

Digital Strategy basics for TKD Clubs

Running a TKD Club is like running any small business. There's overheads and income, people, venues, events, staff, equipment, accounts, tax, banking, and all the normal responsibilities of managing a business; as well as competition from other TKD schools/clubs and other martial arts. That's where Marketing is important. Word-of-mouth and referrals are always going to be the key drivers of any TKD Club, but this alone is unlikely to allow your Club to reach its full potential. Without effective marketing, you are likely to be robbing your Club (and yourself) of the opportunity of seeing it reach this potential. As a small business owner, it's usually a sole operator (or possibly a partnership) that is managing **all** the responsibilities of keeping the business afloat and earn an income to feed your own family; when all you probably want to do is help others discover the joys and benefits of learning this thing we love.

In the current digital age, we've moved from just 'logging in' and evolved to the point where we are constantly online. The internet permeates every facet of our lives, augmenting our experiences of the world and allowing us to connect to the rest of humanity, far beyond what was possible even 20 years ago. We have instant access to much of the world's information at our fingertips and are pretty well constantly under attack from this information as its creators vvy for our attention. More information passes by our conscious life in any given day than we would have experienced in a month before the birth of the internet. Smart-phones have enabled the internet to be involved in everything we do - conversations with each other, making choices, understanding our environment, the food we eat, everything our sensory system experiences is now influenced by the internet; and it's going to continue at an exponential rate. Early adopters are already experimenting with human microchipping and direct cranial internet connectivity. Google recently patented lens replacement technology to actually replace our normal eye lens with one that can allow us to access our data and record the world around us! This is something we will experience in our lifetime and something our grand-children will find perfectly normal. If you think about it, your fitbit and your mobile phone (which is always with you) are a simply and externalisation of this concept. In this brave new world, as small business owners, we are required to move from 'being online' (IE having a website and a Facebook page) to manifesting a complete Digital Strategy.

I define Digital Strategy as "the careful selection and application of relevant and appropriate digital assets to achieve a goal or outcome". This article is designed

to give a more fundamental consideration of Digital Strategy and its application to running a TKD Club. As the Reverend MC Hammer once said, let's "break it down".

Your Website

The primary tool that a business has today is their website. If you are running a business without a website, you are probably missing a very important opportunity. Think of the website as your bricks and mortar store or shop. Once someone enters your shop, they are (usually) ready to buy and are looking for the thing that confirms this mindset. If you give them the right trigger, they'll buy (conversion). If they find what they were expecting to find, they'll buy (planned purchase). At this point in time the website is the primary place a user comes to buy.

Your website consists of a series of landing pages. A landing page is the page which a user 'lands' on when they click a link that takes them to your website. Keep in mind, it doesn't necessarily mean your homepage - and with effective digital strategy, the homepage certainly isn't the only landing page on your site.

Some fundamentals to consider when building, developing or editing a website:

- Make sure it is mobile-friendly. This is also called 'responsive' and is arguably the most important consideration for a website today; especially in TKD where around 70% of all users are on a mobile device. Further, Google will penalise you if your website isn't mobile friendly. To check if your site is mobile friendly, open your website on a phone. Has the page resized to suit the phone (responsive) or do you find the text is way too small and you have to move the page around to see the content? Run a Google search for your website. Are the words 'mobile friendly' in light grey text in your website's google listing? If your website is not mobile friendly, stop reading now and get it rebuilt - it's that important.
- Make sure your contact information is in the header and is 'click-to-call' for mobile devices.
- Make sure your Club's address, timetable and other essential information is very easy to find.
- Have a mailing list capture form in the footer so it's on every page.
- Google Analytics - capture and regularly analyse website data. This will help you work out what's working and what needs fixing.
- Every website should have a Blog (or News). As a website owner, you need to be adding new content to your blog as regularly as you can feasibly

manage. A blog post is really anything that requires at least 150 words (ideally around 300) to explain or is content that enhances the user experience or identity of your brand (such as a video). Consider every blog post as another page on your website.

