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UNDERSTANDING YOUR DIGITAL AUDIENCE



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WHAT DO YOUR CUSTOMERS WANT?

In the age of search marketing, personalisation and relationship-building are key. Added to that, the growing complexity of today's customer journey means that understanding your audience is a vital first step towards a successful search marketing strategy, whatever your business' size or sector.

To attract visitors, increase brand awareness, convert leads and increase return on investment (ROI), you need to adopt techniques that will engage advertising-savvy, time-poor, multi-channel and multi-device using individuals.

You can't rely on assumptions...

Creating meaningful, authentic, lasting connections is one of the main objectives of digital marketing, where the focus is on offering high quality content in a relevant context to create a rich, personalised experience for your target audience.

This requires thorough research into your target audience using analytics tools such as Google Analytics, and by studying their online behaviour:

- How and when they use the internet
- The search terms they use
- The way they interact with your content
- Their social media activity

The best way to start this research is by defining your target audience through the creation of customer personas.

Consumer personas should be entirely dynamic, open to change based on the data you discover during the investigation process, however, it is important for you to have at least sketched an outline to build on, and here's how.

TARGET DEMOGRAPHICS

This will feed back into many other areas of your strategic planning, so it's a good area to start with. Whatever service you provide will fall into a few generic types – whether it is 'female marketing managers 25 – 50', or 'house husbands 30 – 40 based in the South East', knowing the audience you're pitching at will begin to give you an indication as to how to satisfy their needs with the services or products you provide.

GOALS AND CHALLENGES

What are your ideal customers' values and objectives, personal and/or professional (depending on whether your business operates a B2C or B2B model)? What motivates them and what frustrations do they face? This can help you to identify and improve the way you solve problems for your customers and prospects.

You could also include traits such as attitude and behaviour, or even a phrase they might use and complaints they might have, for example, "I know quite a bit about recruitment, but further guidance would reassure me", or "I can never find the right swimwear for my body shape". It can also be useful to think about what they don't want.



DEVICE USE

Understanding what devices your customers use, and how they use them, is important for a number of reasons.

Device use also offers correlation with intent – with buyers more likely to use desktop to research and make purchases, while mobiles tend to be used more for solution based searches, local searches and voice searches.

Determining device intent will feed directly into any good search marketing campaign, allowing you to offer cross platform personalisation to help nurture customers and increase conversions.

As mobile search also tends to be influenced more by location, offering brands with a location specific, or multiple location specific, offers or products the ability to drive mobile users to convert in person.

USAGE CHARTS

When are your customers most active and receptive? If usage peaks in working hours then this should be your focus or, if you run an eCommerce site, you need to work to your strengths during periods of high seasonal or holiday activity – think Christmas for toy manufacturers, or summer for BBQ equipment and garden furniture.

It's not enough to be online for these periods, it is important to use gathered data and your customer personas to make your best pitches at times when your services are most required, in addition to creating meaningful content year-round. Though this is predominately of relevance to paid search campaigns, it is also useful when planning asset marketing for inbound sales and even for seasonal SEO updates to product feeds.

CUSTOMER PERSONAS ALLOW YOU TO:

- Identify customers' values, goals, challenges and interests.
- Think like a consumer, so that you can satisfy their needs with the services or products you provide.
- Improve the way you pitch your product or service offering.
- Identify potential new markets.
- Create engaging content that meets their needs.
- Deliver it in the optimum format, place and time.

WHAT IS YOUR AUDIENCE SEARCHING FOR?

Keyword research is a vital part of any search marketing campaign, whether it is used to inform on-page copy, or to develop brand or product positioning.

Think about what people search for at different stages of the buying cycle. At the start of their searches, potential customers are likely to search for problem-based keywords, eg: 'How to dry out a smartphone'.

Further into the buying cycle, they tend to type in solution-based keywords, eg 'Waterproof smartphone cases', while branded keywords tend to be used at the decision stage: 'Samsung Smartphone preserver case review'.

Get into the mindset of a customer, who is more likely to use natural, casual language than industry jargon or the terms you use to refer to your business.

