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Marketing & Paid Media Strategy

CASE STUDY

Learn how I developed a multi-channel marketing strategy for a retail business, combining SEO, paid media, and customer engagement tactics. This case study outlines the approach taken to increase visibility, drive traffic, and boost revenue in a competitive market.

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Marketing and Paid Media Campaign Strategy Example

This strategy was developed for a dispensary client in New Jersey to outline a marketing and paid media campaign aimed at increasing brand visibility, website traffic, and customer engagement. To protect the client's privacy, the brand name has been replaced with "Dispensary," and location-specific details have been omitted.

The document details a multi-channel strategy incorporating search engine optimization (SEO), paid media, and email/SMS marketing. It highlights tactics to drive customer acquisition, including creating targeted content, programmatic advertising, and customer loyalty. This strategy reflects my ability to develop marketing plans that align with client goals in a competitive market.

Campaign Strategy

September 14th, 2024

Hello Dispensary Team,

Thank you for the time you've spent with us in our meetings over the last couple of weeks. The discussions we've had as a group helped us to create this strategy document, which outlines our approach for search engine optimization, paid media, and email/SMS marketing.

The marketing and advertising strategy prepared for Dispensary encompasses several key components aimed at increasing brand visibility, website traffic, and revenue. Here's a summary of the strategy:

SEO Strategy:

- Focuses on improving website visibility in search engines through organic methods.
- Aims to account for 60-80% of new business generation.
- Aims to generate positive reviews on platforms like Google, WeedMaps, and Leafly. ● Plans to expand existing website content by creating articles, resources, and new pages. ● Prioritizes content creation and pillar pages to cover various cannabis-related topics.

Paid Media Strategy:

- Supplements SEO efforts with paid advertising to drive traffic and brand awareness.
- Includes out-of-home advertising (billboards, LED truck ads, etc.) and programmatic advertising targeting cannabis-interested audiences.
- Utilizes programmatic tactics like geofencing competitors, geofencing OOH inventory, lookalike audiences, and retargeting website visitors.

Email & SMS Strategy:

- Focuses on direct communication with customers to inform them about products, promotions, and industry updates.
- Utilizes Alpine IQ for email and SMS marketing.

- Includes welcome email sequence, disengaged contact sequence, bonus points days, and list-building strategies.
- Plans for weekly emails initially, with adjustments based on performance.

In summary, the strategy combines organic SEO efforts with paid media and direct customer communication to enhance Dispensary's online presence, drive traffic, and boost revenue.

SEO Strategy

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is the process of increasing a website's visibility in Google and other search engines, thus leading to more traffic and ultimately more revenue. As part of our campaign, we will expand further upon the groundwork laid in the website design process by the previous company you worked with. Creating content that satisfies local searches and questions will be the primary driver of website visitors and one of our campaign's highest ROI activities because of the traffic and sales it will generate. SEO will account for roughly 60-80% of the new business we generate, which is critical to our marketing and customer acquisition strategy. The following strategy outlines our specific plans for driving traffic to the website through creating new pages to improve the user experience, developing educational content monthly, generating reviews, and maintaining a technically sound website.

Content Creation

Further development of the existing website will be a focal point of our campaign. You've established a good base, but to consistently generate traffic, we will need to write articles, create resources for customers, and build new pages on the website that aim to rank for specific keywords and to answer the questions related to cannabis, for example, strain information, terpenes, state laws, cannabis' applications for particular ailments, etc. Below is a list of core pages that we recommend adding to the website before we start publishing blog content every month. These pages and the homepage will serve as the core of the website from which we build the original resources. Our team is responsible for designing, building, and writing the content for these pages.

List of Pages to Create:

- Resources
  - This will expand upon the "news" page on the website and serve as our "blog" section.
  - From the new resources page we create, visitors can navigate to a system of content category pages we make through internal links.
  - We will sort content into a category page for each topic (for example, terpenes, consumption, lifestyle, cannabis 101, etc.)

- These are commonly referred to as "topic clusters" and are an impactful way to improve the user experience, and they will also help us to rank for searches related to these topics.
- We will identify and finalize these topics in the first few weeks of our campaign. Some examples of how these could be broken down are below.
  - Category Page Examples: Cannabis 101, Product Reviews, Brand Features, Culture.