- Each page should have a very clear purpose or goal (commonly called a conversion). The first thing you should ask yourself is "What am I wanting the user to do here?" Answers might include:
 - Read the article and comment on it or share it
 - Call you
 - Buy a product
 - Buy a ticket to an event
 - Watch a video and share it/download it
 - Download a document/brochure
- Be wary of publishing pages to your website that do not ask something of the user.
- Always be clear about what you want the user to do and make it as easy as possible for them to do it.
- Each page should be optimised for search for only one particular keyword or phrase.
- Beware the Huberis Effect. As one of my clients puts it - you don't need a bazooka to kill an ant. Only contain that which is relevant to the goal.
- Always ensure you are tracking your conversions. This often requires professional help, but if you rely on your website as a primary tool for your business, this is absolutely imperative and therefore worth figuring out how to do yourself or paying for. If you're not tracking conversions, how can you know if your landing page is working?

Whilst a website will often require a web company to assist or manage it (a bit like a store manager), most website platforms these days are pretty simple for the novice to use and only getting easier as time goes on. As a TKD Club owner, it is unlikely that a full-time web designer is in the budget, so the more you can learn to handle yourself, the better. Depending on your level of commitment, I would recommend the following platforms for the reasons indicated:

- Squarespace, Wix and other web-building software - for the person who wants a little more control over their website and can understand some basic web building techniques (like drag and drop) but has no understanding of code. If your budget is close to or equals zero, Squarespace is a good choice. It's cheap and looks professional.

- Shopify - if you want to sell stuff on your website directly and this is the primary purpose of your website. It's unlikely this applies to running a TKD club, but it may be worth a mention. Shopify is arguably the best eCommerce platform available today. It's relatively expensive but completely worth it and doesn't require a lot of website understanding to get a decent store online.
- Wordpress - my preferred platform. Wordpress requires a bit more than a basic understanding of web development, but being the largest open source platform in the world, there's millions of online tutorials to help you learn how to Wordpress and there's several million Wordpress developers out there that can help. I also believe Wordpress is excellent for Google Search and the core of the platform is focused on making Google happy. I argue that a website built using Wordpress versus another platform (like Drupal or Silverstripe) with exactly the same content and SEO configuration will always show higher on search results. I also feel that once you understand the basics of Wordpress, you can handle the on-going maintenance and add blog posts etc to your website yourself without having to continue to pay a web company.
- Drupal, Magento, Silverstripe and the many others - these are platforms that are favoured by web development companies for many reasons. In my experience, a website company chooses a platform according to what they know how to do well. For example, my company prefers Wordpress and will generally look to Wordpress for a solution to the clients needs. Other companies would likely take the same approach but with their platform of choice. All of the different platforms have pros and cons. If you are looking to engage a website company to handle the building and on-going management of your website, make sure you understand what platform they will use and why.

Mobile Applications

A mobile application is the new benchmark for a successful small (or large) business. Fundamentally, a website and a mobile application are very similar things. However, there is a definite relationship shift when a user downloads your app and the level of interaction provided by an app far outweighs a website. Everything about your business is now in their pocket, and it's learning about them and talking to them directly. For TKD students, the app is like a direct line to their school and Instructor and acts like an extension of the physical interactions in the Club - it's somewhere they go online to be a part of the Club. Bill Gates long

ago said that an app is not just a cool thing to have, it's customer service. I believe that the opportunities presented to the TKD Club or School by a mobile application are far reaching and incredibly powerful; however, the purpose of this article is not to discuss this. It is enough to know that almost every element of your digital strategy can be handled by this one tool - so in my opinion, they're worth it. Some of the things a mobile application offers might include:

- Push notifications - this is one of the fundamental and most powerful features of a mobile application. Push notifications are communications sent to your app users through the app; and they have a 92% open rate! It's the equivalent of sending everyone a text message; but that message could be anything!
- Member only functionality and content. Apps have tools which enable them to 'learn' about the user and alert you to their preferences etc.
- In-app purchasing for up-selling - including using the user's phone bill
- Instant social media groups - imagine the power of everyone at an event posting everything they are experiencing (including photos, videos and text) directly onto your digital assets for you.
- Event management in a closed, private group.

There's really so much more, this is just the tip of the iceberg! I cannot overstate the value a mobile application would add to a small business. Not to mention the opportunity presented by the fact that (almost) nobody else in NZ has one yet...