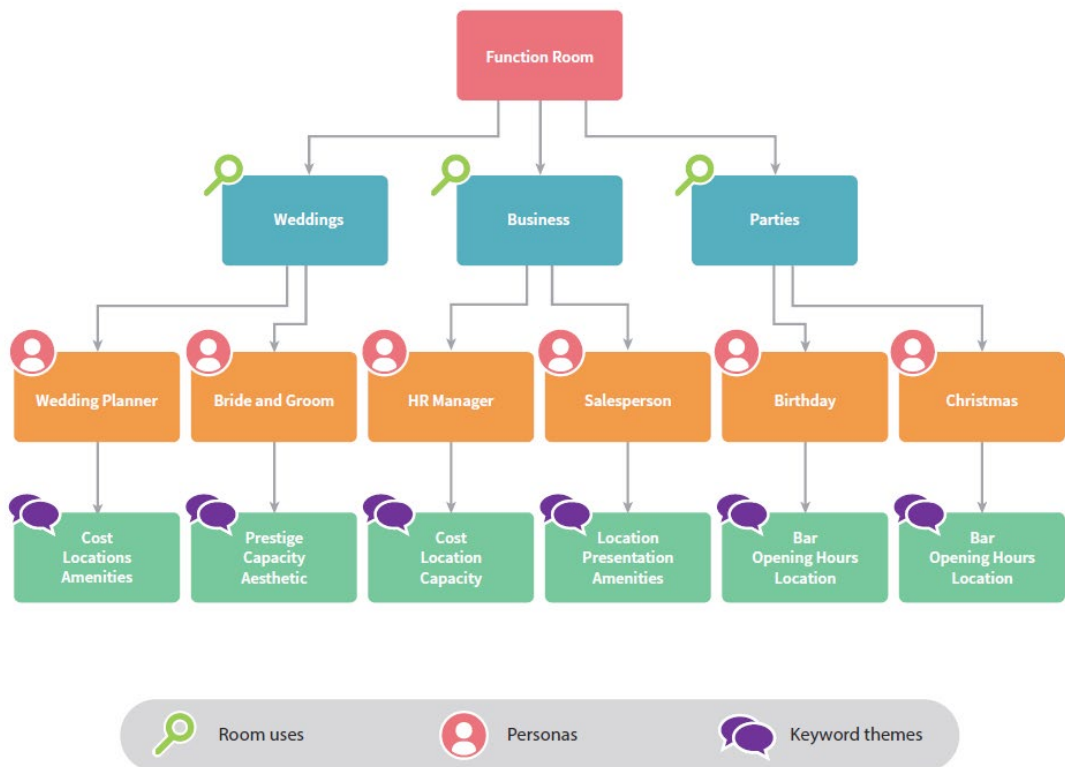
Once you have assembled lists of key terms and questions, use online tools, such as Google's Keyword Planner, to quantify search volume and which of these should be the focus of your efforts. Ideally you're looking for the golden ratio of low competition and high volume.

WHAT ARE YOUR COMPETITORS NOT PROVIDING YOUR AUDIENCE WITH?

Good keyword research will reveal gaps – areas in which your competitors are not competing in, or competing only marginally. In a crowded marketplace it can be difficult for newcomers to compete against established companies. The chances are that competitors will be well established for trophy keywords, whereas there may be appropriate, industry-specific longtail gaps that you could take advantage of for early gains.

WHAT IS YOUR AUDIENCE SEARCHING FOR ON YOUR SITE?

You can use Google Analytics to monitor in-site searches – those customers who are searching while on your page – as well as popular landing pages and seek to consolidate these terms externally.



Basic overview of keyword selection

KEYWORD RESEARCH ALLOWS YOU TO:

- Discover the specific terms customers are using when searching for something for which your brand could provide the solution.
- Reveal specific longtail gaps, particularly those that competitors may be missing, that can be exploited.
- Establish a list of key terms, giving you a clear focus for your SEO and PPC efforts.
- Deliver the right content at the right stage of the buyer journey.

HOW IS YOUR WEB CONTENT PERFORMING?

Is your content striking a chord with your audience? Google Analytics allows you to track the performance of your on-site content, in terms of sessions, engagement and conversions. Here are the basics on how to track the success of your brand's on-page content, allowing you to build up a picture of what resonates with your audience.

LANDING PAGE ANALYTICS

Sessions ? ↓	% New Sessions ?	New Users ?	Bounce Rate ?	Pages/Session ?	Avg. Session Duration ?	Goal Conversion Rate ?	Goal Completions ?
16,000 % of Total: 17.28% (92,612)	84.06% Avg for View: 79.81% (5.33%)	13,449 % of Total: 18.20% (73,910)	65.52% Avg for View: 61.50% (6.55%)	1.57 Avg for View: 1.90 (-17.11%)	00:00:53 Avg for View: 00:01:07 (-21.22%)	0.15% Avg for View: 0.47% (-67.84%)	24 % of Total: 5.56% (432)

Top level metrics for landing page analysis

The above, for example, shows some of the best metrics for measuring the success of your content (included in the standard view if you follow **Reporting>Behaviour>Landing Pages**) and is an average of all pieces in the selected area of the site for the selected duration of time.

