**Digital Literacy Skills:**

Training Program for Volunteer Managers

*Course Outline:*

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**Digital Marketing Fundamentals**

*Objective: To explore the basics of digital marketing, including the marketing funnel, content, SEO, social media, and email strategies.*

**Video Script:**

“Welcome to Digital Marketing Fundamentals, Volunteer Managers! In this Module, we’ll combine what we’ve learned so far, and view it through the lens of digital marketing…

Digital marketing is any sort of advertising or promotion communicated through digital platforms, including every technique we’ve discussed, ranging from social media to blogs, search engines and websites, to email campaigns and paid online advertisements… Digital marketing uses digital skills to gain awareness around a brand and its mission and services.

One of the core pillars of digital marketing is content marketing. We’ve talked about content throughout our modules: content is any information, media, or online communication that holds a purpose, whether that’s to educate, inspire, or gain donations... The best content is a combination of it all, providing relevant value to the consumer, whether they take the desired action or not.

In digital marketing, content is often the umbrella term for media such as blogs, social media posts, designs, videos, messages, and any media you can consume. One of the best parts of content marketing is that it doesn’t cost much! You can create a social media profile for free if you have a smartphone and internet connection. You can even create designs, record videos, take pictures, and write content at little-to-no cost! Digital marketing has opened up innumerable opportunities for not-for-profits, business owners, and individuals alike. We can reach hundreds, thousands, or even millions of people, without paying a cent.

However, this strategy requires truly understanding the “digital marketing funnel,” which is the journey a user takes to find a brand, create a relationship with them, and eventually make a purchase, donation, or another desired action.

We want to think of a marketing funnel as building a *relationship* with someone.

Think of it like this: how do you find an organisation? This is *Awareness*, which is the first step in the marketing funnel. Using our relationship analogy, think of this step as how you get to know someone for the first time – where do you meet them? A volunteer or donor might first become aware of an organisation through a search engine, which makes website and SEO strategy important as a way of gaining awareness.

Alternatively, they might find an organisation through their social media account or an online advertisement. Regardless, this is the first step in the funnel. Without awareness, we cannot fulfil our purpose!

Next, we generate *Interest*. Once an organisation builds awareness, it should find a way to interest the user enough to form a relationship or ongoing connection. This might be to follow them on social media, sign up for their newsletter, or subscribe somehow. This gets them to learn more about the organisation without imposing any pressure on them, and is a way to help them keep in touch. Again, in terms of a relationship, think of this as getting someone’s phone number, email address, or social media account so that you can become friends and stay in contact.

From here, we nurture and gain a relationship with them. This is the third step: *Consideration*. As with any relationship, we talk and familiarise ourselves in order to build trust and connection. In digital marketing, a brand accomplishes this through valuable social media posts, insightful email newsletters, and other online content that educates, empowers, and engages. Here, focus less on advertising and more on creating a relationship.

From there, we can more easily gain a commitment –– a *Conversion*, which is the next step in our funnel. Once you have established trust, it is easier to ask a potential volunteer, donor, or other stakeholder to invest. Because they know the free value your organisation offers because of its valuable content, if they want either more value or want to contribute to it, they can take action!

With this relationship established, action and conversion are much easier to obtain, due to the power of trust. If we tried to skip from Point A to Point B, walking up to a stranger and asking them to donate to our cause, they’d likely be sceptical! But suppose an individual is given the time, resources, and care to gain the information, context, and trust they need to invest in a brand or donate to a cause. In that case, they can do so with more confidence and success. And if their donation or purchase goes well, they’re even more likely to do it again and spread the word to their friends! This is why the most critical work is caring for and supporting those who are *already* contributing and committed to a cause. When an organisation truly cares about their supporters, its supporters care about them.

This is why there’s not much of a difference between relationships and digital marketing. We must build a relationship to demonstrate our purpose and value to support security and motivation for an individual to take the desired action. This desired action is to receive donations and motivated volunteers, both of which help us fulfil our organisational mission and purpose.

Now, we’ll learn how each digital marketing and content strategy plays a role in this journey and the best practices of each basic technique. Ready to help us make a difference? Let’s get started.”

**Reading Portion:**

**Digital Marketing Fundamentals**

Welcome to Digital Marketing Fundamentals! In this Module, we will explore the basic importance and principles of digital marketing. We’ll break down how each digital marketing strategy fits into the marketing funnel discussed in our video and how anyone can use these techniques to reach their professional goals.

Let’s get started!

**What is Digital Marketing?**

[Digital marketing](https://www.marketo.com/digital-marketing/#:~:text=At%20a%20high%20level%2C%20digital,goods%2C%20services%2C%20and%20brands.) is any online method organisations use to communicate with their target audience and promote their brand. Every method we’ve discussed so far is a digital marketing strategy, including emails, websites, SEO, social media, paid online advertisements, and designs.

The main objective of digital marketing is to:

* Increase brand awareness.
* Make audiences interested in a brand or cause.
* Encourage individuals to consider trusting and investing in an organisation.
* Increase conversions or desired actions, like donations, sign-ups, or purchases.

