

Arts, Technology and the Business of Innovation

IDSN 529 Marketing Strategy for Startups

Units: 3.0

Fall 2024—Thursdays—5:30 pm-8:00 pm PT

Location: https://brightspace.usc.edu

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

IT Email Support: iyahelp@usc.edu

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 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 for an early-stage startup/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
- Determine the ethical challenges of data capture and audience tracking through the design of content management and data storage that incorporate privacy standards

Prerequisites

There are no pre- or co-requisites for this course.

Course Notes

Students are responsible for all additional assigned material, including video lectures, interviews, and reading materials offered by the instructor throughout the semester.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

Students must provide their own laptops. The laptop specifications consider that students will create, stream, and download audio and video, communicate using video conferencing applications, and create and store large multimedia files.

USC Laptop Loaner Program

The university realizes that 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, you may be eligible for the <u>USC Computer Center Laptop Loaner Program</u>.

How To Purchase Software at The Academy Discounted Rate

Selected software licenses are available for purchase online through the USC lovine and Young software catalog at the Academy discounted rate. To purchase software:

- 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.

Technical Support Information

For help accessing or using Brightspace, Zoom, or other USC online tools and resources, including email, use the following contact information.

- Brightspace Help: https://www.brightspacehelp.usc.edu
- Brightspace Email Support: <u>usc@d2l.com</u>
- Zoom Support: Zoom information for students
- IT Help: https://uscedu.sharepoint.com/sites/IYAStudent/SitePages/IT-Resources.aspx
- IT Email Support: iyahelp@usc.edu

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Required readings and videos are outlined in the Course Schedule below and are hosted by third-party websites. If an article or video becomes unavailable, notify your instructor for a suitable replacement. Additional readings may be assigned during the semester. The following books are recommended but not required:

- Start With Why, (Simon Sinek), 2009.
- <u>The Psychology of a Website: Mastering Cognitive Biases, Conversion Triggers, and Modern SEO to Achieve Massive Results</u>, (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 Magical Science of Storytelling The Power of Storytelling for Brands The PESO Content Model Content Atomization Owning Your Narrative with Owned Media	Close the Deal with the ABCDs for Action (Think with Google) The Magical Science of Storytelling (YouTube) The New Art of Storytelling: A Look at the Future of Content (Contentful) Assignment 1.2 Due		
4	Setting the Stage: Semester Project Intro Presentation • Initial Semester Project Presentations and Q&A	Assignment 1.3 Due		
5	 If You Fail to Plan, You Plan to Fail 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 	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 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 Rich Results, Voice, Mobile, and Local Search Measuring SEO Efforts Core Web Vitals	How to Do a Website Audit to Improve SEO and Conversions (HubSpot) No Assignment Due
8	 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
9	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
10	 PR and Promotions Press and Media Relationships Press Kits and Press Releases Conferences, Webinars, Events, Contests 	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 Guerilla Marketing Tactics Ambient, Buzz, Viral, and Referral Marketing 	Assignment 2.4 Due
Module 3: Performance and Measurement		
12	 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 2.5 Due

13	 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 3.1 Due
14	 Topics on The Future of Marketing Discussion of Emerging Marketing Tactics Dry Run of Final Presentations in Breakout Rooms 	Assignment 3.2 Due
15	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 2. Pitch Presentation of the Plan

Description and Assessment of Assignments

Below are brief overviews of each assignment. Your instructor will provide additional instructions for each. All assignments will be submitted to the Brightspace Learning Management System (LMS). If you experience difficulties, email your instructor and use the USC Brightspace Help page.

Weekly Course Participation

Consistent participation (synchronously and asynchronously) is heavily emphasized throughout this course. Participation includes thoughtful contributions to classroom discussions, collaborative work among your peers, and presentation of your ideas regularly.

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 links and screenshots.