Sessions

This means the total number of visits to the specified subsection of the site (here reached by searching '/blog' to give a view of blog traffic). It details the overall number of visits, including returning visitors. It has the obvious benefit of indicating your overall traffic and can show how much your traffic improves alongside a content strategy.

% New sessions

As above, but this metric excludes returning visitors and therefore indicates the new consumers your content is attracting. Clearly it is desirable to retain some repeat traffic as it indicates that your content is developing a following, but this metric can offer a fantastic insight into how your content is developing your traffic.

New users

This is the number of new visitors, rather than as a percentage. Easier to understand at a glance as a simple figure, this metric shows how attractive to new audiences your content is – perhaps revealing how well a piece of 'How to' or instructional content is answering the search query it is aimed at for example.

Bounce rate

This shows the percentage of users that visit only one page of your site before exiting. It can also show you how well your 'similar content' lists or CTAs are working, as these are the main tools you will use to draw consumers on through the site on the path to conversion.

Pages per session (PPS)

This offers an insight into what consumers are doing on your site and potentially how well you're capturing their attention. PPS will generally be much higher for eCommerce sites, but equally a site looking to measure the success of a content strategy will want a high average as it indicates that they are continuing to read/watch/listen past the point of finishing what originally drew them to your site.

Avg session duration

The ideal length of this will depend on the length of your individual pieces of content and how many pages per visit your consumers are visiting, but again the best result is always longer. If a piece of long form content is only receiving a minute of attention, for example, it may be worth revisiting the page to see if you address any issues with the content or layout.

Goal conversion rate & goal conversions

Again, these will depend on what goals you have in place, how you're using CTAs in your blog and other things, but essentially these metrics allow you to assess at a glance how well your content is performing against specific goals – which can, again, be tracked over time to measure progress and identify areas for improvement.

Sessions ? ↓	% New Sessions ?	New Users ?	Bounce Rate ?	Pages/Session ?	Avg. Session Duration ?	Goal Conversion Rate ?	Goal Completions ?
16,164 % of Total: 17.35% (93,140)	84.13% Avg for View: 79.82% (5.40%)	13,598 % of Total: 18.29% (74,340)	64.87% Avg for View: 61.19% (6.02%)	1.58 Avg for View: 1.90 (-16.99%)	00:00:53 Avg for View: 00:01:08 (-21.17%)	0.15% Avg for View: 0.46% (-67.99%)	24 % of Total: 5.56% (432)
7,652 (47.34%)	94.05%	7,197 (52.93%)	67.24%	1.39	00:00:29	0.04%	3 (12.50%)
404 (2.50%)	92.08%	372 (2.74%)	87.62%	1.30	00:00:27	0.00%	0 (0.00%)
365 (2.26%)	89.59%	327 (2.40%)	73.15%	1.42	00:00:53	0.00%	0 (0.00%)
278 (1.72%)	68.71%	191 (1.40%)	80.22%	1.53	00:01:00	1.44%	4 (16.67%)
242 (1.50%)	77.27%	187 (1.38%)	85.12%	1.41	00:00:41	0.00%	0 (0.00%)
228 (1.41%)	77.19%	176 (1.29%)	78.07%	1.66	00:01:40	0.00%	0 (0.00%)
216 (1.34%)	68.06%	147 (1.08%)	76.85%	1.57	00:01:09	0.46%	1 (4.17%)
210 (1.30%)	76.67%	161 (1.18%)	56.67%	1.85	00:01:16	0.00%	0 (0.00%)
210 (1.30%)	75.24%	158 (1.16%)	72.86%	1.75	00:01:40	1.90%	4 (16.67%)
183 (1.13%)	68.31%	125 (0.92%)	53.01%	2.02	00:01:19	0.00%	0 (0.00%)

Some example blogs arranged according to sessions

ATTRIBUTION

The standard first and last interaction attribution data can give you a good idea of how your content is performing across various platforms.

First interaction

The below is an example of conversions for which the first interaction was a share on various social platforms. Here you can see which platform is best serving your present content strategy best and allow you to revisit your approaches for platforms which are underperforming (specifically looking to adapt content to the forms of content which perform better on that specific site).

