

USC Iovine and Young Academy

*Arts, Technology and the Business
of Innovation*

IDSN 529 Marketing Strategy for Startups

Units: 3.0

Spring 2024—Thursdays—5:30 pm-7:50 pm PT

Location: <https://digitalcampus.instructure.com/>

Instructor: Jay Clewis

Office: Virtual

Office Hours: By Appointment

Contact: jclewis@usc.edu

IT Help: <https://uscedu.sharepoint.com/sites/IYAStudent/SitePages/IT-Resources.aspx>

Hours of Service: 9 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Contact Info: iyahelp@usc.edu

Technology Support: [Zoom information for students](#)

2U Digital Campus Online Technical Support

Contact: 1-855-487-3504, techsupport@digitalcampus.2U.com

Course Description

How do you attract your first 100, 500, or 1,000 customers? This course focuses on a subset of marketing strategies and tactics that are ideal for early-stage startups seeking to build communities of early adopters and beta testers for their products, services, and systems. We will take a strategic approach to developing an omnichannel content strategy that aims to build lasting customer relationships across all possible channels and touchpoints, including digital and real-world environments. There will be an emphasis on audience acquisition tactics that align stakeholders in understanding who our desired audience is, and how to find them and engage them with quality content, incentives, and offers. Additionally, this course will explore customer retention, content delivery, performance, and measurement to optimize desired outcomes.

Learning Objectives and Outcomes

Students in this course will learn how to design, build, and execute a strategic content marketing plan. Upon completing this course, students will be able to:

- Understand the foundational components of a marketing plan for an identified audience
- Build a strategic content marketing plan aimed at building an audience for an early-stage product, service, and/or company
- Analyze and make recommendations for a communication business's content development strategy, business logic, and audience measurement systems
- Apply knowledge of search algorithms and search engine optimization (SEO) to analyze information quality and derive content quality score measures

- Make use of content development technologies and best practices to research and write actionable recommendations to optimize content for internet search and distribution
- Utilize human-centered design principles in content development and user research methods and practices
- Determine the ethical challenges of data capture and audience tracking through the design of content management and data storage that incorporate privacy standards

Prerequisite(s):

IDSN 510 IPR; IDSN 540 Processes and Perspectives; IDSN 545 Integrative Project.

Course Notes

This course will be conducted online, using a combination of the 2U Digital Campus (Canvas), group messaging, submission of deliverables, and grading. Google Drive will be used as a repository for all coursework, deliverables, and shared activity documents. Zoom will be used to conduct all live synchronous sessions. Students are responsible for all additional assigned material, video lectures, interviews, and reading materials offered by the instructor throughout the course.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

Students must provide their own laptops. The laptop specifications take into consideration that students will be creating, streaming, and downloading audio and video, communicating using video conferencing applications and creating and storing large multimedia files.

USC Technology Rental Program

The university realizes attending classes online and completing coursework remotely requires access to technology that not all students possess. If you need resources to participate in your classes, such as a laptop or internet hotspot, you may be eligible for the university’s equipment rental program. Submit an application to the [USC Technology Rental Program](#).

HOW TO PURCHASE SOFTWARE AT THE DISCOUNTED ACADEMY RATE

For classes that require them, the following software is available for purchase online through the USC Iovine and Young software catalog at the Academy discounted rate:

Software	IYA Short-Term License at USC Bookstore
Adobe Creative Cloud	\$70 2023–2024 annual license
Apple Logic Pro	\$35 semester licenses
Solidworks	\$35 semester license
Apple Final Cut Pro	\$35 semester license

To purchase:

- Visit: <https://commerce.cashnet.com/IOVINE>
- Select the software license(s) you would like to purchase by clicking “View Details” or the software title and make your purchase
- You will receive an order confirmation receipt at the email address you provided
- You will be notified by email when the software license has been activated

If you have any questions about this process, please do not hesitate to contact Academy IT Support at iyahelp@usc.edu.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Required content and readings are outlined in the Course Schedule. Additional readings may be assigned by faculty during the semester. In addition, the following books are recommended and will be referenced throughout the course:

- *Start With Why*, (Simon Sinek), 2009.
- *The Psychology of a Website: Mastering Cognitive Biases, Conversion Triggers, and Modern SEO to Achieve Massive Results*, (Matthew Capela), 2021.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

Below are brief overviews of each assignment and deliverable in the course. Unless specified otherwise, all assignments will be submitted within the 2U Digital Campus. If you experience technical difficulties, email the course instructor and utilize 2U student support for assistance. Additional assignment details will be provided and discussed during the live session meetings.