Digital marketing is often divided into two main categories: paid and organic.

*Paid digital marketing* includes any strategies that require you to pay to deliver your content to an audience. For example, you see paid online advertisements via “sponsored” Facebook or Google Ads. These methods are effective for organisations with a budget and need to reach their goals quickly. New audience ads are used to gain awareness, and retargeting ads inspire interested individuals to commit to a sale or donation.

*Organic digital marketing* is any strategy that doesn’t cost to deliver to an audience. For example, publishing a regular social media or blog post doesn't cost. It’s geared toward creating long-term relationships and developing trust with an audience.

**What is Content Marketing?**

[Content marketing](https://contentmarketinginstitute.com/what-is-content-marketing/) is a core aspect of digital marketing. When we use the word “[content](https://www.toprankblog.com/2013/03/what-is-content/),” we’re referring to any information or media that serves a specific purpose. That purpose might be to educate, empower, and engage an audience. Most often, digital content marketing helps to build trust and provide relevant value. It’s less about selling and more about developing a relationship. Content marketing is typically organic, making it a very affordable way to advertise.

Digital content can be designed, written, recorded, captured, or curated in any way that allows it to be published online. We refer to anyone who views this content as “consumers.”

Examples of digital marketing content:

* Social media posts and captions.
* Blog articles.
* Websites.
* Photos and videos.
* Free ebooks and guides.
* Emails and newsletters.

**What is the Marketing Funnel?**

As we discussed in our video, the marketing funnel is the journey an individual takes to become a customer or contributor to an organisation. Remember our relationship analogy? It’s how a stranger turns into a loyal supporter, advocate, and partner.

There are 5 main stages of the [marketing funnel](https://www.skyword.com/contentstandard/how-the-marketing-funnel-works-from-top-to-bottom/):

1. **Awareness**

How does an organisation spread awareness and ensure people know about their cause? This is often accomplished through SEO websites and blogs, paid advertisements, social media marketing, and word-of-mouth.

1. **Interest**

How do users gain interest in and connect with the organisation? Valuable, resonating content can capture an individual’s interest. They can show this interest and keep in touch by following the brand on social media, subscribing to their email newsletter, or signing up for a free/zero-pressure service.

1. **Consideration**

How does a brand get interested individuals to consider investing, donating, or working with them? This is often achieved through consistent, valuable content marketing efforts. Sending out helpful email newsletters, educational blog posts, and inspiring social media posts can help turn a brand into an opportunity to consider.

1. **Conversion**

How does a brand ‘convert’ consumers into customers, donors, or volunteers? This is where we’ve built enough trust to encourage individuals to take the desired action. This is the sales pitch, so to speak. It is a warm, friendly proposal, as the relationship is already established. Digital marketers can use any of their platforms to convert.

1. **Repeat! (Loyalty)**

Once an organisation has a healthy pool of loyal supporters, it can grow even faster by empowering its followers to help them reach their goals. They can turn volunteers into recruiters, donors into advocates, and customers into references. In this mindset, you build an online community that can make a genuine, lasting difference.

**Why is Digital Marketing So Effective?**

**You can reach more people and create a greater impact than ever before.**

Digital marketing opens up a new world of opportunities compared to traditional marketing. Think of a billboard or poster, for example. At some point, there is a limited number of individuals who will see this advertisement because it’s confined to one physical location. But imagine you create a social media post or website –– you’re no longer limited by geography! You can instantly reach people around the city, country, and even the globe!

**You can track the insights and performance of your marketing efforts.**

Beyond this, digital marketing provides trackable insights. If you wanted to know how many people saw your in-person advertisement, you’d have to stand all day and watch! If you wanted to know how many people were moved to take action from it, you’d be out of luck.

But digital marketing comes with game-changing tools. Computers can track how many people see, click on, and even take the desired action from an online advertisement.

**You can connect with individuals on a faster and more personal level.**

Individuals can directly interact with organisations, leave comments on their posts, reply to their emails, and contact them through their websites. The internet makes the world even smaller and more connected and allows organisations to reach those they need to help faster and more effectively.

**Digital Marketing: Best Practices for Not-for-profits**

Now that we understand the purpose and power of digital marketing, let’s put our skills to the test! Continue to review some of the best practices specifically for not-for-profit organisations.

**SEO (Search Engine Optimisation)**

As a refresher,[SEO](https://digitalmarketinginstitute.com/blog/what-is-seo#:~:text=Well%2C%20SEO%20stands%20for%20'Search,more%20people%20will%20see%20it.) is the strategy used to make a website more visible in search engines. The more ‘optimised’ a website is, the easier it is for customers to find it and make a purchase. As we learned in Website 101, digital marketers research and use keywords on their blogs and websites to make it easier for their target audience to find them in search engines. Keywords are the words or phrases individuals type into Google to find the information, solution, or service they’re looking for.

