USC Iovine and
Young Academy
Arts, Technology and the Business
of Innovation

IDSN 529 Marketing Strategy for Startups
Units: 3.0
Summer 2024—Tuesdays—5:30 pm-8:40 pm PT

Location: https://brightspace.usc.edu

Instructor: Jay Clewis
Office: Virtual
Office Hours: By Appointment
Contact: jclewis@usc.edu

USC Brightspace Help: https://www.brightspacehelp.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 student

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 marketing 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

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- 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): None

Course Notes
Students are responsible for all additional assigned material, including video lectures, interviews, and reading materials offered by the instructors throughout the semester. Zoom will be used to conduct all live synchronous sessions.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required
Students must provide their own laptops. The laptop specifications consider 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, but not required, and will be referenced during 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.

Course Schedule

Week	Topics	Reading and Assignments
Module 1: Marketing Strategy and Planning		
1	**Marketing Strategy for Startups** • Course Introduction and Overview • Content Strategy Basics • Inbound Marketing vs. Content Marketing • Diversity in Marketing • Marketing Trends	What is Content Marketing (Mailchimp) The Future of Marketing: 5 Trends and Predictions for 2024 and Beyond (Gartner) **No Assignment Due**
2	**Know Thyself, Know Thy Enemy** • Defining Brand Identity and Story • Vision, Mission, and Message • Brand Pillars, Content Pillars, and Content Verticals • Market Research • 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) This is How Louis Vuitton Mastered the Art of Timeless Luxury with these Marketing Strategies (Brand Vision Insights) **Assignment 1.1 Due**
3	**Content Development and Management** • The PESO Content Model • Content Atomization • Owning Your Narrative with Owned Media • The Magic • 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 Intro Presentation** • Initial Semester Project Presentations and Q&A **If You Fail to Plan, You Plan to Fail**	**Assignment 1.3 Due** OKRs vs. SMART Goals (Perdoo)

	• How to Build a Marketing Strategy and Plan • OKRs: Creating Clear Objectives and Desired Results • Conscious Marketing: Path to a More Loyal Audience • Data Ethics: Privacy, Transparency, and Trust	[How to Write Effective OKRs 2023](#) (ClickUp)
Module 2: Audience Acquisition		
5	**Search Engine Optimization, Part I** • How Search Works • On-Page SEO Techniques • Off-Page SEO Techniques • Keyword Research **Search Engine Optimization, Part II** • Rich Results, Voice, Mobile, and Local Search • Measuring SEO Efforts • Core Web Vitals	[What is Off-Page SEO?](#) (Semrush) [6 SEO Challenges Brands Anticipate in 2023](#) (HubSpot) [How to Do a Website Audit to Improve SEO and Conversions](#) (HubSpot) **Assignment 1.4 Due**
6	**Email Marketing Magic** • Email Marketing Strategy and Automation • Email Design Best Practices • Landing Page Optimization and Testing	[The Email Design Guide](#) (Mailchimp) **Assignment 2.1 Due**
7	**Social Media and Influencer Marketing** • Social Media Marketing Overview • Organic vs. Paid Social • Community Building • Importance of Influencers	[Brands are Obsessed with Building Community](#) (Vox) **Assignment 2.2 Due**
8	**PR and Promotions** • Press and Media Relationships • Press Kits and Press Releases • Conferences, Webinars, Events, Contests **Hacking Growth Through Marketing** • Guerilla Marketing Tactics • Ambient, Buzz, Viral, and Referral Marketing	[How to Build a Startup Press Kit](#) (Medium) [6 Steps to Write a Killer Press Release](#) (Copyblogger) **Assignment 2.3 Due**
Module 3: Performance and Measurement		
9	**Content Mapping, Performance, and Measurement** • Value and Importance of Content Calendars • Measuring Content Performance • Understanding Key Performance Indicators	[Complete Guide to Content Mapping](#) (Semrush) **Assignment 2.4 Due** **Assignment 2.5 Due**

10	**Campaign Performance and Testing** • Social Media Monitoring and Social Listening • A/B and Multivariate Testing • Fake Door Tests • Conversion Optimization	[Social Listening: Your Launchpad to Success on Social Media](#) (Sprout Social) **Assignment 3.1 Due**
11	**Topics on The Future of Marketing** • Discussion of Emerging Marketing Tactics • Dry Run of Final Presentations in Breakout Rooms	**Assignment 3.2 Due**
12	**The Big Show: Final Presentation** • Final Presentations: Pitch Presentation of the Team's Strategic Marketing Plan Proposal	**Assignment 3.3 Due (2 parts)** 1. Strategic Marketing Plan Proposal (template provided) 2. Pitch Presentation of the Plan

Description and Assessment of Assignments

Below are brief overviews of each assignment. All assignments will be submitted within the Brightspace at USC Learning Management System (LMS). If you experience technical difficulties, utilize the USC Brightspace Help page (link above) and email your instructor.