1.1 – Marketing Trends (individual)

Identify two strong examples of brands using one of the current marketing trends discussed in Unit 1. In a few short paragraphs, explain what tactic they're deploying, how you know, and your assessment on the execution. The deliverable should be a PDF (of a Google document or slide deck) and include images of examples and/or citations.

1.2 – Brand Stories (individual)

Identify two examples of companies using powerful storytelling to share their brand values, mission, and message. In your assessment, explain what content type(s) are they using, how is it being distributed, and the impact they are striving for. The deliverable should be a PDF (of a Google document or slide deck) and include images of examples and/or citations.

1.3 – Semester Project Pitch (team)

The semester project is a team project where you will select a young company to create a marketing strategy over the course of the semester. For this initial pitch, you will conduct research and identify: 1) the company (an existing business or IYA student project/company), 2) stated or perceived brand vision, mission, and content pillars, 3) target audience, 4) core products and services, and 5) competition and current market positioning. The deliverable should be a PDF (slide deck) and include any relevant citations. Plan to present this pitch in the live session.

1.4 – OKRs: Objectives and Key Results (team)

Semester project teams will collaborate on setting clear objectives for the project and articulate the key desired results to track the outcomes of the marketing strategy. The deliverable should focus on four marketing-related OKRs based on the semester project, include specific timelines, and result in a PDF (of a Google document or slide deck) to share in class.

2.1 – SEO Audit and Recommendations (team)

Semester project teams will conduct an SEO audit of their brand's website and/or its main

competition to create benchmarks for keyword research, competition, on-page technical SEO recommendations, as well as content recommendations to improve SEO ranking. The deliverable, a high-level plan for improving search engine optimization, should be a PDF (of a Google document or slide deck) and include descriptions, examples, and screenshots of your work.

2.2 – Email Marketing Campaign (team)

Semester project teams will create an email marketing campaign to complement the content strategy of the project. The deliverable should include at least two sample emails (an offer email and a retargeting email), plus a mockup of an optimized landing page for the campaign. The deliverable should be a PDF (of a Google document or slide deck) and include screenshots/samples of your work.

2.3 – Social Media Marketing Campaign (team)

Semester project teams will create a social media marketing campaign to complement the content strategy of the project. Include at least four sample social media posts (at least two different channels); pointing to your optimized landing page (from 2.1). The deliverable should be a PDF (of a Google document or slide deck) and include screenshots/samples of your work.

2.4 – PR and Promotions (team)

Students will independently research and identify two public relations or promotional opportunities for their teams to consider for inclusion in the overall marketing strategy. The deliverable should be a PDF (of a Google document or slide deck) and include screenshots/samples of your work.

2.5 – Growth Hacking (individual)

Students will independently create a detailed concept of an alternative marketing tactic covered in class for their teams to consider for inclusion in the overall marketing strategy. The deliverable should be a PDF (Google document or slide deck) and include screenshots/samples of your work.

3.1 – Content Calendars (team)

Semester project teams will create a content calendar (at least four weeks long) that complements the overall content mapping strategy of the project. The deliverable should be a PDF (of a Google document or slide deck) and include any relevant examples and/or citations.

3.2 – A/B Testing Concept (team)

Semester Project teams will collaborate on creating an A/B test (or multivariate test) concept for one of the marketing tactics outlined in the team's strategy. The deliverable should be a PDF (of a Google document or slide deck) and include any relevant examples and/or citations.

3.3 – Marketing Strategy Plan and Final Presentation (team)

Finalize your team's semester project by creating a cohesive marketing strategy plan (template provided) and a presentation aimed at the selected company's stakeholders to demonstrate your vision for audience acquisition and growth, as well as the tactics and measurements used to achieve the desired results. Full requirements, grading criteria, and a rubric will be shared early in the semester. The deliverables should include two PDFs (for the plan and presentation).

Assignment Rubrics

The instructor will provide evaluation and grading criteria for assignments throughout the course.

