



MULTI-LOCATION MARKETING

The keys to developing
a results-driven strategy



1 INTRODUCTION

2 THE ENDURING FOUNDATIONS BRAND, AUDIENCE, AND MEASUREMENT

Brand

Be Differentiated, Compelling, and Consistent

Audience

Understand the Customer Journey

Measurement

Track and Optimize Across Locations

3 TODAY'S ESSENTIAL TACTICS WEBSITES, SEARCH, AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Websites

Build a Robust Platform

Search Engine Optimization

Make the Most of Modules

Local Search

Ensure Relevance and Prominence

Search Engine Advertising

Group and Track Campaigns

Social

Understand Your Audience and Invest in Paid Media

4 GET IN TOUCH

1 INTRODUCTION

**WHAT WE'VE
LEARNED OVER
MORE THAN
20 YEARS AS
AN AGENCY
SPECIALIZING
IN MULTI-
LOCATION
MARKETING
IS THAT SOME
THINGS HAVEN'T
CHANGED,
WHILE OTHERS
ARE CONSTANTLY
EVOLVING.**

The important core strategies, such as investing in your brand, developing a rich understanding of your audience, and tracking what's working, remain as important as ever.

Meanwhile, rapidly evolving digital channels are transforming the field, and keeping pace with these requires continually updated marketing approaches.

In this e-book, we share advice on how to develop a modern multi-location marketing plan by laying a strong foundation through branding, audience understanding, and measurement, and by effectively executing your website, search, and social media efforts.

The principles, strategies, and tactics we cover were gleaned from our extensive work with multi-location companies in varied industry verticals and growth cycles. While this guide won't guarantee the success of your marketing strategy, it will point you in the right direction for creating a results-driven plan.



THE ENDURING FOUNDATIONS
BRAND, AUDIENCE, AND
MEASUREMENT

2

THE ENDURING FOUNDATIONS BRAND, AUDIENCE, AND MEASUREMENT

BRAND BE DIFFERENTIATED, COMPELLING, AND CONSISTENT

PRO TIP
Brand consistency is especially important for businesses with more than one location, since it's easy for messaging to get distorted. Work hard to ensure that every brand communication—whether it's 30 characters or 3,000 words—has the same voice and tone.

We've found that the success of a multi-location business is rooted in creating a differentiated, compelling, and consistent brand. Put simply: building a powerful brand is paramount to sustainable growth.

A well-developed brand provides the foundation for all your marketing and communications efforts. By being differentiated and compelling, you set yourself apart from the competition and increase the likelihood that potential customers will take action. And by being consistent with your voice, tone, and promise, you establish loyalty and familiarity.

Of course, developing a powerful brand isn't easy, especially for a multi-location firm. In our experience, these types of businesses often have partners and/or investors who are highly focused on identifying the most cost-effective marketing channels. Since the immediate, tangible results of investing in brand development can be challenging or costly to measure, it can be an uphill battle to convince companies whose focus is on aggressive growth that it's worth the effort.

However, it's absolutely worth the investment because a strong brand platform allows for the flexibility to support growth while maintaining competitive differentiation. This has a direct impact on an organization's ability to penetrate new markets, add new services, and fend off competitive challenges.

Investing in your brand can have a meaningful financial impact on the value of your company. In some cases, a strong brand can be as valuable as historical revenue, capital assets, or high EBITDA. So how do you build a powerful brand? We believe it starts by taking a step back: there's immense value in undergoing a structured, strategic, and focused evaluation to consider how your brand fits its current conditions and future aspirations.

2

THE ENDURING FOUNDATIONS

BRAND, AUDIENCE, AND MEASUREMENT

AUDIENCE

UNDERSTAND THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY

A critical component of effective and efficient multi-location marketing is defining the customer journey.

To maintain and grow your business, it's essential to develop a very clear understanding of where your prospective customers are in the purchase cycle and what they're trying to accomplish. From there, you can work to present a path to conversion.

It's important to note that the length and depth of the consideration process varies widely among different types of multi-location businesses. For example, in dentistry, the conversion is an appointment, and it can take extensive touch points and time to encourage one to be made. For other businesses, the process is much simpler and more compressed, and there may be an entirely different conversion metric.

These variations are why each business needs to map its own customer journey. Only by understanding the path to purchase of your customers and how these fit with your operational strengths (and weaknesses) can you tailor your marketing effectively.

Mapping and tracking conversion points is what allows for sustained and long-term same-store growth. However, as with branding, it can be a struggle to justify making this investment. It's very common, especially when working with equity-backed businesses in an aggressive growth mode, to focus on immediately driving more leads without doing the customer-journey legwork.

After working with multi-location businesses since 1999, we've learned that rushing past mapping the customer journey is usually an irresponsible approach that negatively impacts long-term ROI.