Social Media

Social Media is the next level of tools for your digital strategy. Given that TKD is primarily considered a sport (although we know better!) it is by default considered a social activity. Therefore, effective use of Social Media is absolutely key to running a successful TKD Club. In fact, Social Media has become so important to running a Club that many have (for better or for worse) elected to run their Club's digital presence solely using Social Media. The purpose of this article in educating its readers about how to use Social Media is limited. This article will also not address guidelines or rules around social Media use for ITKD Members. This information can be found by [clicking this link](#).

Facebook is the 3rd largest website. Therefore, every club must have a Facebook page. It was (is) likely the very first digital asset you developed (unless your club pre-dates Facebook) because it is free and pretty easy to do. Some clubs/instructors also use other Social Media platforms such as **twitter**, **instagram**,

pinterest and Google+. There are new platforms launching almost every day. In fact you can start your own social network about your club (or TKD) completely free using something like **Ning**. However, given the incredible proliferation of Facebook, when we talk about Social Media, most people think Facebook. In terms of Digital Strategy, one, two or more of these platforms might be relevant, so I would encourage every Club to at least have a presence on the major platforms listed above. A useful (and free) tool called **Hootsuite** is great for managing and updating all your social media profiles by creating a dashboard for all your profiles (called streams) and allowing you to post content to one or all of them in one go. A real timesaver when you have something you want to broadcast across your entire audience (such as a new event). However, as these platforms evolve, it is important to understand some basics about social media itself and what each platform 'specialises' in.

The key to Social Media is in its name. It is a social place. I always ask a new client, "when was the last time you went on Facebook to buy something?" The answer is always the same "never". So why try to "sell" on Facebook? Effective use of social media in terms of TKD Clubs is to allow the following to occur:

- start and maintain a conversation about a topic.
- obtain reviews from members.
- provide links to resources that enhance the message within a particular conversation.
- allow content to be shared easily.
- promote a concept, idea, event, experience.
- to enhance or even develop your brand and it's identity.

Everything you post on social media relating to your business should enhance or develop your identity and aim to engage your audience. That's it. People get far more attached to brands and are far more likely to become involved with a brand if they can relate to that brand's identity. Every brand that you can think of immediately is one that has an identity that you relate to. Check out your favourite brand's social media. Chances are they are using their stream to enhance their identity. Be wary of falling into the post-something-on-Facebook-just-to-keep-the-audience-engaged theory. Make your posts relevant and engaging and give the audience a way to discover more; such as a link to your website where there is more information about the post. If you don't have anything to 'announce', chances are it is better not to post anything at all. ALWAYS remember, everything you post will be there forever and Facebook posts in particular stick around longer than other platforms. Most users

that click through and actually visit your Facebook page are likely to scroll through old posts and learn more about you/your Club. They'll probably also click through to your personal page as well.

When it comes to using Facebook properly, I teach the following ideas.

Remember, there aren't any rules or guidelines to follow and everyone has a different idea about what you should be doing on Facebook.

1. Always have a business page for your club, never use a personal page.
2. Think very carefully about everything you post online. Think of yourself as a magazine editor and every Facebook post is another 'column' for your magazine. Do you think Cosmopolitan or Vogue publish anything without thinking it through? Try and find the most engaging way of communicating your message. Would a video be better? An image? How can I structure this post to enhance my identity? What about the language?
3. What is the goal for this post? Make your intentions clear and give the reader a very easy path to follow to fulfill the goal.
4. Stop asking (begging) for likes. If you provide content that people can relate to or enjoy, they'll like your page. Very rarely (if at all) will someone like your page, just because you asked.
5. Use the boosted post feature only for important events or branding. If you have a seminar coming up in a week or two and are looking to recruit attendees, use a boosted post. It costs money, but you have an incredible amount of control over where you are spending that money. Facebook advertising is still a relatively inexpensive way of branding your club and spreading the word to the people you want to target.
6. Posting to Facebook should be the last step in your strategy, not the first.
7. Remember that your audience can find out a lot of information about you online in a very short period of time. Everything you post online can be found if you know how to look for it. Just for fun, think of someone you know (anyone at all). Spend ten minutes online and see what you can find out about that person - the results of this exercise will likely astound you.