1.1: Marketing Trends (individual)

Identify two strong examples of brands using one of the current marketing trends discussed in class. Briefly explain what tactic they're deploying, how you know, and your assessment of the execution. The deliverable should be a PDF and include a link and screenshots.

1.2: Brand Stories (individual)

Identify two examples of companies using powerful storytelling to share their brand values, mission, and story. Briefly explain the content type(s) found, how it is being distributed, and the perceived impact. The deliverable should be a PDF and include a link(s) and screenshot(s).

1.3: Semester Project Intro Presentation (team)

The semester project is a team project where you will select an early-stage startup to create a strategic marketing plan over the course of the semester. For the initial presentation, you will conduct market and audience research and identify 1) the 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 and include screenshots and relevant citations.

1.4: Objectives and Key Results (team)

Semester project teams will collaborate on setting clear marketing objectives for the project and articulate the key desired results to track the strategic marketing plan's outcomes. The deliverable should focus on at least four marketing-related OKRs based on the semester project, include specific timelines, and result in a PDF (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 should utilize the assignment template provided in class.

2.2: Email Marketing Campaign (team)
Semester project teams will create an email marketing campaign to complement the project's content strategy. The deliverable should include at least one sample email per team member (more details provided in class) and a mockup of an optimized landing page for the campaign. The deliverable should be a PDF (Google document or slide deck).

2.3: Social Media Marketing Campaign (team)
Semester project teams will create a social media marketing campaign to complement the project's content strategy. The campaign should include at least four sample social media posts or mockups that span at least two different channels/platforms (more details provided in class).

2.4: PR and Promotions (hybrid)
Create a package of PR assets for the semester project to be included in the content marketing strategy document. Each team member will be responsible for creating at least one of the PR tactics covered in class. Full details and templates will be provided in class. The deliverable should be a PDF (Google Doc or slide deck) and include the completed assets (or links to view online).

2.5: Guerrilla Marketing (team)
Semester project teams will create two detailed concepts leveraging two of the alternative marketing tactics covered in class 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 (Google document or slide deck) and include any relevant examples and/or citations.

3.2: Campaign Testing Concept (team)
Semester Project teams will collaborate on creating either an A/B test concept for one of the marketing tactics outlined in the team's strategy (more details will be provided in class) or a fake door test to gauge the desirability of a proposed new product, service, or feature. The deliverable should be a PDF (of a slide deck) and include mockups showing the concept being tested.

3.3: Strategic Marketing Plan Proposal and Pitch Presentation (team)
Semester project teams will finalize their strategic content marketing plan (template will be provided) and a pitch presentation of the plan aimed at internal stakeholders to demonstrate the vision for audience acquisition and growth and measurements used to achieve the desired results. The deliverables for this final assignment include two PDFs (marketing plan and presentation).

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

Grading Breakdown

Assignments	Points	% of Grade
Participation (individual)	100	10%
1.1: Marketing Trends (individual)	20	2%
1.2: Brand Stories (individual)	20	2%
1.3: Semester Project Intro Presentation (team)	80	8%
1.4: Objectives and Key Results (team)	60	6%
2.1: SEO Audit and Recommendations (team)	80	8%
2.2: Email Marketing Campaign (team)	80	8%
2.3: Social Media Marketing Campaign (team)	60	6%
2.4: PR and Promotions (hybrid)	80	8%
2.5: Guerrilla Marketing (team)	60	6%
3.1: Content Calendars (team)	60	6%
3.2: Campaign Testing Concept (team)	60	6%
3.3: Strategic Marketing Plan Proposal and Presentation (team)	240	24%
Total	1000	100%

Grading 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

Assignment Submission Policy

All assignments must be delivered by the date and time (Pacific Time) 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 in the 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

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 confirm new deadlines or due dates. Extensions or other accommodations are at the instructor's discretion.

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 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, 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 Generative AI Tools

This policy aims to foster creativity, efficiency, innovation, and the adaptive use of contemporary tools as part of our educational and professional development. Generative artificial intelligence (Gen AI) platforms have become invaluable tools for content creators, designers, developers, and

beyond. Hence, students are encouraged to leverage these resources to learn how to integrate them into academic research and study while upholding the highest standards of ethics and academic integrity. Read the following guiding principles for acceptable use in this course.

Use of Generative AI Tools and Platforms:
- **Acceptable Uses:** Students are permitted and encouraged to use Gen AI platforms to assist in their research of topics and ideas to assist in information discovery and summarization. Students may use Gen AI to create outlines for written work as a starting point. Students may use Gen AI tools to edit their original work. Students may use Gen AI to help visualize their original ideas and work with the creation of images and videos.
- **Transparency:** Anytime a Gen AI platform is used to create or assist in the creation of material or content used in submitted deliverables, students must cite each use.
- **Prohibited Uses:** Students are not permitted to use Gen AI to create full drafts of written content for submission. Submission of content solely generated by AI may be considered plagiarism, and submission of content without citation may be considered cheating.
- **Enforcement and Consequences:** Offenses will be reported as academic integrity offenses and may result in failing the assignment, failing the class, suspension, or expulsion.

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.