That's because people at different stages require different marketing approaches. For example, audiences actively trying to access goods and services may be best served by focused, conversion-based website landing pages with compelling offers, whereas those just beginning the research process may need more-informational website content. Only by understanding these nuances and tailoring your efforts can you meet these unique needs effectively.

PRO TIP

Once you've mapped the customer journey, segment audiences based on conversion cycle. This will enable you to effectively target your marketing efforts according to each group's specific needs.

2

THE ENDURING FOUNDATIONS

BRAND, AUDIENCE, AND MEASUREMENT

MEASUREMENT TRACK AND OPTIMIZE ACROSS LOCATIONS

PRO TIP

To truly understand the effectiveness of your marketing efforts, you must understand how they map to revenue. Developing baseline KPIs that align with ROI objectives is necessary to make informed decisions on which optimizations you should make.

Growing your locations begins with understanding your business. Fundamentally, you must know how each location is performing—same-store growth, staff productivity, etc.—in order to properly allocate resources.

One measurement area that's especially important—and one that multi-location businesses often struggle with—is attribution. All too often, firms make marketing-decision mistakes because they're relying on a single point of attribution. To avoid this, it's necessary to engage in multi-touch attribution. Only by understanding the role that each of your marketing channels plays at each point on the customer journey can you develop a plan that will drive significant and sustainable growth.

Another essential approach is to measure across locations. By leveraging data from all markets and by looking at the full breadth of your business, you'll be able to more easily identify what's working—and what isn't.

Of course, having more locations means more data to collect and analyze. That's why it's often necessary for multi-location businesses to develop custom dashboards and alerts to help them see where resources aren't being applied efficiently. Automation can also be used to help with things like pausing digital initiatives for locations that aren't meeting core KPIs.

Don't forget that tracking is only half the battle— to achieve success, you must also optimize across locations. A constant cycle of measuring, testing, optimizing—and measuring again—is required to validate new tactics and keep up with the ever-changing world of marketing.

Also keep in mind that successful measurement and optimization requires walking a fine line: you should identify best practices that can be applied across your entire business, while remaining flexible enough to address the specific needs of individual locations.



TODAY'S ESSENTIAL TACTICS
WEBSITES, SEARCH, AND
SOCIAL MEDIA

3

TODAY'S ESSENTIAL TACTICS WEBSITES, SEARCH, AND SOCIAL MEDIA

WEBSITES BUILD A ROBUST PLATFORM

Whereas a simple website setup may work for a single-location firm, businesses with multiple locations need a robust web platform.

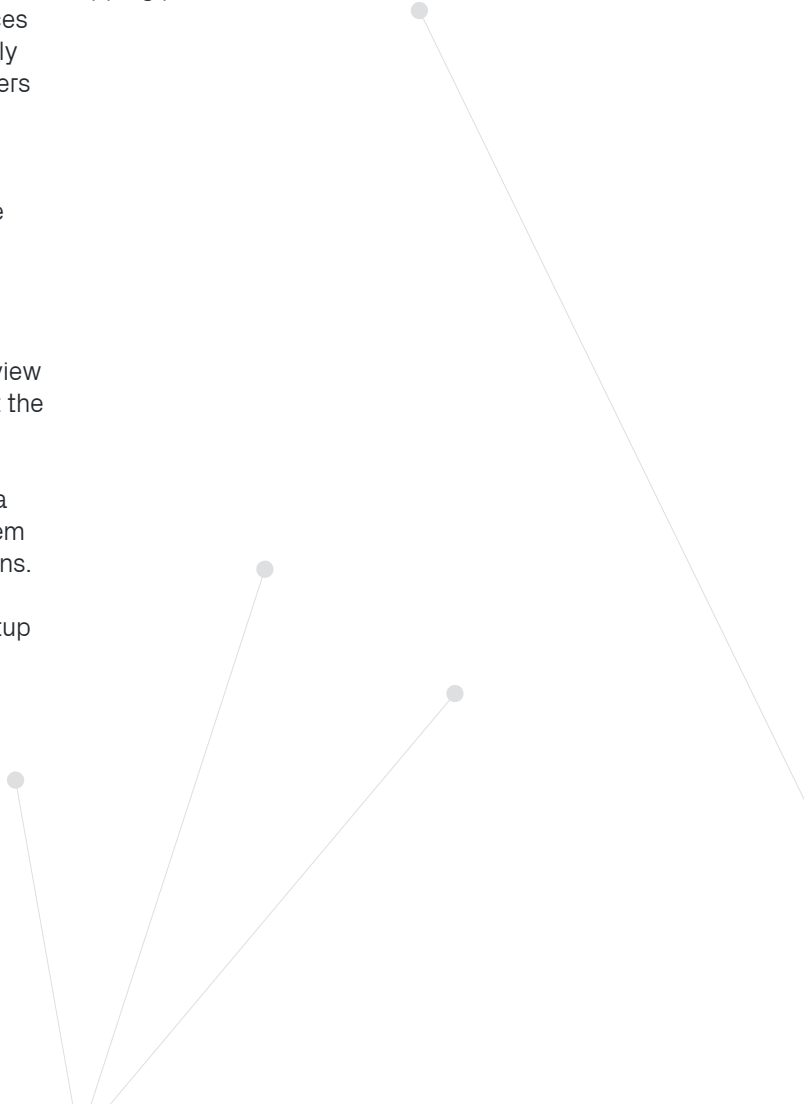
That's because having more locations means more complexity: each one may need a unique visual theme, as well as a unique configuration for things like the address, hours of operation, services offered, and any promotions. Moreover, at a certain point, manually adding, editing, and removing content across multiple disparate sites becomes nearly impossible.

