

With no return to traditional sales activities in sight, how can we efficiently trade travel for technology?

*Sandra Powers Murphy, author of *The Road to AUM: Driving Assets Under Management through Effective Marketing and Sales*, and CEO of Noble Ark Ventures, a business development and organizational consulting firm, provides the following insight into digital strategies for 2020.*

As COVID-19 cases continue to soar, the reality is that travel, face-to-face meetings and traditional sales practices are unlikely for the balance of 2020. Will 2020, the 'sales year that wasn't', have permanent implications on business development best practices? We believe it already has. We also know that the time is now; utilize the balance of the summer to kick start an efficient review and enhancement of your business development process and pipeline to ensure success regardless of whether we return to the friendly skies. As you may have already realized, there are some distinct advantages associated with the technology for travel trade.

The Technology for Travel Trade

In the midst of the day-to-day challenges presented by the global pandemic comes an opportunity to capitalize on a shift from pricey, time consuming and often unproductive travel, towards a highly efficient, eco-friendly, digital engagement campaign that has just as much opportunity to succeed as does old school face time. In fact, there are an array of low cost, in-house digital business development strategies that can improve both the breadth and quality of your firm's online footprint without leaving the comfort of your home office. In this two-part series, we will provide best practices on how to efficiently (and successfully) trade travel for technology in the 'new norm' of business development. This issue will focus on online presence and the 'first date' with prospects. In next month's issue we will focus on active integration of outbound marketing and sales campaigns.

The Interconnected Reality of Marketing and Sales

Organizations that have established and maintained autonomous functions for marketing and sales are realizing just how critical their interplay is. Marketing fuels sales, sales fuels marketing, and together they create a powerful synergy when timed, tested and implemented under a clear communications plan. Step one: create a written communications plan that integrates your team's best thinking and resources—both sales and marketing. If there was ever a time to get rid of the silos, it is now. Resources are too scarce, time is too valuable, and the market is moving too quickly.

Let's Have a First Date - Online

It's 2020; your website matters more than you think. Your firm's website is one of its most valuable assets at this time—it serves as your 'first date' with a prospect. Regardless of whether a prospect has stumbled across your services organically or has intentionally sought you out, your digital presence is step one in the modern sales cycle. While Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is often thought of as an abstract science, intelligible only to expensive web developers, its core fundamental principles are actually quite simple. Consider your own experience as a consumer. What subliminal conclusions do you draw from your first few clicks on an outdated website? How interested are you in learning more about the team and story if you can't even find your way through the home page? Is your immediate reaction to the site a big snooze, or an aha moment? Among the thousands of statistics that support the importance of quality web-design is one provided by a recent Swinburne University study, in which it was discovered that 50 milliseconds (about 0.05 seconds) is the average time it takes web users to form an opinion about your website and that determines whether they will stay on your page or exit stage left (Lindgaard, Gitte (2006). *Journal of Behavior and Information Technology. Volume 25*). Long outdated is the notion that your website is a mere extension of your business—today, it is the front line of your business. Don't let your website—and particularly that all too critical home page—go untested for another minute. (Continued)



"ASK SANDRA"

Submit Your Questions!

Have a question about organizational dynamics, business development best practices or how to effectively build market presence and AUM? The Noble Ark Ventures team will be answering questions submitted by EMM subscribers each month.

Send your questions to:
info@noblearkventures.com.

Gain Clarity

Looking for clarity around one of the twelve core elements outlined in *The Road to AUM*? EMM subscribers are eligible for one free curriculum series download which includes an Audible presentation, profile, team workbook and Excel file associated with maximizing your effectiveness. To receive your free unit, visit www.noblearkventures.com, select "Curriculum Series", identify the unit you wish to receive and simply email us your selection at the above address.

Engage your team, look at competitive sites, revisit what content and connection you have and most importantly look at your site's statistics. Without even having to understand technical SEO elements such as updated sitemaps, strategic metatags, or the integration of high volume, high ranking keywords, you can improve your firm's SEO by simply doing (or at least affirming if you feel your 'all set') some content and formatting-oriented groundwork as follows:

Mirror Mirror

Conduct a Google search for your firm: is your site the first to appear on the results page? Is it buried under a long list of unrelated listings? What else pops up? Get a better understanding of what prospects see when they attempt to find you.

The .05 Second Home Page Assessment

Beginning with the home page, honestly and objectively consider what you see. Can users clearly and immediately gather what it is you do? Is your site's navigation straightforward? Can you find your firm's approach, team, strategies, collateral and thought leadership without effort? Are the images outdated? Typical? Is there something—anything—on the page that you are likely to click on? What draws your attention? Feel free to ask a few others to visit your site—young professionals and/or older adults are great candidates. How do they answer the above questions?

Play Survivor

In 2020, content and messaging must be dynamic, brief, focused and impactful. Is your site hitting these high notes, or is it more of a storage locker? Often organizations are hesitant to remove unnecessary or outdated materials from their website for fear of losing something of value. Play a game of survivor with your own site. Eliminate all outdated content, remove or update content more than 3 years old, avoid putting a date on thought leadership pieces you want to retain that you believe are evergreen. Next, determine what is most impactful. If you had to drop something from a page, what should go first? Second? Third? Is what remains reflecting the information that is most relevant to current investors and potential investors? Finally, evaluate whether the remaining content is consistent with your collateral materials. If you are sending out a fact sheet, brochure, presentation or link to a podcast, is the site a consistent representation of that content and story? If there is limited alignment between what you are presenting in collateral and conversations with what you are projecting via your web presence, clients and prospects will pick up on this. Before we embark on more outbound marketing, pushes for webinar attendance, sharing of content and prospect engagement, make sure you are ready for prime time. Don't waste good outreach on leading prospects to a poorly designed first date.

Connect the Dots

Visitors are looking for a logical user experience. Technology has come so far that most sites we all elect to visit—certainly those we return to—make our experience 'simple' and efficient. Connect the dots for your visitors. What content (and in what order) would you relay to a prospect in a face-to-face meeting? Using this information, guide visitors through your website using clear call to action buttons and links. Not only do internal links between your pages assist in building credibility in the eyes of the major search engine algorithms, they allow you to tell your story exactly how you want it to be told. Often times, the most effective low-cost SEO strategy is a clearly formatted website.

Choose Your Words Carefully

As in life, choosing your words carefully is a must when it comes to maximizing your digital presence. Keyword research and content curation is one of the easiest and low cost methods of improving your on-page SEO; www.ubersuggests.com is a great free tool that can be used to see your site's current top ranking keywords and corresponding monthly search volume, as well as how well your site ranks for that keyword on the search results page. The ultimate goal is to have a high position on the results page for frequently searched organic keywords that correspond to what your firm does. By incorporating these keywords into your site's content, you can improve your chances of appearing first on corresponding Google searches. Be careful, however, not to aim too high. Targeting keywords that have extremely high monthly search volumes (50,000+) and an expensive CPC (the amount of money firms can pay to have their listing promoted to the top of the results page in the form of adspace) is indicative of too much competition. Aim for reasonable volume, reasonable CPC and only for the keywords that directly relate to what you offer.

As we continue to exchange travel for technology, now is an opportune time to apply resources and focus on your firm's online presence. Assign the above review to a member of your team and affirm your digital presence before investing in further marketing efforts.