Twitter is generally about what is happening at this very moment. Tweets (posts to your Twitter page) are only visible for a very limited time (sometimes mere seconds) by your audience so generally don't stick around long. In New Zealand, Twitter isn't particularly popular so for a TKD Club, I don't think it's particularly valuable. Some users prefer Twitter though, so for these people, you should still be available. You can set up your Twitter to post automatically to your Facebook (and vice versa) allowing you to have a presence on both without having to switch

between the two. Theoretically though, twitter is for more urgent announcements (such as changes to an event on the day, early announcements of impending news and the like). Twitter can be used quite effectively by adding a hashtag to a theme of posts (such as an event) allowing users to follow news and updates about it easily.

Google+ is Google's version of Facebook. In the USA and other regions, G+ has a much greater importance than in NZ. Having said that, G+ is given a very high preference in Google search so for this reason alone EVERY club should have a G+ page. It's often the thing that will rank top for searches related to your business and is often the way a big portion of your audience will do simple and quick things like grab your address or phone number without having to visit a website. A user can search for a club and tap-to-call a phone number straight from the search results if you have a G+ page.

A final social media platform that has merit for the TKD Instructor (not necessarily the Club) is LinkedIn. If you are an instructor running a club and don't know about LinkedIn I strongly urge you to take the time to find out more.

YouTube

YouTube is the second largest website on the internet after Google. YouTube is possibly the most underutilised tool available for TKD Clubs (after a mobile app). If you only take one thing from this article, it should be that you need to learn to use YouTube more and better. Most computers (and all iPhones) come with film editing software (like iMovie) that with a bit of effort can help you make your videos far more engaging. Don't just throw them up on Facebook. Your videos are gold and should be treated with utmost respect - even if it's just a student doing a side-kick. Upload them to YouTube and make sure the description and tags contain the keywords relevant to the content (for example a film of someone performing Chon-Ji should have a description mentioning the Club, the student, Chon-Ji, ITF, International Taekwon-do, International Taekwon-Do Federation, International Taekwon-Do Foundation, ITKD, etc). This will help increase the overall online visibility for your club and your other digital assets. We will discuss how to use YouTube more effectively below. Remember, YouTube is owned by Google and they would like you to discover their content first.

Database

A database for the purposes of this article is essentially an emailing list or lists. Your database clearly does a lot more than this (possibly tracking who's paid fees, attended class, etc) and you may also run some kind of CRM. This article is only concerned with utilising the database for EDM's (Electronic Direct Marketing).

A smart operator will have at least 3 lists.

- List 1 - anyone and everyone. These are people that have added themselves via the database capture form on your website or anyone in your contacts. There are programs that sync your contacts with email marketing software so whenever you add a contact (with an email address), they get added to this list. This is the list you are going to use to recruit new members.
- List 2 - Your club members. Every single member (and their parent if relevant) should be on this list. This is the list you will use to promote Club events or make special Club only announcements.
- List 3 - Important people in the organisation. This list is used for communicating with people that influence your business. They could be staff, senior instructors, your Master, sister-club, decision makers, etc.

Remember, people can exist on one or all of these lists, but the lists themselves serve different purposes. Using an email marketing system (I recommend Mailchimp) can make even sending a quick email out to the members of your list a quick and easy process.

SEO Basics

SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) is the process of improving your website's visibility in search. Type something into Google. The websites that appear on page 1 are the best performing websites in terms of SEO for the search term you typed in (keywords); that is, they have the best visibility or highest pagerank. Getting onto (and staying on) page 1 is usually the most important goal for any business owner online. There are an incredible number of factors that are considered when Google determines who gets to the top. To give you an idea, the most recent 'update' to the Google search algorithm included over 200 changes. That's just an update. SEO is tough. Getting to the top of page 1 can be very difficult for keywords that are highly competitive (just ask a dentist or a plumber). Using Google Adwords, you can pay to have the top position. This is the only way to guarantee you get position 1 - pay more than your competitors and Google will

put you at the top. For 'organic' listings (unpaid), the process is much more complex. Organic SEO is made up of 2 factors considered by the algorithm when assigning you a pagerank for a particular keyword - on-page and off-page.

