**Is your online presence an afterthought?**

I have many clients that allocate the majority of their budgets towards traditional advertising vehicles and seem surprised when I suggest that online is a critical part of the marketing mix. Let’s be clear, I’m not advocating abandoning traditional media, what I am advocating is understanding what the right mix of online and traditional media is for your business and optimizing your investment for performance. With [80% of consumers researching online](http://www.internetretailer.com/2012/03/30/most-shoppers-go-online-research-products) before buying, it’s more critical than ever that your online and offline presence are integrated.

Let’s walk through a scenario that’s all too common. What happens when people see a marketing message and decide they’re interested in the product or service? Often, they go online, type in some search terms and attempt to learn more, compare prices, or find out where to buy. This is the principle discussed in the [Zero Moment of Truth](http://www.zeromomentoftruth.com/), a fantastic ebook put out by Google.

Even if you’re savvy and include your website address as part of your traditional media, people will still go to Google and type in your brand name. Hopefully they end up on your site and have a fantastic experience. But…

* What happens if your competitors are bidding on your brand name and have an ad with an enticing offer right above the link to your site?
* What if your website is really pretty but isn’t indexed by Google because the home page has no content and you didn’t think about optimizing for search engines when you built it?
* What if customers come to your website but you can’t figure out why they’re not buying because you don’t have Google Analytics installed?

**What should you do?**

With traditional media, unless you have a unique offer, it can often be difficult to determine the effectiveness of your media buy. One of the major benefits of online marketing is the ability to track performance and test, test, test!

Maybe you’re one of the converted. You’re saying to me “Heather, we run banner ads on several sites and they generate lots of traffic to our site.”

* That’s great – do you know which banners result in the most conversions?
* Is your site even set up so that you can measure conversions?
* Do you even know what you should be tracking?
* Are your banner ads more or less effective at driving the right type of traffic than other marketing tactics?

Making an investment in your online presence isn’t just about buying ads or being on Facebook. It’s about recognizing that consumers are going online as part of the buying process and that having a good experience is CRITICAL. You can start by making sure that Google Analytics is [installed correctly](http://support.google.com/googleanalytics/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=174090) on your site. Then, why not take some time to ask yourself WHAT you can measure and HOW you’ll use the information that you get from measuring.

What kind of challenges does your business face with online marketing? What metrics do you use to measure performance? Let us know in the comments!