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AGENCY FORWARDSM

Your guide to digital marketing in an uncertain world



It's no surprise that consumers adopted new behaviors in 2020.

From virtual health visits to online grocery orders, the pandemic accelerated digital adoption across industries, and insurance was no different.

Our **Agency ForwardSM Survey** confirms this digital trend:

48% of consumers have used a client self-service website

37% have used mobile apps for client services and claims

36% have used online mobile tools for insurance quotes and to compare policies and prices



Want more evidence of your clients' changing behaviors?

More than 93% of online experiences begin with a search engine¹ such as Google or Bing, and a full 89% of consumers buy from brands they follow on social media.²

Yet when it comes to insurance, consumers still value agent expertise and a personal relationship. Our Agency Forward research also shows that:

87%

of consumers say an agent plays a critical role in the client experience

88%

of consumers still value being able to speak with an agent when they need one

56%

of consumers, **53%** of small-business owners and **18%** of mid-market business owners do not feel it's important to have their agent close to them



Agency perspective

Before the pandemic, Mike Skiens, CEO of [MasterCare America](#), shared that clients struggled to connect with agents over video.

"It wasn't that they were opposed to it, just that they weren't fluent. People are now preferring to use virtual. I think there will always be the face-to-face sales, but it's interesting to see the preference grow for the convenience of video sales."



Learn how to connect with clients and grow sales in this new environment.

If you're new to digital marketing or looking to up your digital game, **the following guidelines will help you master the 3 areas in which to focus your marketing efforts in 2022 and beyond.**



1. Make your website work for you

Think of your website as your digital storefront

Keep in mind that your website is now likely to be the first introduction a client gets to your business, so it's important that it be an authentic and meaningful representation of you and your agency. You might want to share your mission and core values upfront, but also consider sharing:

- » Why you're in this business
- » How your sales and support team uphold your mission
- » How you meet client needs
- » Ways you're involved in the community



Help visitors to your site understand how your capabilities and experience benefit them

For example, instead of just saying your agency has been in business for 25 years, you could ask a few of your best clients to provide a testimonial of how your agency has gone above and beyond for them, especially after a claims event.



Take a deeper dive.

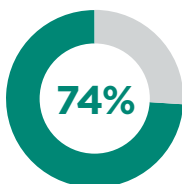
[Read more](#) about how to play to your strengths and find ways to win with digital marketing.

Make your website mobile-friendly

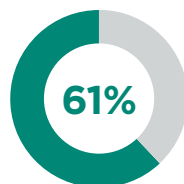
It's vital that your website be easy to use — **especially for people viewing it on their mobile devices.**

Websites that aren't mobile-friendly can be almost impossible for clients to navigate. The text can be too small to be read easily, and users can have difficulty zooming in to tap on menu options. You want your website optimized for mobile so that images, text and menu options are all sized correctly to be viewed on mobile devices.

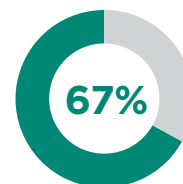
Even more reasons to make your website mobile-friendly³:



of visitors are more likely to return to mobile-friendly websites



are likely to leave if a site is not mobile-friendly



are more likely to buy at a mobile-friendly website



Make it easy for clients to find your website

Search engines such as Google have become the primary way that people find what they're looking for online. **Two interesting insights:**

- » Search engine users are **most likely to click on the top 5 results** on the page⁵
- » 70 to 80% of **people ignore paid search results**, choosing to click only on organic (unpaid) listings⁶

People are more likely to find your website if it's optimized for search engines

You want your agency to appear in search results based on the location of people near your business. [View our guide](#) to help your agency appear in more local searches.

Make your website accessible to everyone

Your website should be accessible to people with diverse abilities so you can reach the broadest array of prospects possible and meet regulatory and legal requirements. [Learn more](#) about making your site accessible.