Here are the best SEO practices not-for-profit organisations can use to boost their visibility:

* **Localise SEO.**

Most not-for-profit organisations focus on serving within their communities. One of the most effective ways to ensure our community can find us is by [localising our SEO](https://shanebarker.com/blog/seo-for-non-profits/). For example, keywords for blogs and web pages should include phrases like “Sydney, Australia” to drive local traffic.

Google Business Profiles are also crucial for local SEO. These listings appear at the top of search results when you search for a business or service with a physical location. For example, if you Google “restaurants in Sydney,” you’ll find listings at the top with photos, reviews, hours, addresses, and contact information of local restaurants.

Optimising a Google Business Profile with photos, questions and answers, updates, contact information, and more can help increase local trust and SEO ranking.

* **Perform keyword research.**

You can use Google’s Keyword Planner to find the best keywords:

1. Create/sign in to your free [Google Ads account](https://ads.google.com/home/#!/).
2. Click the Tools icon.
3. Select “Discover new keywords.”

Overall, aim for long-tail keywords. These are more specific, longer keyword phrases. For example, it’s much easier to rank for “free digital marketing class in Sydney” than for “digital marketing class.”

* **Write blog posts.**

Blog posts are one of the most effective ways to increase SEO. The key here is to incorporate your keywords into your article naturally. For example, let’s say we’re writing a blog article about the importance of digital skills. If one of our keyword phrases is “digital skills training in Sydney,” we might start our article with:

*Digital skills can open up job opportunities, increase income, and transform lives. If you’re considering signing up for* ***digital skills training in Sydney****, here are some important things to consider…*

Overall, we want to aim for a keyword density of 1-2%. So, if a blog article is 1,000 words long, we want the keyword to be included about 10-20 times, as long as it sounds natural.

* **Optimise titles.**

Keywords are most effective in headings, subheadings, and near the top of a web page or article. When we use keywords in these places, we’re telling Google that these phrases are essential, and they’ll be more likely to send users our way when searching those phrases.

* **Share links.**

When links appear on other websites, it helps increase their SEO *authority*. This can increase the web page’s ranking and visibility. You can easily do this by sharing blog articles and web pages to your social media profiles or in comment sections on other websites. This is what digital marketers call ‘backlinking.’

An even more powerful way to accomplish this is to pitch or send articles to local magazines, blogs, and publications. If they share our story on their site, it increases our SEO and spreads the word to their local audience!

**Social Media Marketing**

* **Turn on Facebook and Instagram Fundraising.**

Facebook and Instagram both have fantastic fundraising features. Users can create posts that allow their followers and friends to donate straight from the post!

Organisations can turn on this fundraising feature on [**Facebook**](https://www.facebook.com/help/1640008462980459) by:

1. Logging into their admin Facebook Page account.
2. Signing up for “Facebook Payments.”
3. Navigating “Page Settings.”
4. Clicking “Donations.”
5. Checking “Allow people to create fundraisers” and “Add donate buttons to their posts.”

Organisations can turn on this fundraising feature on [**Instagram**](https://help.instagram.com/758461854832783) by:

1. Logging into their organisation’s Instagram account.
2. Tapping the top-right icon on their profile page.
3. Selecting “Settings.”
4. Clicking “Business.”
5. Tapping “Donations.”
6. Checking “Add Donate Button to Profile.”

Once this is set up, any Facebook or Instagram user can add a fundraiser to their posts and search/select the organisation as the recipient.

On **Facebook**, a user can start a fundraiser by creating a post and selecting “Raise money” as one of the features. On **Instagram**, they can do the same by selecting “Add fundraiser” to their post before sharing.

* **Create and join local Facebook Groups.**

Creating and joining local Facebook Groups can allow you to network within the community. This can help us connect more Volunteers and Donors with our cause.

* **Use videos and visuals.**

[Videos are central](https://www.wildapricot.com/blog/social-media-guide-for-nonprofits#5-top-nonprofit-social-media-examples) to content marketing success. Using Instagram and Facebook Reels can enable us to reach individuals outside our following.

**Email Marketing**

* **Create a lead magnet.**

A ‘lead magnet’ is a central strategy for the first two stages of the marketing funnel: awareness and interest.

A lead magnet is a ‘freebie’ or free resource an organisation offers in exchange for users signing up for their email list.

From here, readers can stay in touch and build trust through consistent newsletters and email campaigns.

* **Send out newsletters.**

[Newsletters](https://www.campaignmonitor.com/resources/guides/ultimate-guide-email-marketing-nonprofits/) are short yet valuable emails sent out regularly, often once per week, bi-weekly, or monthly. They are very content-driven, providing news, tips, and education related to the industry or topic that is relevant to both the reader and sender.

For example, a newsletter might include digital skills tips and advice, news regarding digital skills and disadvantaged communities in Australia, updates on our organisation’s resources, etc.

* **Include a “Donate” or “Sign-up” action button.**

While emails should focus on providing educational and valuable information, the bottom of every email should include an action button to increase conversions. This might include signing up to enrol in our services, volunteering to help, or donating.

**Having covered these best practices, it’s now time to put them into action!**