

# Unlocking Digital

How Financial Companies Master Modern Marketing



 digital agent

by Veriday

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# Are you helping your Advisors crack the digital marketing code?



Your advisor network is the touch point between your brand and its customers. If your advisors fail to unlock digital marketing the way they should, and cling to antiquated marketing tactics, as most do, your business suffers.

Why would a financial advisor sit on the sidelines while the game's being played online?

- 1. Technical hurdles**—Digital marketing appears to be a “no way out” maze to many small business owners. They know they need to get into it, but are fearful of what happens next.
- 2. Resources**—Digital marketing presents a myriad of challenges that demand substantial time and money to address effectively.
- 3. Compliance**—Industry regulations can make it a nightmare to support advisor businesses aiming to publish and distribute compliant marketing and content. They want in but can't flip the switch because they're in a highly regulated industry.

As a dealer-broker, you have the power to come to their aid. You can provide your advisors robust digital marketing tools, deliver content at scale, enable them to represent your brand the way they should, and ensure compliance. Doing so is critical to amplifying the reach and engagement of your brand.

In your line of sight right now is a “must-read” guide. Congratulations for downloading it. Though it'd be unfair to tell you digital marketing is simple just because we offer a solution expressly built for financial institutions, we will slay the beast by helping you understand:

- The vital role of the advisor website
- How publishing helpful content is central to success
- Where social media comes into play
- How email marketing is used to generate new business
- Why digital marketing analytics enables perpetual improvement
- How automation makes digital marketing processes efficient and effective

You're going to discover the secrets to leveraging modern marketing and scaling your business via the web. Let's begin.

# If it's static, it's not sticky



Do your advisors have engaging websites? Are they optimized for search engines? Do they help position the advisors as helpful resources and enhance your brand's leadership?

Less than two decades ago, every financial advisor's website (along with most websites) was basically a digital brochure. It was static. If you were to think of the pixels as ink, the ink dried immediately upon publication. Updates were seldom made.

You couldn't expect a brochure website to do anything more than provide an inkling of credibility. Like a brochure, the language aimed to sell. Visitors were given no reason to do anything more than click around—once.

Today, few businesses do well with static sites. Instead, the goal is to make “sticky” sites, those that compel visitors to stick around longer, engage more deliberately, and come back often.

Successful websites are essentially communities of like-minded people or hubs. Brochure sites treat everyone who visits exactly the same.

Obviously, your customers do not all have the same interests, needs and challenges. If you want your financial institution to satisfy the information needs of specific people, your advisors' websites must be customized accordingly.

## **It's time to think inbound**

Old marketing relied on “push” strategies. You pushed messages out via various advertising and direct marketing tactics. Digital marketing pioneers HubSpot dubbed the tactics “outbound marketing” to contrast the new-school strategies of “inbound marketing.”

With inbound marketing, you don't aim to interrupt people as they are consuming media they're interested in, but rather, the goal is to create the media they are interested in.

Achieving success with inbound marketing also calls for far more than creating an expansive and interesting site. You need to create an expansive and interesting online presence that “pulls” prospects into your website. In other words, you need to create content—the web's magnetic force.

# How websites earn traffic



Content comes in many forms: video, podcasts, infographics, images, customer stories, eBooks, slides, quizzes, courses, tools and so forth. Blogging is the most universal strategy for content marketers.

Blogs (short for “web logs”) tend to house a variety of articles types (how to’s, lists, opinions, etc.) as well as the others types of media mentioned above. Any digital media can be published on a blog.

Remember, the first objective of your advisors’ sites is to pull people into them. As such, the content created by those representing your brand will be vastly more effective if it also appears offsite, thereby expanding your advisors’ digital footprint.

With that, the conversation turns to search marketing and social media. Email marketing? Yes, indeed. Even online advertising can play a role in increasing the reach of your advisors’ content.

You have to keep the content coming  
The 21st century boasts an enormous number of companies that have figured out how to rule the web by publishing content.

While some niches offer more exciting examples than others, every industry now includes “content kings” that attract traffic, lead, sales, and referrals as a result of publishing.

Make no mistake. Succeeding with content marketing isn’t the least bit easy. It requires commitment. Following are some best practices of successful content marketers:

- **A mission is defined.** Content marketers document whom they publish for and what purpose the content serves.
- **Consistency is maintained.** Content marketing is not a campaign. There is no end date. The program fails if and when the publication stalls or stops. It’s imperative to perpetually develop and publish new content.
- **Content becomes a culture.** The most successful content marketers gain universal (and top-down) buy-in from everyone in the company and rely on a rich variety of sources for content creation.