Grading Breakdown

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Participation (individual)	150	15%
1.1 – Marketing Trends (individual)	20	2%
1.2 – Brand Stories (individual)	20	2%
1.3 – Semester Project Pitch Presentation (team)	100	10%
1.4 – Objectives and Key Results (team)	50	5%
2.1 – SEO Audit and Recommendations (team)	70	7%
2.2 – Email Marketing Campaign (team)	70	7%
2.3 – Social Media Marketing Campaign (team)	70	7%
2.4 – PR and Promotions (individual)	50	5%
2.5 – Growth Hacking (individual)	50	5%
3.1 – Content Calendars (team)	50	5%
3.2 – A/B Testing Concept (team)	50	5%
3.3 – Marketing Strategy Plan and Final Presentation (team)	250	25%
Total	1000	100%

Assignment Submission Policy

All assignments must be delivered by the date and time (Pacific Time) that the deliverable is listed as due per instructor guidelines. The instructor(s) will provide due dates for all assignments and deliverables during the first week of the Capstone. Late assignments will be subject to the late submission policy indicated below. **All assignments must be completed to pass this class.**

Late Submissions

Assignments will be accepted after the deadline with the following grade penalties. Do not ask for extensions; the extensions are noted below.

Submission within 24 hours after the deadline	10% deduction
Submission between 24 hours and 3 days after the deadline	50% deduction
Submission after 3 days after the deadline	100% deduction

Grading Scale

Final course grades will be determined using the following scale:

Letter Grade	Numerical Score
A	95-100
A-	90-94
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
F	69 and below

Course Attendance Policy

The Academy maintains rigorous academic standards for its students, and on-time attendance at all class meetings is expected. Each student will be allowed two excused absences over the course of a semester when a detailed explanation is provided. Each unexcused absence will result in the lowering of the final course grade by one-third of a grade (e.g., an A will be lowered to an A-, an A- will be lowered to a B+, and so on). In addition, being tardy to class will count as one-third of an absence. Three tardies will equal a full course absence. Missing a substantial part of a class for any reason may be counted as a full course absence and is at the discretion of the instructor.

Students remain responsible for any missed work from excused or unexcused absences. Immediately following an absence, students should contact the instructor to obtain missed assignments or lecture notes and to confirm new deadlines or due dates. Extensions or other accommodations are at the discretion of the instructor.

Excused absences normally may not be used on days where there is a quiz, exam, or presentation. Using an excused absence for a quiz, exam, or presentation, such as in the case of sudden illness or other emergency, is at the discretion of the instructor.

In the case of prolonged illness, family emergencies, or other unforeseen serious issues, the student should contact the instructor to arrange for accommodations. Accommodations may also be made for essential professional or career-related events or opportunities. Additionally, students who need accommodations for religious observations should provide advanced notice to instructors, and student-athletes should provide Travel Request Letters. All accommodations remain at the discretion of the instructor, and appropriate documentation may be required.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Week	Topics	Reading and Assignments
Module 1: Marketing Strategy and Planning		
1	Marketing Strategy for Startups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course Introduction and Overview • Content Strategy Basics • Inbound Marketing vs. Content Marketing • Diversity in Marketing • Marketing Trends and Examples 	What is Content Marketing (Mailchimp) How the Best Marketing Campaigns of 2023 Mastered Pop Culture Nostalgia (Marketing Drive) The Future of Marketing: 5 Trends and Predictions for 2024 and Beyond (Gartner) No Assignment Due
2	Know Thyself, Know Thy Enemy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining Brand, Vision, Mission, and Message • The Importance of Brand and Content Pillars • Market Research and Competitive Analysis • Seeking Differentiation (Unique Value Proposition) • Audience Definition, Targeting, and Personalization 	11 Steps to Defining Your Brand Identity (Indeed) The Beginner's Guide to Brand Pillars (HubSpot) Assignment 1.1 Due
3	Content Development and Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The PESO Content Model • Content Atomization • Owning Your Narrative (via owned media) • The Magical Science of Storytelling • The Power of Storytelling for Brands 	Close the Deal with the ABCDs for Action (Think with Google) The Magical Science of Storytelling (YouTube) Assignment 1.2 Due
4	Setting the Stage: Semester Project Pitch <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial Semester Project Presentations and Q&A 	Assignment 1.3 Due
5	If You Fail to Plan, You Plan to Fail <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to Build a Marketing Strategy and Plan • OKRs: Creating Clear Objectives and Desired Results • Conscious Marketing: A Path to a More Loyal Audience • Data Ethics: Privacy, Transparency, and Trust 	OKRs vs. SMART Goals (Perdoo) How to Write Effective OKRs 2023 (ClickUp) No Assignment Due
Module 2: Audience Acquisition		

