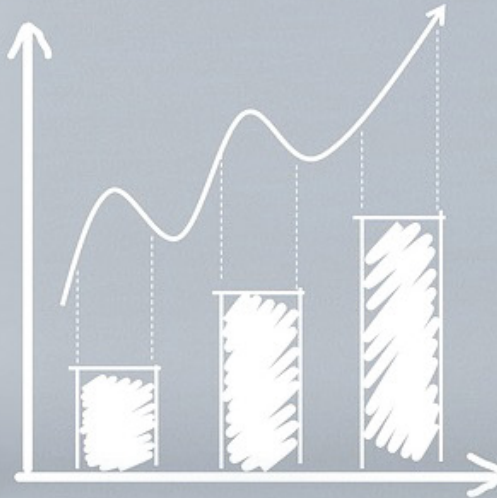


# SELLING TO SCHOOLS:

Digital Marketing 101  
for K-12 Education



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Filling Your Sales Pipeline  
with an Integrated  
Marketing Calendar

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jennymunn

## What is Digital Marketing Exactly?

Digital marketing is more than a fancy buzzword or cliché. HubSpot describes it as “encompassing all marketing efforts that use an electronic device or the internet.” Intuitive enough, right? Channels include pay per click (PPC), search engine optimization (SEO), websites, online PR, content marketing, social media, email, marketing automation, and mobile apps. It includes both inbound and outbound methods.

## Why Digital Marketing?

Visibility is the Holy Grail you’re striving for to grow and maximize your presence. This is easily achieved with digital marketing, which is crucial for education organizations for many reasons:

- 1 Digital marketing is one of the most efficient and cost-effective ways to consistently drive qualified prospects into your pipeline. Adding one (or several) of these channels doesn’t take away from traditional K-12 marketing channels—it enhances them. Direct mail, PR, email, webinars, workshops, and conferences are still relevant and effective.

***Adding digital marketing channels doesn’t take away from traditional K-12 marketing channels—it enhances them.***

### **When you're in the business of selling or marketing to schools, let's face it: you need to stay top of mind all year long.**

However, there are quite a few challenges:

- The market is very crowded. Big players and nimble startups are also competing for your buyer’s attention.
- It is very noisy online, and the average person has a shorter attention span than a goldfish.
- You’re trying to market to one of the most time-starved markets: educators.
- Having multiple decision makers means you have to stretch resources to reach more people.
- As consumers dictate reach and frequency, brands must meet the requirements for relevancy, helpfulness, and personalization.

If you’re marketing the same way you always have, then you’re probably behind your competition. Not to mention, you may be missing out on key opportunities by not accelerating growth and awareness with digital marketing channels.

**2** When it comes to understanding what is working with your marketing efforts and campaigns, digital marketing channels are fantastic for tracking, evaluating, and quantifying return on investment (ROI). Accessing data and metrics faster allows you to pivot and fix underperforming campaigns.

**3** It's a given in online marketing that it takes 6–8 touches to generate a viable sales lead. Without resorting to tacky, pushy sales tactics, digital marketing speeds up the process by delivering a steady message across multiple channels. Education is a complex market with a long buying cycle, and consistency is the name of the game.

**4** Digital marketing is great for any business, regardless of size. It costs less than traditional channels (such as print and television) and allows you to stay competitive with the big players in your space.

## Putting Together an Integrated Marketing Calendar

So what digital marketing components should be integrated throughout the year? Adding a digital element to any marketing calendar might include:

- **PPC:** A wonderful way to get to the top of search engines quickly, and it doesn't have to be very expensive. Plus, it is very trackable and can easily be turned on and off. PPC works great when your target market knows exactly the type of solution they're looking for, which matches your ideal lead-generating keywords.
- **Retargeting:** Stay in front of people while driving more conversions and repeat website visits. With Google Ads and Bing Ads, you can retarget with display advertising on other websites that your core audience visits, or you can retarget on social media platforms (Facebook, for example).
- **Organic SEO:** Do you show up for keywords that your target market might type in? Do you show up as a leading industry website when someone in your market types in related keywords?

- **Social SEO:** Have you identified your most critical keywords and optimized your social channels, assets, descriptions, and content? If not, you could be missing out on a huge opportunity.
- **Paid Social:** If your market is all over social, you should be too. Paid social advertising on Pinterest, Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram is a great way to complement and amplify any campaign.