On-page SEO

This is the process of carefully structuring your content to ensure you meet all the factors the Googlebot is seeking when crawling your page. I have written an article on how to structure a page for SEO at the following URL:

<http://www.topcatt.nz/structure-news-story-seo/>

Off-page SEO

This refers to everything else that is factored by the Googlebot when determining pagerank. This is the great unknown and where SEO battles are fought and won. As a Digital Consulting Agency, we have SEO tools that can analyse and provide data about a lot of the off-page SEO of a website or webpage and this helps us develop an off-page SEO strategy. Some of the key off-page SEO factors (remember there are literally hundreds of factors) include:

- links - to and from your website
- anchor text - links within your website
- domain registration (how long you have registered the domain name for)
- hosting - where is the website hosted
- mobile user experience - is the interface optimised for mobile
- website reach - how well known is this website?
- website traffic - how many visitors does this website get compared to similar websites
- Authority - how much of an authority on the related topic is this website.

Any business that relies on their website as their primary source of business acquisition should be paying a professional SEO company (or have a staff member whose primary responsibility is the website SEO). It is an on-going and time-consuming task to increase your website visibility. As any business owner knows though, if you're not on page 1, you're not in the game.

Putting it all together

The following is something I believe has shown great results for my clients. I wish to reiterate, that there are no rules or guidelines to follow in Digital Marketing and everyone you speak to will have different views on the topic. This is a basic

guideline for communicating online which I have seen yield great engagement and conversions. I call it content marketing or channel management, depending on the size of your organisation.

Step 1 - Create collateral and plan the announcement

Let's say you have a seminar coming up that you wish to recruit attendees for (but this theory applies to almost any communication).

- What medium will you use to make this announcement? Video? Image, flyer, brochure, text?
- Create an engaging way of making the announcement that clearly answers the what, where, when, why, who, etc.
- Beware the Huberis effect - if a short text post will do, keep it short. Don't make a 1 minute video when a 15 second one will do.
- If you are making a video (my recommendation wherever possible), upload the video to your YouTube Channel and make sure you choose your keywords and tags carefully.

Step 2. Make it a blog post.

Using a blog and carefully structuring the post is important for the following reasons:

- this is where the person you are targeting is likely to end up to make their purchasing decision (conversion)
- this is where you can put as much detail about the communication as you want
- this is where you want to drive traffic, so visitors have the ability to explore the rest of your website. Remember, this might be what gets them to your website, but it might not be the thing that converts them.
- this page will be cleverly designed to make the conversion a very simple process.
- Embed the YouTube video (if appropriate), don't upload a video to your own website.
- Remember SEO!

Step 3 - Check the process!

This is the step many forget to do. You want to sell tickets to the seminar right? So make sure you can easily do this and it is working properly. You might need to

buy one of your own tickets first! Assess the process and give yourself feedback. Did I need to click through several pages to do something I should have been able to do on one page? Would it be easily understood by my grandma or 6 year old? Am I able to check how many people visited the page and completed a conversion (in this case, bought a ticket) and how many didn't?

Step 4 - Now you're ready to tell the world.

Now use your social media or database or both to make the announcement. Keep the original communication as little as possible. Remember, you want the reader to click the link you embed that takes them to your website, so make sure you don't give the game away. The announcement should contain a very obvious link to follow to your landing page and a reason to click the link - and that's it.

Step 5 - Monitor the 'campaign'.

- Is the campaign yielding the results I expected (or better)?
- Has anyone posted on Social Media about the campaign? Make sure you respond appropriately - even a quick thanks for your comment goes a long way. Especially take the time to thank people for sharing a communication.
- What have I learned from this campaign that I will improve on next time?

Final Thoughts

- There's a whole lot that goes into successful Digital Strategy.
- It is no longer enough to simply have a website and a Facebook page; 5 years ago this might have worked, but not anymore.
- Your Club needs to be available to your audience and your potential audience anywhere, anytime.
- Ranking well for your primary keywords on Google, having relevant and significant content on YouTube and having a strong Facebook page puts your Club on the three biggest websites in the world. The costs to do this alone can be very little.
- If you aren't doing the things in this article or don't have time to do the things in this article, you need professional help. Delaying seeking help WILL hurt your business. If you aren't doing these things, chances are your competitors are.