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) the target audience, 4) core products and services, and 5) the competition and current market positioning. The deliverable should 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 its top pages to create benchmarks for keyword research, competition, on-page technical SEO recommendations, and content recommendations to improve SEO ranking and topical authority.

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 spanning at least two 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 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: 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.

3.2: 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 relevant examples and/or citations.

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
Weekly Course 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
А	95-100
A-	90-94
B+	87-89
В	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
С	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 absences over the course of the semester for which no explanation is required. Students are admonished not to waste excused absences on non-critical issues and to use them carefully for illness or other issues that may arise unexpectedly. Except in the case of prolonged illness or other serious issue (see below), no additional absences will be excused. Each unexcused absence will result in the lowering of the final grade by $\frac{1}{3}$ of a grade (e.g., an A will be lowered to an A-minus, and an A-minus will be lowered to a B+, etc.). In addition, being tardy to class will count as one-third of an absence. Three tardies will equal a full course absence.

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 instructor's discretion.

Automatically excused absences may not normally be used for quizzes, exams, or presentation days. The instructor may use an excused absence for a quiz, exam, or presentation, such as in the case of sudden illness or other emergency.

In the case of prolonged illness, family emergencies, or other unforeseen serious issues, the student should contact the instructor to arrange for accommodation. 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.

Unless students provide an accommodation letter from USC's Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) or a letter from IYA Student Services detailing visa or travel restrictions, attendance and active participation is expected in the classroom. Any student with such accommodations should submit their accommodation document to the instructor as soon as possible to discuss appropriate accommodations.

Classroom Norms and Zoom Etiquette

We will meet each week at a set time, and you are expected to begin each session engaged and ready to participate. The classroom will open 10 minutes before each live session begins, and the class will begin on time. The expectations outlined below are paramount to your success:

- Be on time: Set an alarm if needed, and plan to arrive a few minutes early.
- Limit distractions: Find a guiet place and check your surroundings.
- Be prepared: Charge/plug in your computer, use headphones, and turn on your camera.
- **Presentation:** Dress appropriately (for a business setting); sit up straight.
- Mute yourself when you are not speaking.
- Participate: Be present and contribute ideas; avoid multitasking.
- Chat responsibly: Use chat to ask questions and offer feedback; avoid gossip.

• **Show respect:** Practice good netiquette. Listen, be respectful, be considerate.

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 <u>USC Student Handbook</u>. All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course and 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 academic misconduct violations 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.

Academic dishonesty has a far-reaching impact and is considered a serious offense against the university. Violations will result in a grade penalty, such as a failing grade on the assignment or in the course, and disciplinary action from the university, such as suspension or expulsion.

For more information about academic integrity see the <u>student handbook</u> or the <u>Office of Academic Integrity's website</u>, and university policies on <u>Research and Scholarship Misconduct</u>.

Please ask your instructor if you need clarification on what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment or what information requires citation or attribution.

Course Policy for the Use of Generative Al

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.

- Acceptable Uses: Students are permitted and encouraged to use Gen AI platforms to research topics, discover information, and summarize it. Students may use Gen AI to create outlines for written work as a starting point, edit their original work, or visualize their original ideas with 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. Submitting content solely generated by AI may be considered plagiarism, and submitting 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.

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 instructor's express permission 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 and the instructor. (<u>Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook</u>, 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 University Academic and Support Systems

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.

Student Financial Aid and Satisfactory Academic Progress:

To be eligible for certain kinds of financial aid, students are required to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) toward their degree objectives. Visit the <u>Financial Aid Office webpage</u> for <u>undergraduate</u>- and <u>graduate-level</u> SAP eligibility requirements and the appeals process.

Support Systems:

<u>Counseling and Mental Health</u> - (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.

<u>988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline</u> - 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, seven days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline consists 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.

<u>Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP)</u> - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on-call Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to genderand 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) 740-2500

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 through 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 student resources.

<u>USC Emergency</u> - 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 how instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

<u>USC Department of Public Safety</u> - 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 Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

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.