- **Content qualifies.** Though the content your advisors publish won't be explicitly promotional, it should be relevant and attractive to the right audience and help others disqualify themselves when ill fitted for the products and services.
- **Content sells.** Content should take prospects and customers on a journey, moving first-timers to a more engaged stage of interest. The ultimate goal is to use content to create sales-ready leads.
- **Advocacy is built.** Content marketing should foster loyalty and strive to create a legion of brand advocates.

The role of search engine marketing

A recent survey of investors by the Financial Planning Association and LinkedIn found that over half of respondents between 18 and 44 perform an online search for an advisor before making contact with them.

Consider also, a higher percentage of investors seek financial information, not financial advisors. They enter keywords such "retirement planning" and land on the websites and blogs of businesses that offer advice and insights. In the age of inbound marketing, you need these investors to find content offered by your company and its advisors.

The bottom line: to succeed in the all-important search marketing channel requires a concerted effort to develop useful content and apply search engine optimization (SEO) tactics so that it's discovered.

### Who goes there?

What happens when a potential customer visits the advisor's website? Approximately 98% will do nothing more than read a little. In other words, only a small fraction of first-time visitors reveal who they are or reach out. Opportunity lost. The chance of them returning to the website in the future is miniscule.

The savvy way to address this challenge is to entice the visitor to provide contact information—usually their email address. This is done by offering free but gated content. That is, the website calls attention to a "lead magnet," an offer of some sort, which is fulfilled only if the visitor completes a form.

Now that's progress. Your advisor actually has a lead. And thanks to the power of marketing automation, the advisor will have the opportunity to follow-up and nurture the relationship.

Industry	Visitors	Visitors	MQLS	Sales Ops	Customers
Education	10,000 - 50,000	10 - 500	10 - 500	100 - 200	100 - 200
Healthcare & Medical	10,000 - 50,000	10 - 500	10 - 500	100 - 200	100 - 200
Marketing Agencies	10,000 - 50,000	10 - 500	10 - 500	100 - 200	100 - 200
Consulting	10,000 - 50,000	10 - 500	10 - 500	100 - 200	100 - 200
Industrial & Manufacturing	10,000 - 50,000	10 - 500	10 - 500	100 - 200	50 - 100
Media & Publishing	10,000 - 50,000	10 - 500	10 - 500	100 - 200	50 - 100
Travel & Tourism	10,000 - 50,000	500 - 1000	500 - 1000	100 - 200	300 - 400
Software	10,000 - 50,000	500 - 1000	500 - 1000	100 - 200	50 - 100
Information Tech & Services	10,000 - 50,000	500 - 1000	500 - 1000	200 - 300	200 - 300
Consumer Products	10,000 - 50,000	500 - 1000	500 - 1000	300 - 400	200 - 300
Financial Services	10,000 - 50,000	500 - 1000	500 - 1000	200 - 300	200 - 300

Demand Generation Benchmark Report, 2015



# The social media imperative



Social media networks offer today's most open content-sharing environments. They also have become a central part of how consumers discover and evaluate information. As more and more customers demand online resources to help them better understand financial management strategies, social media is becoming increasingly critical.

Unsurprisingly, the use of social media marketing by financial advisors is evolving rapidly. A 2016 survey by Putman Investments of more than 1,000 financial advisors found:

- 85% use social media for business.
- 80% reported gaining new clients as a result.
- 85% say social media helped shorten the selling cycle.
- 73% use LinkedIn; 54% are active on Facebook; and 44% on Twitter.

*The reasons advisors use social media include:*

- Connecting with peers
- Improving their referral network
- Building brand awareness
- Enhancing current client relationships
- Cultivating prospects
- Expanding industry knowledge
- Thought leadership promotion

Investors expect more from their financial institutions than simply having a social media presence. Your company and its advisors must deliver value via social channels and seek to make connections with prospects. Not doing so is to risk losing opportunities to build relationships with clients on their terms.

### **Social media marketing tips for financial advisors**

Following are some essential strategies financial advisors should use to attract new clients and solidify relationships with existing clients via social media.

- **Listen and learn**—Before taking action on social media, newcomers should observe what others are doing. Look at how competitors, colleagues, and friends use the media and apply what you learn.
- **Share relevant content**—Financial customers and prospects are hungry for solid financial planning advice and social media provides numerous content distribution platforms. Advisors should work with dealers to generate content such as blog posts, videos, reports, guides and case studies to help customers solve problems and learn more about financial topics.