- Menu
  - This page is currently under construction on the website. Before launch, this needs to be made live after testing the embed codes and adding copy.
  - This page also needs a concise header and meta description so when people see it in Google who intend to purchase, they know they're clicking through to a shop-based page.
    - SEO Title Example: Dispensary Menu: Explore Our Cannabis Selection
    - Meta Description Example: Browse our dispensary menu. From top-shelf strains to concentrates and ingestibles, our curated selection promises an unforgettable experience. Discover your favorites today.
- Deals and discounts page
  - This page is meant to serve as a hub for any new customer, seasonal, one-time, or recurring discounts we're offering at any given time. These can also live on the menu page, but having a dedicated space for them on the website is more effective.
  - This will help us to rank for keywords like "cannabis deals" and "dispensary deals," which people commonly use in Google.
- Loyalty program overview page
  - This page isn't necessarily critical to our SEO campaign, as "cannabis loyalty" searches aren't as critical to capitalize on as deals and menu searches. However, the more people who opt-in to the reward program updates, the more effective our email and SMS campaign will be. We should have a page for the loyalty program accessible via the main website menu.
  - We will include a program overview, a list of benefits, instructions for signing up, and an embedded sign-up form from Alpine IQ.
- Dispensary Location Page
  - This should be separate from the menu page and include hours, an embedded map, a location description, photos, and videos, if applicable.
  - This page aims to help rank for searches like "dispensary near me" or "dispensary in NJ."
  - This also helps provide an easy way for customers to find the store, its location, hours, and contact information.
- Brands We Carry
  - This is a strategy we've used for a couple of stores that has worked well. This is not our client, nor did we create this, but here is an excellent example of what we're looking to achieve.

- This page aims to help us rank for branded product searches and then direct people to the menu page. We can also create an individual brand spotlight for each company that we can link to from this overarching brands page.

- FAQ
  - This page will answer common questions related to cannabis and New Jersey that people may be searching for. These can range from questions about purchase amounts and legal forms of cannabis in New Jersey to questions about online ordering, pick-up instructions, etc.
  - FAQ pages provide an excellent opportunity to rank for question-based keywords, so we'll ensure we create an exhaustive list of questions to include here.
  - It's better to create blog content around questions that require longer answers. For example,"How do I place an online order,"is a good FAQ question, whereas "Which cannabis products are best for anxiety?"is better answered in an article.

Blogs:

Blog posts are an essential component of our SEO campaign. These are well suited to answering searches in 1,500 or so words. At the beginning of our campaign, we will provide you with a list of all the keywords we need to rank the website to capture local traffic. These searches will cover various topics and drive people to different sales funnel stages. For example, some searches will be more transactional, such as "dispensary near me."In contrast, others will be more informational, such as "What is the best THC: CBD ratio for anxiety?" We will write two blog posts per month based on these keywords, and our team will be responsible for posting them to the website and correctly categorizing them under the content category pages we create.

There are three primary ways we will decide on which topics to write our blog posts on:

1. We will distribute a survey to customers, asking them which topics they would like to see covered to help them learn more about cannabis and the products they can purchase. 2. We will distribute a survey to employees, asking them which topics they would like to see covered that would benefit customers.
3. We will use our SEO tools to determine which topics to focus on based on search volume, relevancy, difficulty, and other factors.

Pillar Pages:

Pillar pages serve a similar purpose to blog posts but take longer to create and provide more thorough information about a topic. For example, a blog post is excellent for covering something that can be answered relatively quickly, like "how to roll a joint." However, a more broad topic like "what are cannabinoids" or an introduction to terpenes can include many subtopics that also need to be covered. In these cases, creating a pillar page is a better approach because the greater word count will help us to rank for more competitive keywords, which typically have more search

volume (the number of people searching that keyword in Google). We will create one resource page every three months, in addition to our blog posts, to cover more general topics.

Some examples of potential pillar pages include:

- Introduction to Cannabis
- Terpene Guide
- Cannabinoid Guide
- Cannabis Consumption Methods Explained

Review Generation

Generating reviews is essential for a dispensary as a form of social proof. Many customers will read reviews of Dispensary, primarily on Google, to get a sense of the store's customer service, product selection, ambiance, pricing, and more. Pricing, in particular, is a frequent focus of many of the dispensary reviews that we see. New stores tend to experience more hiccups with the ordering process, customer service, etc., as staff is being trained and new processes are being implemented. Thus, we must encourage positive reviews wherever possible, as there will inevitably be a negative review here and there.

