Analytics-Driven Marketing

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Right Message

It's that time of year again. Time to plan your advertising budget for next year. Assuming you have a written advertising budget, review your spreadsheet or list to recall what ad tactics generated sales in 2023. Was it that Google Ad campaign? Your email newsletter? Your ad in a local magazine or newspaper? If you can track your sales spikes and match those up with marketing campaigns, then you can identify which marketing tactics work best for your farm.

If you're still unsure what the most impactful form of advertising this past year was, don't beat yourself up. Pinning down exactly what works and what doesn't in advertising has always been a challenge. However, with the advent of digital marketing, a means of measuring an ad's effectiveness is now more readily available.

Website Analytics

Your website is more than just a postcard on the internet to tell people about your company. The backend of your website should also include a robust set of tools that monitor, record, and report traffic to your website. While most websites have at least a rudimentary toolbox of tracking software, many websites utilize Google Analytics for this information. Google Analytics provides insights such as demographics (gender, age, location) of your site visitors. Most importantly for planning your ad expenditures, it can track the source of your web traffic which can tell you which ads worked and which didn't.

Links, QR Codes, Discount Codes & Coupons

Gone are the days when we had to rely on customers cutting a coupon out of a newspaper for us to be able to gauge an ad's effectiveness. A QR Code,(that black and white box that looks sort of like a jigsaw puzzle), when scanned by a smartphone, leads customers directly to a designated page on your website. QR codes can be used as part of the overall design on print ads, billboards, flyers and trade show handouts, business cards, and even TV commercials, to drive and track traffic to your site.

On digital ads in online magazines and on social media posts, live links connecting your written out domain (your .com address) to your website can also be tracked.

If your website has an e-commerce component, meaning your site lets you conduct online sales of sod, fertilizer, and other products, discount codes specific to certain advertising efforts also tell you how a customer found out about your farm and offerings.

The same is true for email marketing software programs such as MailChimp and Constant Contact. Once an email or digital newsletter is sent, these programs easily create reports showing who opened your email, when, and if they clicked on a link to your website or social account.

How to Use This Information

When you compare sales trend information with website traffic, you can determine which of your advertising efforts converted to sales. As an example, let's say in February you ran a print ad in your local newspaper or turf industry journal. If you have a QR code on that print ad, anyone who scans the code will be directed to your website, and the fact that they used the QR code to get there will be recorded. A significant jump in website traffic could mean your ad generated interest in your farm among potential customers. A large jump in sales could mean your ad reached qualified potential customers who were ready to buy. You'd want to repeat an ad like that, right?

Websites with e-commerce capabilities can take it a step further and tell you exactly how much revenue an ad generated based on resulting sales.

If you aren't yet utilizing analytics, QR codes, or live links in your current strategy, you still have time to include them in your ads for the coming sales season. Start now so you can set yourself up to plan your future ad budgets based on data. The benefit is when you know what works for your farm, you can make future advertising decisions backed by solid information. Spend your money on ad tactics that work. Cut from your budget ads that don't. Use data to determine the difference.