% of conversions: 2.80%

First Interaction vs *Select model*

Primary Dimension: Source/Medium Other Channel Groupings

Secondary dimension

advanced

Source/Medium	Spend (for selected time range)	First Interaction Conversions	First Interaction CPA	First Interaction Conversion Value	First Interaction ROAS
1. facebook.com / referral	—	1,703.00	—	£4,588.85	—
2. m.facebook.com / referral	—	987.00	—	£4,255.02	—
3. t.co / referral	—	813.00	—	£2,399.78	—
4. linkedin.com / referral	—	225.00	—	—	—
5. vk.com / referral	—	146.00	—	—	—
6. twitter.com / social	—	117.00	—	—	—
7. joni-phil.weebly.com / referral	—	71.00	—	£113.70	—
8. lnkd.in / referral	—	62.00	—	—	—
9. l.facebook.com / referral	—	42.00	—	£23.45	—
10. lm.facebook.com / referral	—	26.00	—	£121.64	—

First interaction is indicative of a conversion which began with a specific referral from (in this case) a social platform and, though there may have been many interactions since, a cookie was placed during this particular visit and the conversion took place within a specific range of time.

Last interaction

Similarly, this shows the number of conversions from visits with last interactions (again we use the social channels here) that come from various platforms. Though the value of these conversions is obviously important, the main use of this section of Analytics is to monitor and develop the performance of your content strategy.

% of conversions: 2.80%

Last Interaction vs *Select model*

Primary Dimension: Source/Medium Other Channel Groupings

Secondary dimension

advanced

Source/Medium	Spend (for selected time range)	Last Interaction Conversions	Last Interaction CPA	Last Interaction Conversion Value	Last Interaction ROAS
1. facebook.com / referral	—	1,271.00	—	£3,254.16	—
2. m.facebook.com / referral	—	923.00	—	£3,611.13	—
3. t.co / referral	—	804.00	—	£2,127.70	—
4. linkedin.com / referral	—	184.00	—	—	—
5. vk.com / referral	—	133.00	—	—	—
6. twitter.com / social	—	114.00	—	—	—
7. lnkd.in / referral	—	60.00	—	—	—
8. joni-phil.weebly.com / referral	—	44.00	—	£78.80	—
9. l.facebook.com / referral	—	34.00	—	£23.45	—
10. pinterest.com / referral	—	27.00	—	£339.43	—

ANALYSING GOOGLE ANALYTICS DATA ALLOWS YOU TO:

- Identify the type of content that most engages your audience.
- Identify opportunities for improvement where you're not meeting the needs of customers.
- Take the guesswork out of enhancing the ROI of your digital marketing activity.
- Plan how time and budget should be distributed for maximum impact, helping to inform your future planning.
- Ensure each piece of content you craft provides valuable information that is centred around the needs of your audience and tailored to their position in the buying cycle.

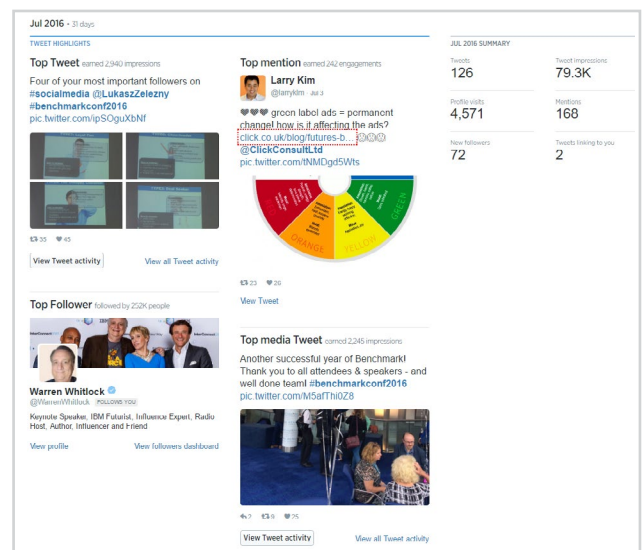
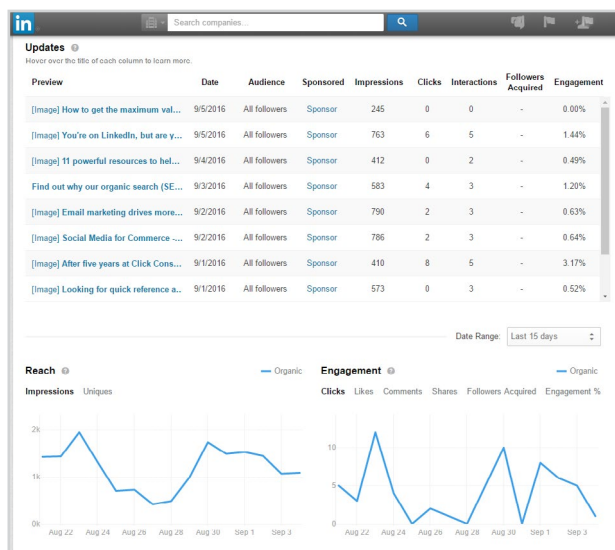


