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The Role of Growth Hacking in Marketing Strategy

The Emergence of the Marketing Technologist

By: Megan Miller

Today's front-runners in marketing are focused on the evolving digital world: web, mobile and social media marketing. The term 'Growth Hacker' has sprung up in the last couple of years to describe a person with a unique combination of skills – an innate ability to understand target consumers, marketing messages and campaigns, combined with a strong aptitude for web technologies, social media, and marketing automation tools.

Like most companies, your 2015 marketing plan includes goals to increase visibility and brand awareness, increase new leads, and ultimately, grow revenue. Other goals might be expressed in terms of web traffic, 'conversions', RFPs or sales opportunities. Many well-meaning marketers build those goals into a marketing plan, without the tools to measure the success of their programs.

The Growth Hacker

The term 'growth hacker' is often used to describe a scrappy, hands-on, heavy-networking marketer in a start-up company, using low-cost, high-touch methods employed to get a company off the ground.

An effective growth hacker melds traditional marketing skills with technical and analytics skills. He or she is disciplined in prioritizing and testing marketing ideas, and using tools to analyze results to continuously improve targeting and messaging. Growth hackers use technology to get to know contacts and better understand their interests, so they might increasingly serve the 'market of one' with tailored information of high value.

Given our description of the spirit of growth hacking, any company, from traditional established Fortune 500 companies to new web start-ups can benefit from growth hacking as a method to effectively generate leads, engage with prospects, and retain customers.

Tools used by Growth Hackers

Growth hacking is part art and part science. An effective growth hacker understands web and marketing automation tools, and can map the marketing strategy and messaging into tactical plans for content creation, web page design, email templates, sales funnel/purchase management, social sharing, web analytics, SEO (search optimization), and landing pages that resonate with prospects and effectively engage them. The tech processes behind the relationship development effort can be refined over time with A/B testing, to continually improve response rates and generate viral customer growth.

Tips for Measuring Success

A growth hacker strategy can be developed in phases. First look for a CRM system that integrates effectively with web and email marketing tools, so that marketing results are available across the sales lifecycle. This means for example, that data captured on web registration forms moves seamlessly into the sales contact database, and that every action taken by a lead or contact can be attributed to its original campaign source.

Phases in the customer lifecycle:

- Acquisition: a measure of click-through or conversion activity



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- Engagement: continued activity by a contact, through multiple campaigns; social sharing; web posts or participation in other programs
- Purchase: Measures quote/purchase transactions
- Retention: Repeat purchase activity, referrals, loyalty programs

Don't be deterred from growth hacking because you don't have the technical chops to run integrated CRM and marketing automation tools. Build a growth hacker mentality into your organization by identifying and developing an employee who understands your business and also has interest and aptitude in building expertise in integrated marketing. A PR and marketing agency with experience in content development, marketing automation, and digital marketing can get your growth hacking effort started.

About the author

Megan Miller is a senior consultant with Edge Marketing, where she helps clients understand, navigate and succeed in target markets through the development of focused marketing and communications strategies and planning. Megan holds a BS degree from Pomona College and an Executive Education certificate from Stanford University.



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