As marketers, we have to be at least two steps ahead. In addition to important seasonal dates, there are easy and effective digital marketing techniques that can be utilized all year long to create a robust, integrated marketing plan:

- Organic social media to keep in front of your audience all year round
- Pinterest for holidays and key dates
- Facebook ads for workshops and events
- Twitter ads to stay in front of educators, especially in niches where Twitter chats are utilized heavily
- PR to generate brand awareness in relevant industry publications
- Conferences to attend to stay visible and showcase expertise
- Influencer marketing campaigns

There are also digital marketing channels you can engage in that align with the school selling calendar.

## June Through October: Be Visible—Everywhere and Often

It's critical to be visible when educators and administrators are in research and planning mode. Summer is your chance to make sure your content shines. Fall is ideal for building awareness to make sure you're driving consideration in the spring. During the months of June through October, it is imperative to show up above competitors and ensure your content is optimized across all channels and platforms.

Digital marketing tactics and reminders to leverage while you're at the top of the funnel include:

- **SEO:** Adding SEO to the equation is critical when you're ready to take your efforts to the next level. Organic SEO is designed to make your content more findable and capture existing search interest. When educators are online to research answers and solutions, it's critical that your content ranks as prominently as possible (ideally, above your competition).
- **Organic Social Media:** Having an active presence on social media is your chance to build an emotional and long-lasting bond with your brand. Your organic social presence is the place to signal credibility and brand reinforcement of who you are and what you champion. Your calendar needs to be in place early in the summer. Research shows that educators are heavily engaged on social media in July. Even though many educators are taking time off, this is when they start looking forward. What are they challenged with? What gaps in their professional development are they trying to fill? What new trends are happening in their space that they need to know about?

*Google handles over 5.5 billion searches per day (Google)*

- **Mobile First:** A few years ago, the buzzword was mobile friendly, but we've evolved to mobile first. A few reminders for your mobile marketing initiatives:
  - ▣ **People skim.** Make sure your content is formatted, scannable, and easy to digest with clear calls to action. Keep in mind: concise does not mean dumbed down.
  - ▣ **Less is more.** Don't have a lot competing on website pages (or landing pages) for attention—especially at the top where eye tracking studies show people focus.
  - ▣ **Visual content is king.** With our short attention spans, we learn and remember better when visuals accompany text. An infographic by HubSpot revealed that 80% of people remember what they see while only 20% remember what they read.
  - ▣ **Make your headlines count.** A headline is designed to do one thing: draw readers into the

story. With so much competing for attention online, you must spend time to make sure your headline is appealing and will generate clicks.

- ▣ **Don't forget videos.** Video marketing has been growing in importance on every platform and channel. According to HubSpot, consumers want to see videos from brands more than any other type of content. Marketing videos include educational and how-to videos, demos, expert interviews, animated videos, live videos, and more.

*78% of teachers rely on their smartphones to get the information they need (MDR)*

- ▣ **Mobile influences Google ranking.** In 2018, Google made the switch to mobile-first indexing. This means they will use the mobile version of your site for indexing and ranking instead of your site's desktop version. People are more willing to convert on mobile than they used to be, so the experience needs to be fast and seamless.
- ▣ **Optimize emails for mobile.** Educators are busy and on the go, which means they're consuming your emails on their phones. Your mobile email marketing checklist needs to include all of the points above as well as visuals, engaging headlines, storytelling, formatting, and buttons instead of text links.

*November Through April:  
Pipeline Tactics for Middle  
of the Funnel*

Tradeshow season picks up in November. Continue the dialogue and move prospects down the funnel by presenting information based on needs assessments. While your sales team is hitting the

ground hard, digital channels can be supporting them. For example:

- **Retargeting:** Retargeting campaigns bring website visitors back to your site and keep you top of mind. You can and should retarget to supplement events and initiatives, such as:
  - o Attendees who visited your website after a live event
  - o Prospects who visited a landing page but did not convert
- **Paid Social** (Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram)
  - o Planning an upcoming launch
  - o Hosting a workshop
  - o Encouraging app downloads and purchases

***SEO ensures you stay relevant in the ever-changing world of search and savvy competitors. Data shows that 90% of users never scroll past the first page of search results. (Chitika)***

- **Paid Search Ads** (Google Ads)
  - o Drive more traffic to your landing pages
- **SEO:** The quieter holiday season is an ideal time to optimize your content and refresh your keyword research. Make sure your content is findable across every channel, onsite, and offsite.
- **Conversion Optimization:** Look at your landing pages, calls to action, and reports with a critical eye to assess where you can tighten up conversion and stop leads from slipping out of the funnel.
- **Refresh:** For the remainder of the school marketing year, refresh your goals, KPIs, and campaign milestones. Adjust or set any new tracking pixels/tracking links and ensure you're set up to capture data and measure results.