IS YOUR SOCIAL STRATEGY WORKING?

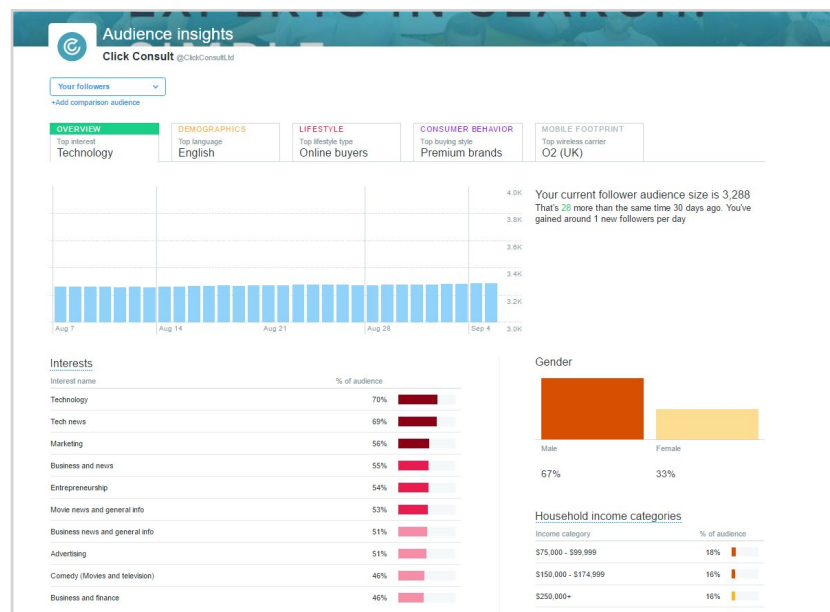
AUDIT SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT

Social media monitoring, using a tool such as Hootsuite, Sprout Social, or each platform's native analytics tool (often called 'insights'). This will help you to track the number of users who are interacting with your posts, the days and times they are most active, and the types of posts that generate the most discussion.

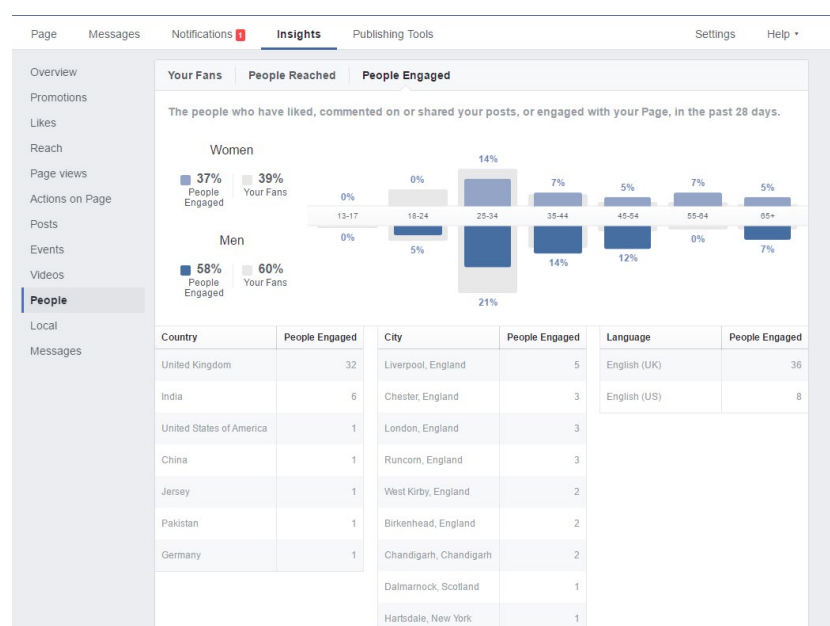
Here's an examples of LinkedIn's Analytics and Twitter's Analytics, respectively:



Most social media platforms will also allow you to dig deeper into the demographics of your Followers. Here's an example of Twitter's Audience Insights:



And an example of Facebook's reach/engagement analysis:



Social media is a goldmine of information about your audience as you can dig as deep as you choose to build up as detailed a picture of your customers' social profiles as you need. For example: which brands and individuals do they follow? Are they members of any groups or forums?

