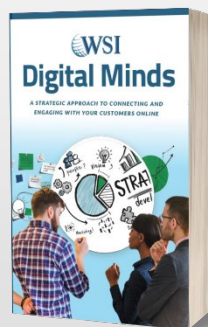




DIGITAL MINDS INTRODUCTION

THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE CUSTOMER

Written by: Valerie Brown-Dufour



The following is the introduction from WSI's 3rd book, *Digital Minds: A Strategic Approach to Connecting and Engaging with Your Customers Online*. If you'd like to read the book in its entirety you can purchase a copy on Amazon.com here:

<https://bit.ly/wsibook3>

There is one thing at the heart of all successful modern digital marketing strategies.

It's not your advertising budget. It's not the ability to predict which marketing platforms will be the next "hot" ones. It's not about the specifics of your messaging. It's not even about your pricing, the value you bring, or even the product or solution you're selling.

The one thing at the heart of every successful digital marketing strategy is the customer.

Plain and simple, businesses and marketers who put their customers first will see the best results in their sales and marketing efforts. The reason? Customers have more power now than at any time in history. After sifting through the vast amount of information available to them, today's customer is making a more informed purchase decision. If your business can set and meet the high expectations of today's customers, you can significantly benefit from positive social and digital word-of-mouth.

It wasn't always this way. Before the information age, the buyer's world was a small one. Customers both in business (B2B) and in daily life (B2C) had smaller networks, and their connections were limited to the people they regularly saw in person or communicated with by phone. It took serious time and effort to research products and services, so much that they'd often rely on commercials and ad campaigns to tell them what to do.

Customers didn't have much influence over brands either. Research and development teams at companies would spend years studying their target market and launch products based on what they thought people wanted. Demand was created from the top-down, not from the bottom-up.

Thanks to the rise of digital media and the connection that the internet brings, today's customers are ultraconnected and empowered. They no longer have to rely on generic messages from TV, magazines, or radio ads to decide which brand of baby monitor is best for their newborn. Similarly, B2B customers can easily find reviews and testimonials that lead them to quality consultants and other professional services.

They can ask their friends for recommendations on social media. They can search Google for the lowest priced option available rather than hunting around stores in town—and have the product delivered right to their doorstep.

They can find and consume an array of media content to inform their decision, from videos to articles to web graphics. They can influence the very products and services they buy by providing real-time feedback. Brands, likewise, can "crowdsource" ideas for products and services to better meet the needs of the market.

But it goes even deeper than this. Customers can now discover a brand's values and culture code, if they are, in fact, living up to their mission statement, and how its key leaders think and behave in real life. If a company mishandles its customers' security or an employee makes an ill-mannered political statement on Twitter, customers will know about it, often instantly, and will avoid the brand or spread the news.

This transformation in how customers interact with brands and make buying decisions is good for everyone, but it requires a massive shift in perspective and behavior on the brand's side. You may be familiar with the idea of a marketing funnel—the process of attracting leads, qualifying them, and ultimately converting them into customers.

But the funnel doesn't work as well today as it used to. The funnel is brand-focused; it views customers as a commodity and your marketing as a linear process: attract, convert, and repeat. Today's customers are far more empowered and informed than those from before the information age and require a new model.

Nowadays, customers can explode or stall your business growth with one well-worded web review. They can provide more (and better) referrals than your top salespeople for a fraction of the cost—and sometimes, for free.

While many of the classic tenets of marketing still apply, smart business owners and marketers are working to reimagine these basics in light of technological and cultural changes that have been influenced by the internet.

In this book, we'll discuss how to factor in the changing role of the customer when you build personas, analyze the marketing efforts of your competitors, and develop a digital marketing strategy.

From there, we'll take you on a journey through how certain digital marketing tactics—like SEO, inbound, and video marketing—are more effective at engaging modern customers.

And finally, we'll speak to how tracking, measuring, and improving upon your digital strategy is the engine that ensures you're making incremental business gains every step of the way.

That's what this book is about, and we hope you'll join us on the mission to exceed the high expectations of today's customers.

About the Author

Valerie Brown-Dufour



Valerie first joined WSI in 1999. As President of WSI, Valerie is responsible for providing support and education to the WSI global network. She is also charged with managing the innovation of the WSI business model as a whole. Valerie works to ensure WSI Consultants are provided with the tools, systems, and support they need to remain top amongst their competitors.

About WSI

For over 25 years, WSI has been providing digital marketing services and comprehensive marketing strategies to businesses of all sizes and across various industries. We are the largest network of digital marketing agencies around the world.

We are a full-service digital marketing agency that helps elevate your online brand, generate more leads and sales, and improve your overall marketing ROI. Our Digital Marketing Consultants use their knowledge and expertise to make a difference for businesses all around the world.

We don't believe in the "one-size-fits-all" approach to digital marketing. Instead, we take the time to understand your organization and customers so we can recommend a strategy based on your individual business needs. When you invest in any of WSI's digital marketing solutions, you'll have some of the top minds in the industry, contributing to your goals and vision.

You have a vision for your business. We can help make it happen. **Reach out; we're happy to help.**