- **Ditch the pitch**—Financial advisors shouldn't look to use social media strictly to sell products and services. In addition to the regulatory considerations, social channels aren't suitable for the delivery of financial products and services. Instead, social media can be used as a platform for advisors to showcase intellectual capital and thought leadership and build relationships.
- **Join social groups**—Joining discussion groups on LinkedIn, Facebook and other networks is a great way to connect with customers and prospects and increase brand awareness. Once an advisor is a member of a social media group, he or she can send personal messages to other members. This practice should be handled with care. Spammers and product pitchers won't be well received.
- **Research and prospect**—Conduct searches based on your preferred customer profile. You can also search by personal interests. Use social media to demonstrate your expertise and build trust over time.
- **Be authentic**—Successful social media marketers reveal their true selves and post in their authentic voice. It's best to avoid controversial topics, but helpful to show your personal side. People do business with people they like.

### Stay compliant

Obviously, compliance regulations loom large in the financial industry and social media represents a risky playing field. Even so, most financial firms recognize the need to grant advisors permission to post updates and content recommendations. Advisors simply can't make headway without some license.

This makes abiding by corporate policies all-important. You can facilitate your advisors' use of social media by creating and enforcing guidelines for creating brand-approved and compliant social media profiles, advertising policies, and governances for publishing content.

The goal is to encourage the use of social media, not hinder it. When advisors fail with social media, it's usually because they give up too soon. It takes time to build a strong base of online connections or followers, but given time, the effect on the advisor's reach and influence can be significant.

# The role of email marketing



Though there is an endless buzz about social media, email remains the most personal medium and most essential tool for financial advisors. The most effective financial professionals reach out to clients monthly, or more often, via email, which helps keep the advisor forefront in the clients' minds, increase referrals and improve client satisfaction.

If you're not helping your advisors take advantage of email marketing, it's time to get started. Email is inexpensive, easy to use, and quick.

- 73% of marketers agree that email marketing is core to their business, according to Salesforce Marketing Cloud's State of Marketing report.
- Clients want to be emailed often. A recent Morningstar study found 30.4% of clients prefer weekly emails from their advisor with 36.6% preferring to receive them monthly. Only 19.9% prefer emails quarterly.
- Over 60% of clients will open and read a relevant weekly email about their financial situation, according to a study by Blueleaf.

## Email marketing best practices

Here are some important best practices for email marketing:

- **Always be list-building**—Advisors must focus on perpetually building an email list comprised of professional contacts, clients and potential clients. Advisors can encourage people to sign up for their list in a variety of ways including using sign-up forms on their websites and blogs, landing pages, new account forms, social media, and more.
- **Offer useful content**—Share content clients want—without focusing on selling. Make sure the benefit of reading the email is clear. Articles, tips, product updates and upcoming events or deadlines will inspire recipients to open and act on email updates.
- **Focus**—Don't overload readers with too much content. Emails should focus on just one (or a few) key points.
- **Write compelling subject lines**—Subject lines are all-important in email marketing. Strive to make them short and specific. Open rates will increase when readers are given a good reason to read the email.



- **Automate and nurture**—Nurture new subscribers with an informative welcome series of emails they'll receive after opting-in. The emails can feature helpful articles, videos, and links to valuable resources.
- **Personalize and segment**—The more personalized (and therefore, relevant) the content is, the more effective it will be. Email programs allow you to segment lists based on specific criteria. Segmenting the audience by interests or behaviors will increase the performance of email programs.
- **Cross-promote**—Email subscribers may want to connect via additional channels. Advisors are wise to promote other digital properties via email, such as: social media networks, websites and blogs. The more channel options clients have, the easier it is to do business.
- **Encourage referrals**—Ask readers to forward email they find valuable to their friends. More readers can mean more business and referrals.
- **Include a call to action**—Emails should tell readers how to respond, whether that may be read a blog post, connect with you on social media or get in contact. The call to action should always include a benefit statement.
- **Watch your analytics**—Analytics from email service providers (ESPs) enables users to assess open rates, click-through rates, bounces and more. Pay close attention to emails metrics and apply the lessons learned.

# Plug into analytics



Unlocking the power of digital marketing requires analytics—the use of data collection systems to measure performance and apply the insights to increase efficiency and profitability. Marketing metrics reveal user behavior, demographics, and interests, which enable marketers to send the right message to the right person at the right time.