A sophisticated content management system (CMS) with a single, integrated console will enable you to handle all of this efficiently. Additionally, you'll be able to execute more advanced approaches, such as creating fully dynamic pages/experiences based on each user's geo-location and interests, and instantly displaying any changes made in the control panel to customers in real-time.

A robust CMS will also allow your site to interact with other platforms more easily. For example, your updates will be able to be sent automatically to search and social networks. A key integration in particular is with online rating and review sites. With a sophisticated CMS, you'll be able to do things like automatically import location-specific online ratings and comments from Yelp and Google My Business for manual review and publish pre-approved positive testimonials for display at the brand or location level.

Keep in mind that there's no one-size-fits-all solution, since a firm that has a dozen locations requires a very different system architecture compared with one that has hundreds of locations. The key is to develop the right platform for your particular business based on an in-depth evaluation of your current setup and future plans.

PRO TIP
CMS inefficiencies often become most visible when a certain scale is reached, which can lead to a great loss of time and/or revenue during new acquisitions and location launches. Be proactive and prepare for growth by building a robust web platform before you hit the tipping point.



3

TODAY'S ESSENTIAL TACTICS WEBSITES, SEARCH, AND SOCIAL MEDIA

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION MAKE THE MOST OF MODULES

PRO TIP

Voice search through Siri, Alexa, and Google Assistant has been growing dramatically. For vocal queries, the Google search engine generally delivers the “zero position” organic result. The good news is that this aligns with Featured Snippets, so by optimizing for that, you’re also optimizing for voice.

In the midst of all the day-to-day marketing madness, it can be easy for multi-location businesses to overlook an important fact: search has evolved.

For example, over the years, Google has continually made changes to how content is displayed on the first page. In the past, simple organic results (the blue links) dominated, with paid listings appearing on the right-hand side. Over time, these have been augmented—or even supplanted—by results from modules such as Google Ads, Google Shopping, Google Images, Google Travel, Google Mapping, Google My Business, video, books, and delivery services. In some cases, the first blue organic link has dropped from the top of the page to the very bottom of the page.

Another big change is that Google is now an answer engine rather than a search engine. In other words, the algorithms have shifted away from trying to simply deliver results that match keywords and toward directly providing information related to questions. That’s why Google’s top of page is increasingly filled with Featured Snippets and People Also Ask fragments that seek to answer the how, what, when, where, and why.

All of this means that search engine optimization is increasingly about optimizing for modules and snippets.

For multi-location businesses to remain competitive, it’s necessary to focus heavily on Google My Business and Maps optimizations in particular, since these drive results in many modules—especially local search modules. And to gain traction in areas such as Featured Snippets, it’s imperative to properly structure your content.

Also, don’t forget to closely monitor your competition. By using tools to track your competitors’ domains, pages, and rankings, you can see what’s working and what you need to do to keep up. Reviewing these results regularly will enable you to outrank your competition in the locations you do business in and see which approaches Google is prioritizing.

3

TODAY'S ESSENTIAL TACTICS WEBSITES, SEARCH, AND SOCIAL MEDIA

LOCAL SEARCH ENSURE RELEVANCE AND PROMINENCE

Perhaps you updated your Google My Business (GMB) listing once and developed a bit of a presence on Yelp. Does that mean you're set to succeed on local search? Not really.

Completing the simple steps to claim all of your business locations on the top platforms is a great start, but implementing a strong, continually updated strategy is key to ranking well on local search.

It's important for multi-location businesses to understand that local search results are based on three main points: proximity, relevance, and prominence. And while their proximity can't be changed, your listings' prominence and relevance to users' searches can be.

How can you impact these factors? It begins by consistently validating all of your listing information—address, phone number, etc.—on key platforms such as Google, Yelp, and Facebook. Next, you need to ensure that you've selected the correct product/service categories on each platform.

