industry, their customer base and the nature of their operations. Major regulations and standards to account for include:

- Payment Card Industry Digital Security Standard.
- Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations.
- Data Protection Act.
- Basel Accords.

With the conclusion of Brexit's transition period, marketers need to consider how this dramatic geopolitical shift will impact their regulatory compliance requirements. There's a fair amount of ambiguity surrounding the situation — for instance around the international transfer of personal data. Although the EU GDPR has been effectively retained in UK law, questions remain around 'adequacy' and whether the European Commission will find local data protection laws acceptable.

Adhering to data privacy and security best practices is always a sound strategy, even if the UK's regulatory future still isn't set in stone. Following the latest regulatory guidance will help businesses stay compliant and avoid potential privacy breaches and other security issues.

▶ Next steps

- **Evaluate legal frameworks** that are already in place and ones that may come into effect in the near term — such as GDPR and The European Accessibility Act (EEA).
- **Build a privacy notice**, make sure your website is operating within a secure protocol, evaluate your cookie policy, and make sure every marketing form provides a clear opt-out from communication, to name a few data privacy considerations.



Make 2021 all about content experience

Above all else, brands need to make 2021 about the customer, taking every opportunity to craft a better experience across every touchpoint and channel that anticipates customer needs and delivers exactly what they want, when they want it.

The trends listed above cover a wide range of areas, from marketing and content creation to accessibility and compliance. As such, they will require marketers, web developers, product owners, and content writers to work together in order to meet the demands of an increasingly digital-focused and data-driven industry.

Every aspect of your website's technical infrastructure, as well as your marketing automation technology, CMS, and various marketing channels, need to work symbiotically, delivering data and insights to different corners of the organisation. This way, brands can be sure that every decision they make, including marketing campaigns and customer engagement strategies, is aligned with broader business objectives.

This content experience toolkit gives digital teams a clear roadmap to follow to better support customer needs and meet rising expectations over the next 12 months. Keep this guide handy as you prepare for and navigate through the challenges and opportunities that 2021 presents.

Contact Siteimprove for an assessment of how your content, technical infrastructure, and marketing campaigns stack up against this evolving landscape.



[Book a consultation](#)

Achieve your **digital potential**

 **Siteimprove**

Siteimprove is a SaaS solution that helps organizations achieve their digital potential by empowering teams with actionable insights to deliver a superior website experience and drive growth. Siteimprove has 550 employees across 13 offices, helping over 7,200 customers globally. We're part of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), the leading group developing international web standards, and an exclusive Adobe Premier partner. Learn more at [siteimprove.com](https://www.siteimprove.com).