6	Search Engine Optimization, Part I <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How Search Works • On-Page SEO Techniques • Off-Page SEO Techniques • Keyword Research 	What is Off-Page SEO? (Semrush) 6 SEO Challenges Brands Anticipate in 2023 (HubSpot) Assignment 1.4 Due
7	Search Engine Optimization, Part II <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crafting and Promoting Content for SEO • Voice, Mobile, and Local Search • Measuring SEO Efforts 	How to Do a Website Audit to Improve SEO and Conversions (HubSpot) No Assignment Due
8	Email Marketing Magic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email Marketing Strategy and Automation • Email Design Best Practices • Landing Page Optimization and Testing 	The Email Design Guide (Mailchimp) Assignment 2.1 Due
9	Social Media and Influencer Marketing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Media Marketing Overview • Organic vs. Paid Social • Community Building • Importance of Influencers 	Brands are Obsessed with Building Community (Vox) Assignment 2.2 Due
10	PR and Promotions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press Releases and Media Relationships • Conferences, Webinars, and IRL Events • Contests and Giveaways 	How to Build a Startup Press Kit (Medium) 6 Steps to Write a Killer Press Release (Copyblogger) Assignment 2.3 Due
11	Hacking Growth Through Marketing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guerilla Marketing Tactics • Buzz, Viral, and Referral Marketing 	Assignment 2.4 Due
Module 3: Performance and Measurement		
12	Content Mapping, Performance, and Measurement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value and Importance of Content Calendars • Measuring Content Performance • Understanding Key Performance Indicators 	Complete Guide to Content Mapping (Semrush) Assignment 2.5 Due
13	Campaign Performance and Testing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Media Listening and Monitoring • A/B and Multivariate Testing 	Social Listening: Your Launchpad to Success on Social Media (Sprout Social)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to Run a Smoke Test • Conversion Optimization 	Assignment 3.1 Due
14	Building Your Dream Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Roles and Responsibilities • Setting Team Norms, Expectations, and Accountability • Dry Run of Final Presentations in Breakout Rooms 	Assignment 3.2 Due
15	The Big Show: Final Presentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Presentations: Marketing Strategy Plans 	Assignment 3.3 Due

Course Content Distribution and Synchronous Session Recordings Policies

USC has policies that prohibit the recording and distributing of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

Recording a university class without the express permission of the instructor and announcement to the class, or unless conducted pursuant to an Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) accommodation. Recording can inhibit free discussion in the future and thus infringe on the academic freedom of other students as well as the instructor. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

Distribution or use of notes, recordings, exams, or other intellectual property based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study. This includes but is not limited to providing materials for distribution by services publishing course materials. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information that had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relation to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the internet, or via any other media. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Integrity:

The University of Southern California is foremost a learning community committed to fostering successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Academic misconduct is in contrast to the university's mission to educate students through a broad array of first-rank academic, professional, and extracurricular programs and includes any act of dishonesty in the submission of academic work (either in draft or final form).

This course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the [USC Student Handbook](#). All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Other violations of academic misconduct include but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity, see the [student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

Policy for the Use of AI Generators

The Capstone course does not have any restrictions on the use of generative AI tools to create or modify content relating to the development of student projects.

Students and Disability Accommodations:

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. [The Office of Student Accessibility Services \(OSAS\)](#) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible, as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Support Systems:

[Counseling and Mental Health](#) - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on-call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

[988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on-call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

[Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services \(RSVP\)](#) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on-call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

[Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX \(EEO-TIX\)](#) - (213) 740-5086

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

[Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment](#) - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

[The Office of Student Accessibility Services \(OSAS\)](#) - (213) 740-0776

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities by providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

[USC Campus Support and Intervention](#) - (213) 740-0411

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

[Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#) - (213) 740-2101

Information on events, programs, and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

[USC Emergency](#) - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on-call

Emergency assistance and avenues to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

[USC Department of Public Safety](#) - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on-call

Non-emergency assistance or information.

[Office of the Ombuds](#) - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University ombudsman who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concerns.

[Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice](#) - (323) 442-2850 or otfp@med.usc.edu

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health-promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.