From there, you need to match your offerings to consumer behavior. Keep in mind that users are querying in increasingly sophisticated ways—for example, searching for “Where's a nearby clinic with appointments available?” versus just “local clinic”—and you must cater to that by optimizing elements such as Google Posts, product/service descriptions, and Q&As for keywords.

Also, it's hard to overstate the importance of ratings and reviews. In fact, most consumers won't even consider a local business with fewer than four stars and one that doesn't respond to its reviews. That's why, regardless of the number of locations you have, monitoring and managing review-site listings is essential for success.

Finally, even after you've updated your local listings and managed your reviews, your work isn't done. Because local search algorithms are constantly changing, and because consumers can continually add to your listings, it's crucial to have an ongoing plan for monitoring and engaging.

PRO TIP

To optimize for local search you need to know how you're appearing on local search. One way to do this is to use a local search results checker tool to see how your listings appear across various locations.

3

TODAY'S ESSENTIAL TACTICS WEBSITES, SEARCH, AND SOCIAL MEDIA

SEARCH ENGINE ADVERTISING GROUP AND TRACK CAMPAIGNS

PRO TIP

When it comes to paid search ads for your branded terms, monitor the migration of users from paid Google Ads to Google organic results in order to find opportunities to reduce spend over time. Also, consider a reduction in branded budget for domains where competitor bidding is minimal.

Many multi-location businesses group their search engine advertising campaigns together into a single campaign, since this allows budget to be shared seamlessly across locations with an automatic optimization for conversions.

The problem is that while this tends to be the simplest approach, it's not necessarily the most efficient. That's because optimizing budget across locations sometimes leads to too much spend going to some markets and too little going to others. For example, you may find that a small handful of established locations receive the bulk of a campaign's budget, while new or smaller locations receive none.

That's why creating individual search engine advertising campaigns for locations can be beneficial—it gives you additional control over spend and traffic.

However, with this approach, you have to be sure that your campaign settings exclude nearby locations from competing with each other so that Google won't create an internal bidding battle and increase your cost per lead.

Another key approach is to bid on your own branded terms. A domain name that consistently ranks outside of the first results page can leverage Google Ads on its own branded terms for increased visibility. Bidding on your own branded terms is also a great way to defend against competitors who may be trying to siphon away traffic.

Also, don't forget that there are multiple ways that a user can convert after interacting with a paid Google Ad. Given that, don't limit your conversion tracking to only a lead form or purchase event. Gain access to other conversion events in Google by tracking things like click-to-calls and in-store visits across multiple devices. Also try to develop unique identifiers—such as by replacing catch-all 1-800 numbers with dynamic phone numbers—so that you can understand the true impact of different efforts.

3

TODAY'S ESSENTIAL TACTICS WEBSITES, SEARCH, AND SOCIAL MEDIA

SOCIAL UNDERSTAND YOUR AUDIENCE AND INVEST IN PAID MEDIA

With more than 140 million businesses on social platforms such as Facebook, getting in front of your audiences can seem daunting.

The good news is that it's possible to break through by taking the right approaches.

This begins by thinking beyond "Likes." All too often, multi-location businesses optimize their social strategies for these sorts of engagement metrics—even going so far as to purchase Likes from bots—but the truth is, they're not that valuable, since these efforts don't necessarily track to sales. Moreover, some platforms, such as Instagram, have started moving away from displaying Likes altogether.

Instead, social media should be treated as a paid media marketing channel, with the sales funnel in mind. Specifically, you should develop a strategic social marketing plan to reach potential (or existing) customers and lead them along the path to purchase (or repurchase).

With this in mind, your social strategy should include a solid flow from brand awareness to lead generation and conversion.

And with multiple locations to manage, your brand should focus on both broad, brand-level campaigns and local campaigns targeted to segmented audiences.

Also, keep in mind that businesses' social media pages can now feature a wide range of elements, from practical information (location, phone number, hours, etc.) and content (photos, videos, images, stories), to ratings/reviews, actions (reservations, bookings, etc.), and advertising/platform integrations.

In other words, social media pages have evolved into rich online hubs for consumers. This means it's more important than ever to ensure that your offerings are continually maintained and optimized. Take the time to regularly update your business information, add content, encourage positive reviews from your customers, and learn about new marketing features introduced by the social networks.

PRO TIP

Success on social starts with having the right structure. Be sure to set your pages into a parent/child relationship before running any local campaigns. This will allow you to easily run ads from an individual location for an increased conversion rate, as well as run localized content targeted to where audiences are.

To learn more about how to create a results-driven marketing plan for your multi-location business, contact us.

MDG FLORIDA
3500 NW Boca Raton Blvd
Suite 601
Boca Raton, FL 33431
(561) 338-7797

MDG NEW YORK
651 New York Ave., #503
Brooklyn, NY 11203
(917) 969-5370

GET IN TOUCH