There are a few ways we'll work with your team to encourage customers to leave positive reviews and a few ways we will manage review responses:

- Printed review cards designed by our team and placed in every exit bag that leaves the dispensary. The review cards will have a QR code linking to our Google Business Profile. They will also have WeedMaps and Leafly (if applicable) logos to encourage reviews across different platforms.
- We can send review requests via email and text through Alpine IQ. These requests will serve a similar purpose as the printed review cards but in digital format.
- We will monitor and respond to reviews that come into each platform, ensuring that each review, whether positive or negative, receives a professional, thorough, and personalized response.
- We typically like to work with a GM to formulate responses to negative reviews. They're usually the best ones to speak to whatever issue occurred and to help us provide a remedy for the situation. In this case, it's best to coordinate with Anthony and Joe to address any negative feedback we see. We will formulate and run the initial responses by Anthony and Joe for additional context and approval before publishing them.
- We should also develop some form of signage to place in the dispensary with a QR code, gently prompting customers to leave a review.
- We can incentivize reviews in Alpine IQ and provide customers who leave a review with a few bonus points to use on their next purchase. I will work with Anthony and Joe on this.

Ancillary

The following items are essential to our SEO campaign but are more granular and are things that we'll monitor monthly, weekly, and sometimes daily.

- Google Business Profile
    - We will ensure the Google Business Profile is consistently updated with new images, videos, and content. Many people will find us through this profile, so it must be an accurate and inviting representation of what they can expect from the in-store experience.
- Titles and Meta Descriptions
    - We briefly mentioned this in the subpoints under the menu page earlier in this strategy, but these make up the preview of what people see in Google when they search for something and are looking at the list of websites on page one of the search results.
    - Writing a compelling title and meta description for each page is essential because it will make people want to click on our result instead of the others.
    - Including keywords in our titles is also a ranking factor, so we'll be sure to write them from scratch for each page on the website, including keywords from our list. ● Image Alt Text
    - This is important to maintain for Google image search, particularly for any infographics and interior images of the store that we upload to the WordPress media gallery.
    - This works similarly to the titles and meta descriptions in that we want to include keywords from our list in the image file names and alt text where it makes sense. ● Website Health
    - We will monitor the website for broken links, slow pages, and other things that can hurt the user experience. This will help to keep the process seamless for visitors and ensure everything runs smoothly between them landing on the website and the checkout page, blog page, etc.
- Link Building
    - For dispensaries, we've found that focusing on content creation is a more effective use of time and provides a better return on investment than using our resources to garner backlinks.
    - However, it is still essential to an SEO campaign, so we will develop a strategy in the first few months of our campaign to help us gain links from other websites, which can help us rank the Dispensary website more quickly.

Reporting

We will use several tools to report on our campaign, which are listed below. You will be provided

with an analytics report on the same day each month that outlines our website traffic, keyword rankings, review generation, and other metrics that indicate the effectiveness of our campaign and how customers interact with the Dispensary website.

Reporting Tools:

- Google Analytics
- Google Search Console
- Google Business Page - This will show us the number of people who have called, visited the website, and requested directions through the Google profile
- Ahrefs - This is the SEO tool we use for tracking and monitoring traffic, keyword rankings, content effectiveness, and more.
  - Spyfu - This is a supplemental tool we use for keyword research, competitor analysis, etc.

End-of-Year Goals

The plan we prepared is aggressive because of the competition that will be coming to the New Jersey market. Based on our strategies and tactics, we think the outcomes listed below are attainable by February 2024. At that point, we will evaluate the campaign and its results and determine a plan for the winter and spring.

- Generate at least 200 Google reviews.
- Develop a set of 10 blog posts and 2 pillar pages.
- Rank for at least 300 non-branded keywords (meaning searches not including the terms "Dispensary"
- Reach 15,000-20,000 monthly website visitors.

Paid Media Strategy

While SEO will be the primary driver of growth for us, it takes some time to increase traffic. Pairing SEO with a paid media strategy will help us to drive traffic and brand awareness while we build up the website and our organic traffic. The two campaigns work well together, creating multiple touchpoints for people to see and interact with the brand and website.

Our design team, led by Creative Director Will Pearson, will develop all of the creative elements needed for each advertising channel that we utilize, including but not limited to print ads, digital ads, billboard designs, event materials, and more. We will work closely with your team and come to you with recommendations for what messaging we think will be most effective, whether that be general Dispensary branded ads, seasonal promotions, or other approaches.

Proposed Budget

In the coming week, we will work with you to determine the budget we recommend for a store

launch like Dispensary's. Please keep in mind that this will be flexible, and the figure we provide is a starting point for us to discuss and finalize with your approval. We will present all of the options that we feel will be effective for Dispensary and work with you to pick and choose the best based on the monthly advertising allocation. After 3-4 months, we will evaluate the performance of each channel and adjust the budget accordingly, doubling down on the most effective media in terms of revenue and traffic.