## April Through June: Strategize, Evaluate, and Create Assets

Spring is the most important season in the education purchasing cycle. Marketing's role is to stay in front of your target market and leverage your content at the bottom of the funnel: demos, case studies, discounts, and email pushes.

While you're supporting the sales team with initiatives designed to encourage the purchase, you should also be ramping up for your next big digital marketing year. This is the time to strategize, evaluate, and create assets.

- 1 Pull reports and review data to inform your marketing calendar.** Evaluate your marketing analytics dashboards and download reports to identify what worked and what didn't. Use data-driven decision-making to inform your strategy and execution. Create or duplicate your annual, quarterly, and monthly calendars; plan ahead as far as you can. This is the time to refresh and set benchmarks for your campaigns throughout the year.

***Popularized by Joe Pulizzi founder of the Content Marketing Institute, the "4-1-1" social media rule states: For every one self-serving tweet, you should re-tweet one relevant tweet and most importantly share four pieces of relevant content written by others.***



**2 Strategize with a mini brand audit.** As data-based selling is important, this should be reflected in your marketing plans and messaging. Relationships still matter, as does knowing how the brand is presented. When is the last time you've Googled your company name? What comes up?

- Google your company name.
- Check out your last ten posts across all social platforms. Do they have the recommended 4-1-1 mix, or are they all about your company?

**3 Refresh your visual assets, including infographics, graphics, memes, and more.**

Don't forget to create videos. Did you know videos generate 1,200% more shares compared to text and images?

- On-site content creation: Improve SEO with blog posts and articles.
- Off-site content creation: Amp up your perception as an expert.

**4 Broaden your SEO, keyword, and content creation strategy.** What alternatives are your target markets using if they're not using your products, services, or ideology? Why not address this with your content? Addressing

competitive or alternative products, brands, or approaches as part of your content strategy brings people to your website and generates new leads. I once worked with a one-location, progressive child learning center. While they didn't have brand name recognition, the Goddard, Primrose, and Montessori schools down the street did. My client enrolled new families by producing content aligning and comparing themselves to these schools.

**5 Create free resources.** Educators love free. Whether it's a gated or ungated resource, your site should be the one they go to. Consider creating rubrics, checklists, posters, articles, white papers, charts, and other tools.

**6 Evaluate your copy and marketing messages.** Be clear, not clever. Use the language and terminology of your people. For example, I urged one of my EdTech clients to simplify their product's name. Instead of using the term "catalyst of communications," I advised them to call their product what it was: "mobile apps for schools." Remember, an unclear mind will never buy—or convert.





# DIGITAL MARKETING:

## Need a Custom Roadmap?

An integrated approach to marketing (especially around email, social, and ads) has the highest engagement and degree of success. Hitting key dates means planning—and executing—months in advance if your goals are to generate and nurture leads throughout the year. You might know this: but what we know and what we act upon are two very different things.

If you need assistance trying to sort out the multitude of options, reach out and ask about my Digital Marketing Roadmap service. I comb through your analytics to identify low-hanging fruit, areas for growth, and larger opportunities customized based on your resources: time, labor, and money.

✉ **Email me to learn more:**  
[jenny@jennymunn.com](mailto:jenny@jennymunn.com).

# ABOUT JENNY

Jenny Munn is a Digital Marketer specializing in Search Engine Marketing (PPC/SEO) for the K-12 Education market. Her clients include school suppliers, EdTech, publishers, consultants, and independent schools. She is focused on generating awareness, traffic and conversions to help businesses fill their sales pipelines consistently. Jenny is passionate about her field, and is a frequent speaker. She has taught SEO at EdNET, NAIS, PRSA, UGA SBDC, WordCamp Atlanta, Digital Atlanta, Business Marketing Association, and various digital marketing organizations.



## Connect With Me

 **Email:** [jenny@jennymunn.com](mailto:jenny@jennymunn.com)

 **Website:** [jennymunn.com](http://jennymunn.com)

 **Twitter:** [@jennymunn](https://twitter.com/jennymunn)

 **LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/in/jennymunn/](https://linkedin.com/in/jennymunn/)

 **Instagram:** [jen\\_munn](https://www.instagram.com/jen_munn)