You can also benchmark your performance against your key competitors (at a top level).

POLLS AND SURVEYS

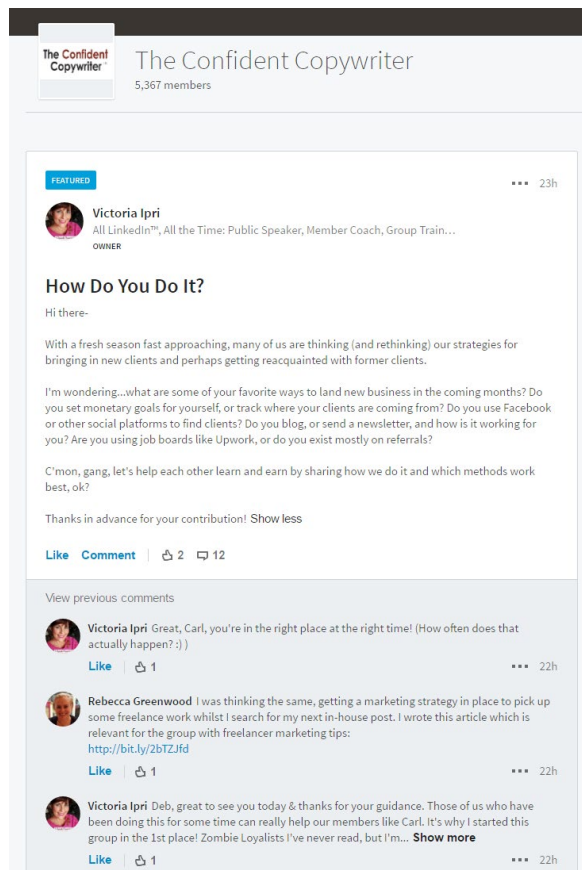
If you have a particular question you want to ask your audience, you can carry out tailored research, for example, by asking a question in a group or forum, or run a poll on Twitter or Facebook. This is a great way to get specific feedback from your audience, and create a buzz around your brand.

As well as gathering useful data, this method provides the opportunity to interact with your consumers in a real and actionable way.

Twitter has a feature that allows you to quickly and easily run a poll:



This LinkedIn user has asked an open question in a LinkedIn group (which allows you to gather data from a very targeted audience):



Of course, social media channels are also good places for sharing links to questionnaires you may be running on platforms such as Survey Monkey.

SOCIAL MONITORING WILL ALLOW YOU TO IDENTIFY:

- Which topics are most popular, and how can you incorporate this into future content, eg, repurposing or offering series of guides to capitalise on engagement.
- The types (eg, lengths, styles, formats) that work the best.
- Your biggest brand ambassadors and the top influencers in your sector and among your follower-base – powerful targets for leveraging your content.
- How to plan your social media posts to capture your audience when they are most likely to be active and to help amplify your posts.
- Whether well-received content on your social channels can be expanded into longer-form material?



CONCLUSION

The digital age offers the ability to vastly improve demographic and interest targeting, but to take advantage you need to thoroughly understand who your audience and what they want.

Treat audience research as an ongoing process; it's important to keep your finger on the pulse to pick up on emerging trends, find inspiration and act on new opportunities. Every piece of information you can gather about your audience is gold dust.

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We are a multi award-winning search marketing agency working with brands & SMEs that want a tangible, measurable return from their online budget.

Our website features an online resources section, full of useful [eBooks](#). We also write a [blog](#), where you can find an abundance of search marketing tips. If you're feeling social, get in touch on [Google+](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [LinkedIn](#).

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Fergal Lynch, Chill Insurance

"As business decisions go, this was probably one of our best. It is not often you find such a responsive and intuitive agency who understand what you are trying to achieve. They get it. They take feedback on the chin - we can be very direct sometimes, and they simply run with it and find solutions that work for us. In a market that over promises and under delivers we trust Click Consult to do a brilliant job. I highly recommend Click Consult. "

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