Out-of-Home Advertising

Out of Home (OOH) advertising encompasses billboards, bush shelters, digital signage, and other installations that reach an audience on the street level. OOH advertising is an effective method to drive brand awareness for a new store because of the broad reach and tangible connection that creates a sense of familiarity with your brand over time. We will recommend a variety of OOH channels for Dispensary's launch campaign to quickly introduce ourselves to the Philadelphia market and surrounding communities in South Jersey.

Below is a list of the out-of-home channels that we will consider for our campaign based on price, reach, and other factors:

- Billboards
- LED Truck Ads
- Garbage Receptacle Ads
- Kiosks and POS Displays

Programmatic Advertising

Programmatic advertising is a digital strategy that leverages automated technology to promote products to a targeted audience. It involves using algorithms and software platforms to purchase and optimize real-time online ad placements across various digital channels such as websites, social media, and mobile apps. This approach allows dispensaries to reach potential customers with contextually relevant ads, ultimately generating website traffic and boosting online and in-store sales. Our preferred partner for programmatic advertising links directly to Dutchie and other menu providers so that we can track our return on investment. We typically see a $2-3 return on ad spend with programmatic advertising, meaning that we make $2-3 for every $1 we spend on ads. We will solely be serving ads to people who we know are interested in or are purchasers of cannabis products and can target them with ads based on their purchasing behavior, favorite product categories, etc., through existing data.

Programmatic Advertising Tactics

We will work with our partner to formulate a plan tailored to Dispensary, but I've listed some strategies below that we've had success with for dispensaries:

- Geofencing Competitors
    - We can set up a geofence around competitors, like Curaleaf, and give an offer to the customers who enter their store.
    - This can be an effective strategy to pull customers away from competitors, particularly if we pair it with a scaling discount for new customers. For example, 10% off on your first visit, 15% on your second visit, and 20% on your third visit. ● Geofencing OOH Inventory
    - We can set up geofencing around our OOH inventory to help measure the foot traffic we receive from people who have encountered our billboards and other street-level advertisements.
- Lookalike Audiences
    - We can target people who fit a similar demographic as known purchasers of cannabis products, helping us reach people likely to be interested in Dispensary and our products.
- Retargeting Website Visitors
    - We can retarget people who have visited the Dispensary website but have yet to make a purchase.

Listing Websites

We have a few options available through popular cannabis listing websites. Leafly and WeedMaps offer premium placement options, display advertising, and more. We have managed a few Leafly and WeedMaps advertising campaigns, but they are costly and do not deliver as good an ROI as programmatic advertising and grassroots efforts. I included them because having the basic listings through each benefits the SEO campaign and general awareness of the Dispensary brand amongst users of both platforms. These will account for a small portion of the budget.

- Leafly
    - I recommend having a Leafly listing for the first few months, at least, while we build up our customer base and brand awareness in the area.
    - If we look back at the data in 2-3 months and decide it is not providing a return, we can cut it out of the budget and allocate that money elsewhere.
    - However, Leafly is only worth paying for if we use the menu integration. If we do not link our Dutchie menu, I do not feel confident seeing a return on investment. ● WeedMaps
    - WeedMaps has gotten very expensive in New Jersey, even for the base-level listing. If we have already been listed for free, then we should keep the listing.
    - Last I spoke with them, they charged over $1,000/month for the basic listings. If this is the case, this money is better put into programmatic advertising or other channels.

Ancillary Channels

We will consider a variety of other channels based on price and reach, including but not limited to the following:

- Advertorial Opportunities
  - This includes placement through local publications like Philadelphia Magazine or the Philadelphia Inquirer, which offer a variety of advertising opportunities. ● Event Sponsorships
- Local Radio Features
- Podcast Features
  - Purchasing ad space on locally-focused podcasts, like Philadelphia sports, will help us reach people we know who live within a particular geographic area.

Email & SMS Strategy

Email and SMS marketing offers a direct line of communication to your customers. This lets you keep them informed about new products, promotions, and industry updates, fostering a stronger connection and increasing brand loyalty. It is much more cost-effective for us to retain existing customers than to get new ones, so we must communicate effectively with them through our available channels. Using Alpine IQ, we will also be able to track the ROI of each email and text that we send. The following strategy outlines our plan for sending frequency, email structure, and general approach. In the first month of our campaign, we will create the designs for the email blasts to keep a consistent aesthetic and work on setting up the automation in our Alpine IQ account, as outlined below.

