

# NEW ONLINE MARKETING PLAN LEAVES YOU CLOSING MORE SALES

## The Seven-Step Process for How Your Customers Shop Today



By Brandon Dietrich, Principal @ Social Assurance Media

How customers shop today is heavily dependent upon research and interacting with companies' online platforms. When looking at the customer journey as a whole, there are seven distinct steps in the process. We will examine this process as a whole, and will identify some key success factors within each step. As a whole, what a business says and does when interacting with the customer at each step of the process must be shopper-centric. It must be developed for ease of use for the customer with clear next steps to ascend through the process. Keep in mind, in most cases, after the first step, the shopper progresses through the remainder of the process almost autonomously.

The **first** step of the shopper's journey is initial **awareness** of a need or a business they have interest in. The shopper understands that they need something or received an unsolicited marketing piece from a company. A key factor that companies have to be aware of when sending these marketing pieces is to evolve from broadcasting your message to narrowcasting it. Broadcasting a generic message to a large group of people hoping for a small percentage to respond is proving less effective now than narrowcasting a specific tailored mes-

sage to a small group of people in an effort to receive a larger percentage response rate.

The **second** step is **search**. Shoppers are searching for a solution (or for a company by name) in their own voice on platforms that are convenient for them. Sellers must figure out the words the shopper uses on each specific platform and develop a plan to be present there. Strictly using trendy (and sometimes confusing) industry terms should be avoided.

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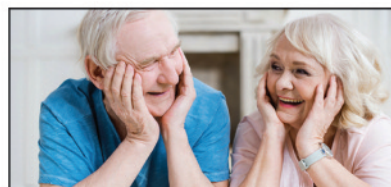
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Having **results presented** to the shopper is the **third** step. The results are a product of the search conducted in step two and are displayed in small “snippets” These results are the first opportunity a business has to make a positive impression and compel the shopper to click their link. If the shopper is searching for a company by name, aim to dominate multiple results in the listings (ex- #1-4 in Google).

Making a **decision** for which of the results to select is step number **four**. This is a critical point where many shoppers drop out of the process. They qualify themselves by searching for a need but do not decide to click on a company’s ad or link. To safeguard against this happening, businesses must have positive reviews showing up on search results and information that is accurate. Consider using video.

The **fifth** step finds the shopper viewing a **landing page or website** as a results of their decision from step four. Shoppers are expecting the answer to their question or an explanation of the product/service that fulfills their need. Answer their question specifically and in a concise manner, all while spurring them to take some action.

In step number **six**, the shopper conducts **research and compares** alternative options or service providers. Ideally, a call to action should be presented on the landing page from step five that spurs the shopper to contact the business or purchase immediately. This however, is not often the case. Two of the most influential aspects that shoppers take into consideration during this phase are a company’s reviews and knowledgeable content. Ensure that reviews rank at 3.5 stars or greater and

that content is helpful, engaging, and easy for the shopper to read in short sentences.

The final step is step number **seven** where the shopper **buys or calls**. After completing the research phase and feeling confident in their decision, the shopper looks for how to purchase or contact the company. At this point the shopper is typically not on the original landing page where they began (step number five). A key to success at this point is having a strong call to action, link back to the company’s website, or accurate and readily available contact info wherever they might be researching.

There are many steps and unique facets to the shopper’s journey; from initial awareness through making a purchase/calling, shoppers engage and evaluate a company on many levels. Shoppers can skip steps or repeat steps, however, one thing remains the same; if a company can implement these small incremental enhancements to their online presence, and meet the buyer where they are throughout the journey, the company can positively influence their customer acquisition process.

*Social Assurance Media is a full-service digital marketing firm that helps convert shoppers to buyers. By offering comprehensive online digital marketing, Social Assurance Media helps clients understand their ideal customer, builds messaging & tools that resonate with them and attracts prospects eager to buy.*