Consider adding engaging videos

Did you know that videos have persuaded 84% of consumers to buy a product or service?⁷ Because creating a video can be as easy as filming a short scene on your phone, it makes sense to try your hand at one or two. **Keep your videos simple and engaging and include a call to action at the end that encourages viewers to do what you want them to do: contact you for more information.**

You could also ask current clients to record testimonial videos, sharing their positive experiences with your agency.

Don't already have a website for your agency?

You can find a variety of website-building tools online that walk you through the process of creating one. CNET rates Wix as the best overall website builder.⁴ Weebly is also recommended for building websites that are easy to navigate and simple to update.

Important:

Once your website is up and running, make sure to keep it working perfectly and to update it regularly.



Agency perspective

Al Spina from the [Spotts Insurance Group](#) says, **"We've been posting 2-minute videos of employees talking about working in the insurance industry and a little about their hobbies and interests. It doesn't have to be fancy; it can be simple and personable."**

2. Boost your social presence

Whether you're new to social networking or you've planned and executed a full social strategy, the keys to social media success are the same: **posting consistently, engaging with your followers and using industry data and resources to your advantage.**

The 4 elements of social selling, according to LinkedIn

1. Establish a professional brand.

Your professional brand is how people perceive you. Your goal is to create a profile on each of your chosen social sites that will help you stand out from everyone else on social media and immediately position you as a trusted partner. You'll want to:

- » Upload a professional portrait of yourself
- » Upload a relevant cover photo, such as the front of your agency's office
- » Add a job title that matches the one on your business card
- » Add your location and industry
- » Introduce yourself with a personal summary
- » Summarize your business experience and write complete descriptions of your current and previous roles
- » List work skills that accurately reflect what you do
- » Include any volunteer experience you may have
- » Add your education history, including dates
- » List any clubs or organizations you're affiliated with

2. Find the right people.

Expanding your network with quality connections will help you build valuable relationships and identify better prospects. Consider these 3 ways to build your social network with quality connections:

- » Use the "People You May Know" feature
- » Ask your clients, prospective clients and colleagues to connect with you on your social sites (use the search tools to find them)
- » Join groups that include prospective clients, thought leaders in your industry and people who share similar interests with you

3. Create conversations.

Sharing insights and new information can start conversations that build relationships with your clients and potential prospects. Remember:

- » Post with a purpose
- » Write about things that matter to you
- » Post 3 to 5 times a week
- » Like, comment and share content from your timeline

4. Grow your relationships.

Here's how to build rapport and establish trust with the connections in your social network:

- » Personalize your connection requests by explaining why you'd like to connect
- » Comment on your connections' milestones
- » Share insights with your individual connections that may interest them

Don't underestimate Facebook, Twitter and Instagram

These social channels can help you build relationships once you've identified someone as a good prospect. Find best practices for Facebook, Twitter and Instagram [here](#).





2 more tips for social success:



Share posts from partners

Consider working with carriers such as Nationwide that offer branded posts for agents to share on their social networks. According to Insurance Journal, one of the most effective ways for an agency to build its book of business is by **partnering “with one of its carriers, a vendor that provides a unique service, or even another agency with complementary products and services.”** It’s a savvy way to add big-brand credibility to your agency brand, and it’s an easy way to increase your posting frequency.



Get local

Clients and prospects want to know how your agency is showing up in the community — whether by volunteering, participating in events or supporting local businesses — so show them in your social posts. Spotlight your employees and members of your community, too.



Agency perspective

“Our brand is tied directly to our team and to our community; we reflect that in our social media,” said Mary Fran Bachman of the Spotts Insurance Group.

3. Create relationships online and nurture them offline

Whether you sell auto, home, small business or life insurance, you know that lead generation is critical to growing your business. You might try a few different online/offline approaches before you find what works best for your business, but however you attract new prospects, **it's key to have a process in place to follow up on them quickly.** Why? Because, according to Harvard Business Review, digital leads that are followed up on within 60 minutes lead to conversations that are 7 times more productive.



Agency perspective

At Firefly Agency, Rod Mayhill knows that clients' expectations for speed and convenience will continue.