If your financial advisors don't track activity on their website—or worse yet—don't have the tools in place to do so—they risk losing a competitive edge. Fortunately, marketing automation tools make it far easier to analyze past performance and optimize future performance.

As a dealer, you not only need information to help advisors generate more leads and revenue but also must rely on the data to improve their businesses. The more technologies you add to the advisor's toolkit, the more important analytics become.

Some of the questions analytics will help answer include:

- How much are advisors using the tools you provide?
- How much traffic are the websites getting?
- Where does the traffic come from?
- What degree of engagement are advisor sites producing?
- What content is being used by advisors?
- What is being downloaded by their prospects?
- What website changes and digital marketing activity are producing results?

# Capitalize on marketing automation



Generally speaking, marketing automation is technology that allows you to streamline, automate and measure marketing tasks to increase efficiency and grow revenue faster. However, it can mean different things to different companies and be applied in a variety of ways.

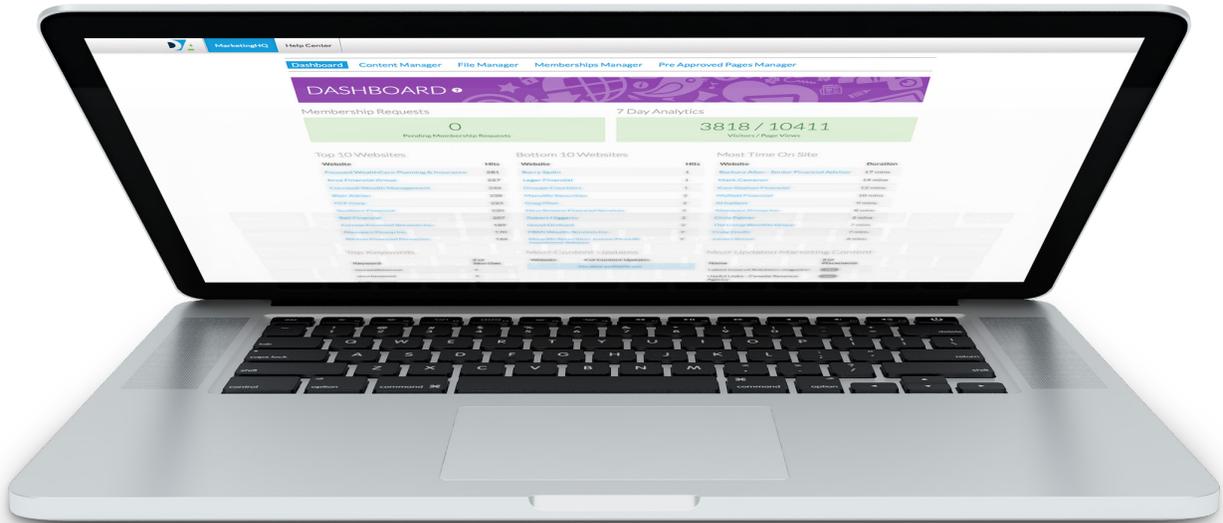
For financial institutions like yours that serve a network of financial advisors, marketing automation's biggest job is to centralize and unify digital marketing operations. The automation system becomes a powerful control center to deliver unprecedented levels of efficiency for:

- The management of website activity for all constituents
- Maintaining brand continuity across digital channels
- Collaborating to create digital marketing campaigns
- Tracking, maintaining and modifying deliverables

- Streamlining compliance protocols and approval processes
- Reviewing up-to-the-minute customer analytics with simple dashboards
- Assessing how content is being used and consumed by advisors to foster better decisions for supporting their businesses
- Integrating customer relationship management systems

*A marketing automation platform purpose-built to address the challenges of your industry face will give you the tools you need to communicate and collaborate effectively with geographically dispersed financial advisors.*

## Your platform to manage advisor digital marketing



Digital Agent, by Veriday, enables you to manage your advisors' digital marketing programs while providing them the flexibility needed to create unique campaigns.

The platform's powerful content management functionality:

- **Enables you to quickly review** new and updated content and accept or reject any changes or updates before being published
- **Makes it easy for your compliance team** to streamline the moderation process
- **Tracks changes and archive** all content created and published
- **Delivers insights** into how content is being used by advisors
- **Provides customized reports** focused on key performance indicators

Digital Agent empowers you to increase your marketing reach and engagement through your advisors and create highly targeted websites and more relevant content. It's easily configured to meet the needs of your company's workflow and standards. The tool optimizes your existing business processes to reduce complexity and maximize productivity.

Ready to unlock digital?

[Schedule a demonstration today](#)



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