Email Marketing

We plan to utilize Alpine IQ for our email and SMS marketing campaign. In this campaign, we will send emails informing customers about our loyalty program, discounts, and events and provide other updates, such as inclement weather notices, employee features, etc.

Approach:

Below is a brief description of our approach to email marketing. These are general guidelines that we will follow for each email that we send to our customers because they will make our communication more effective:

- Clear, concise, and clever messaging.
- Include one or two images per email.
- Each email needs a clear purpose.
- Keep it to one idea per email to keep focused.

- Include one call-to-action per email to keep actions clear.
- Keep emails light on text so they're easy to read.
- Keep a consistent tone, aesthetic, and message.
- Emails in pairs. Each has a follow-up.
    - This works well primarily for deals because we'll send an original notice and one follow-up, but this is not a requirement for all emails.

Templates and Automation:

We will develop the email blasts weekly. However, we will also have a set of automation set up to reach customers at various stages, which are outlined below:

- Welcome Email Sequence
    - When customers sign up for our list, they will receive a series of 2-3 welcome emails that notify them of our intent to communicate with them via email, what they can expect from our mailing list, general information about Dispensary, rewards program information, and a new customer offer to get them in the door if they haven't already made a purchase.
- Disengaged Contact Sequence
    - Winning back customers who have not purchased recently is a relatively easy way to boost revenue.
    - We will set up emails to disengaged customers into three groups: Idle customers who have not purchased in three weeks, absent customers who have not purchased in two months, and highly absent customers who have not purchased in three or more months.
    - Each group will receive a discount of varying levels to entice them to return to Dispensary.
    - We will work with Joe and Anthony to determine what is an appropriate offer here.
- Bonus Points Days
    - Offering double or bonus point earning days is a great way to engage customers already part of our loyalty program without providing a discount on products. ○ We will schedule these intermittently and assess their effectiveness in driving sales.

List Building:

Here are the ways we will assist you in growing the list that we send our marketing updates:

- Events
    - We will work with your team to ensure that emails and phone numbers are collected at any events we attend.
    - We typically like to have customers sign up directly on the website to opt in on the spot, and we don't have to send a follow-up message.

- We can achieve this by pulling an embedded Alpine IQ sign-up form on a tablet or smartphone that is passed to event attendees.
- In-Store Signage
  - As mentioned in the SEO campaign, we will work with you to strategically place signage around the store, encouraging loyalty program sign-ups. These could be plastic signs on top of product displays, signage near the POS stations, or wall signage.
- Website Lead Capture
  - We will ensure that the website includes embedded forms from Alpine IQ that people can use to sign up on their own when they visit our rewards page.

Campaign Times:
We will refer to our analytics to determine the best time to send our email blasts, as every list differs. However, we will send them out at 9 a.m. EST and 12 p.m. EST to begin. We will schedule them at both times and assess which performs better on certain days.

We will send out one per week to begin. Once we get reports on how the emails are performing, we will adjust the frequency of our emails. We will want to see how each performs and how people interact with them.

Email Content Breakdown:

- Events and Updates
  - These emails will highlight upcoming events, workshops, job fairs, etc.
- Program Highlights
  - These emails will introduce and keep customers updated on Dispensary and its various programs. For example, daily discounts, the rewards program, community engagement, and more. We can also distribute surveys to customers via email blast.
- Products and Deals
  - These emails will highlight new cultivator partners, new product availability, and seasonal/one-time deals that we're running.

SMS

Our SMS campaign will communicate the same information to customers as the emails but in a different format. Depending on the deliverability data we collect in Alpine IQ, these messages will be more concise and potentially sent at other times.

Approach:

Below is a brief description of our approach to SMS marketing:

- Obtain Consent
    - We must obtain consent from customers before sending them SMS messages. Alpine IQ's opt-in process will help ensure subscribers willingly join our list.
- Compliance with Regulations
    - We will craft the messaging carefully to ensure that we do not have any deliverability issues because of the promotion of cannabis products.
- Segmentation
    - We will segment our list based on customer preferences, purchase history, and more, which will help us send more targeted and relevant messages.
- Messaging
    - The SMS messages are shorter and more to the point than our emails.
- Timing
    - We will avoid sending texts late at night or during busy hours and consider your target audience's schedule.
- Frequency
    - We will find a balance between staying engaged and not bombarding customers with messages. Weekly messages are a good starting point.
- Deals and Discounts
    - We will provide exclusive offers, promotions, and discounts through SMS to incentivize subscribers to stay engaged and purchase.
- Opt-Outs
    - We will include a straightforward process for subscribers to opt out of receiving messages for compliance reasons.