"Consumers know everything is so automated, and with that comes an increased expectation by the consumer for expediency," he said.

That's why Firefly continues to work with its agents to build everything from marketing to systems to policy management in a much more efficient electronic way.

3 ways to boost your digital leads and grow sales

1. Ask for referrals and reviews.

Trust is among consumers' top considerations when shopping. They often rely on friends, family members or social media when selecting businesses to work with.

To get more referrals, **send a friendly email** to your clients thanking them for their business. Ask them to refer your business to friends and family. [Get more referral tips.](#)

Online reviews are read by 87% of consumers searching for a local business.¹ To get more online reviews, ask your clients to leave a review on your Google listing.

2. Make emails your friend.

Emails are a low-cost way to reach out to prospects about your services and explain the value of working with your agency. Make sure your emails have a compelling subject line and a clear and concise call to action telling readers exactly what you want them to do. Strong calls to action include "Get a quote" or "Call me today."

Emails aren't just for prospective clients. **Send a regular email newsletter to current clients** to inform them of key events that might impact their coverage or market trends that might be relevant to them. Informed clients are happy clients, and happy clients are more likely to refer your business to others.

3. Be active in your community.

People often choose businesses that are familiar to them. **Getting involved and developing a presence** in your community promotes your business to more of your neighbors who are more likely to become clients.

Some ideas to try:

- » Sponsor a local team or event
- » Volunteer for local community projects
- » Join professional networks or groups to meet other professionals in your area
- » Share information about community activities on your website and social media, and follow and engage with your community's social accounts

We can help you navigate every challenge

While innovations in the industry and changing client expectations can seem overwhelming at times, they're also excellent opportunities for growth. And Nationwide is always here to support you with insights and expertise to help you meet today's new challenges with confidence.



A few ways we partner with you:

[Agency Forward](#) is your hub for all things trending in the insurance agency — from economic commentary to client expectations. With a unique perspective on the industry, we help you **turn insights into actionable strategies** that can change the way you work as well as help you grow your business and become an indispensable partner to your clients.

From web strategies to ad templates, you'll find a vast range of [marketing resources](#) to help boost your agency's growth and increase client confidence. Our marketing materials **put your agency's brand first** while building on the strength and stability of the Nationwide brand.

For the past 10 years, our Social Media Solutions program has empowered and encouraged appointed agents to **use social selling to grow their businesses**. You can get started, too, by emailing social@nationwide.com.

Our [Nationwide Agent Locator](#) can **improve your agency's online ranking** and steer traffic to your website.

The bottom line:

Whether you're looking to build more relationships virtually, to generate more online leads or simply to strengthen your agency's digital presence altogether, Nationwide offers what you need to help your business not just survive, but thrive.



Find more industry insights at nationwide.com/agencyforward.

To learn more about the benefits of partnering with us, visit nationwide.com/agents.



Nationwide®
is on your side

¹ SEO Statistics All Marketers Should Know in 2021," Darko Radic, serpwatch.io/blog/seo-statistics (2021).

² "36 Essential social media marketing statistics to know for 2021," Jenn Chen, sproutsocial.com/insights/social-media-statistics/ (Feb. 3, 2021).

³ "What Users Want Most from Mobile Sites Today," thinkwithgoogle.com/marketing-strategies/app-and-mobile/what-users-want-most-from-mobile-sites-today/ (September 2012).

⁴ "Best website builder for 2021," Joe Van Brussel, cnet.com/news/best-website-builder-for-2020-squarespace-wix-and-more-compared/ (Sept. 13, 2021).

⁵ "Why You Need to Raise Organic CTR's (And How to Do It)," wordstream.com/blog/ws/2016/05/10/google-ctr (July 15, 2020).

⁶ "8 SEO stats that are hard to ignore," inforza.com/blog/8-seo-stats-that-are-hard-to-ignore (July 15, 2020).

⁷ "Video Marketing Statistics 2021," wyzowl.com/video-marketing-statistics/ (accessed Sept. 13, 2021).