

fishnet

2019
DIGITAL
MARKETING
TRENDS



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Executive Summary

The change from one year to the next gives everyone a sense of wanting to “do better.” Whether that means eating healthier, hitting the gym more often or simply trying to get more sleep, there’s something rejuvenating about a fresh start.

But change doesn’t happen overnight, and for anyone who’s made a resolution only to see it fade from view a few weeks later knows that real change takes work and preparation. Digital marketing initiatives are just like resolutions. And our approach to these initiatives allows us to deliver a final project that not only sticks, but scales.

Doing the Work: Research-Driven Marketing

Fishnet Partners Jared Lemos and Michael Packard have long held fast to a strong philosophy: any digital marketing strategy should come from a place of purpose. And the best way to define that purpose is through research and data-gathering.

Under this philosophy, all our teams begin client engagements by focusing on competitor and industry research. Understanding this activity in the digital and social media realms allows us to uncover important trends and target audience behaviors that help better prioritize the strategy around our clients’ needs.

With key insights and knowledge laying the groundwork, we can then apply purposeful technology and resources to execute the digital marketing strategy, whether it be a website redesign, content creation and dissemination, or a social campaign. We want to fuel our clients’ digital marketing with relevant ideas that will drive content, increase website traffic, grow brand awareness and increase brand loyalty through tactics that resonate with the target audience.

The only way to get all these elements right is by conducting research to build the strategy, and applying the right technologies to see it through.

For 2019, our team is looking at key trends that will impact our research-driven approach to digital marketing. Every aspect of our client engagements will benefit from the way research and technology are combining to produce successful digital marketing strategies. It’s better than any resolution—its research-backed and data-driven work that can deliver the kind of results everyone wants in a new year.

Getting Back to Basics

Content Marketing from the Soul in 2019

It seems like each year we hear the same mantras when it comes to content marketing: less is more; audiences are more distracted than ever; and personalization is key to getting and keeping their attention.

The many content marketing tools and technologies designed to capture that attention may have actually caused us to lose our way a bit. Content strategy is getting more automated, but our relationships with our audiences shouldn't be. However, our Content Strategist Jen Keefe felt a change in the air as 2018 came to an end.

The increased focus in 2018 on privacy protections, whether it be from the implementation of GDPR or the fallout from Cambridge Analytica on social media, is reinforcing the idea that our responsibility as content marketers is to earn audience attention the right way—with good, old-fashioned quality and creativity.

With that said, perhaps one of the biggest trends Jen sees coming in 2019, even amidst the larger role of automation and new marketing technologies (and, perhaps, in spite of it), is that content marketers everywhere will act on the notion that we need to treat our readers as people—not just as consumers, customers, users, or prospects—by getting back to the basics of content marketing.

Somewhat ironically, but not surprisingly, technology is the key to making this vital connection with our audiences. In 2019, marketers will focus on leveraging technology to create effective, memorable content experiences in truly impactful ways. Research will also play a large role in this effort, as the only way to properly leverage what technology has to offer is to know what you need it for in the first place.

Here are 5 of the top content marketing trends that research and technology will help us master in 2019, focusing on our audience's needs:

- **TREND: Personalized Content**
Technologies: Artificial Intelligence & Machine Learning

Our motto is “give them what they want.” This statement is especially accurate where content marketing is concerned. Our content team is highly focused on giving our clients’ audiences the right content at the right time in the right format for the right stage of the buyer’s journey. AI and machine learning have allowed marketers to be highly intentional in their content strategies, leveraging in-depth audience research to deliver on lead generation and ROI expectations with less cost and time than ever before. In 2019, content marketers will use the winning combination of AI and research to achieve content gold.

- **TREND: Doing More with Less**
Technologies: Customer Intelligence Tools/CRM

Let’s be honest - most companies don’t have the budget or resources to create the multi-faceted marketing campaigns and initiatives of larger companies like Amazon or Netflix. But advanced intelligence tools and customer relationship management are empowering companies to do more with less. In 2019, companies will leverage research and technology to determine their best-performing, evergreen content and breathe new life into existing pieces through content repurposing. This way, companies can produce content in a more manageable, affordable way and know it will have an impact. It’s a tactic we’ve been using for awhile with our clients, and repurposing helps remove some of the burdens of net-new content creation while instilling confidence that the content will be effective in generating engagement.

- **TREND: Content Marketing Just Becomes...Marketing**
Technologies: Content Marketing Tech Stack

More than ever, content marketing is becoming so critical to businesses that it’s just considered part of their marketing strategy. In 2019, we predict this way of thinking will take a more solid hold, and companies will double-down on setting aside time and budget for content as part of their overall marketing strategy, rather than as a separate initiative. It’s been made clear that creating brand awareness, generating leads and increasing audience engagement requires valuable, unique and interesting content. A new website or flashy sales sheet will help your brand, but can’t do the job of a content marketing strategy rooted in research and technology.

- **TREND: Purposeful, Strategic Content Formats**
Technologies: Multimedia (Video/Podcasts)

Video has been a popular content medium for years now, but gone are the days when simply “doing video” is enough to meet the needs of today’s audiences. In 2019, we see marketers using video alongside other mediums like podcasts to reach their audiences in more authentic ways; being more personalized and creating real connections between consumers and brands. When we pair audience research with technology to bridge the gap between our product or service and our customers, we can make our content marketing highly meaningful, effective, and even emotional. Many companies are already acting on this strategy in different ways, but most should add it to their list of marketing strategies for the new year.

- **TREND: Experiential, Highly-Visual, Interactive Content**
Technologies: Multimedia

According to The State of Interactive Content Marketing survey, 93% of marketers agree that interactive content is effective in educating buyers, versus just 70% for static content. This assessment makes sense. Getting and keeping audience attention is the goal of content marketing, and going interactive and using experiential content is a great way to be more personalized in your approach to content and give your audience a unique, memorable experience through which to get your message across. In 2019, content consumption will be a real experience, with interactivity and multimedia. So get ready for some action-packed content.

We’re excited for the new content opportunities on the horizon for 2019, but the execution is a critical piece that will also change the face of digital marketing in the new year. You can do all the research, adopt all the new technologies, and strategize all you want, but the visual execution is what your consumers will see and in many cases makes the difference between content that works and content that flops.

There are some key design trends for the new year on which our experience designers are focused to ensure our visual executions are fresh, new, exciting and—most importantly—effective.

Finding the “New” in a Saturated Landscape of Digital Design Trends

Examples of Brands that are Breaking Free of Design Molds

Our visual and UX designers are always striving to provide new and exciting experiences for our clients. In an effort to keep fresh and stay current, we frequent an endless list of industry blogs, awards sites and other resources for inspiration, techniques, and insight on the latest trends. But our Experience Design Director Sean Reusch knows that identifying a truly “new” trend can be often more difficult than one might expect. Evidence of this challenge can be found almost anywhere you look. Even now, if you do a search for “2019 Design Trends” you’re likely to find multiple references to things like “Flat Design” or “Video”. To some, these might seem like good examples but in our world, they have been around for years.

So, like many things design related, identifying trends might be somewhat of a subjective task. That being said, here are a few of what we consider to be the top design trends for 2019.

Open Compositions

Due to the general nature of web development and the onset of so many readily-available templated themes, the digital design landscape has seen a steady, if not overwhelming, adoption of regimented grid systems (boxes and containers). So, as with anything that becomes too mainstream, the obvious progression is to revolt against it.

Open Compositions aim to do exactly that by allowing design elements to break free of their natural containers. While grids are the foundation of interactive design and development, and therefore won’t be going away any time soon, exploring new ways to hide them will be an exciting pursuit over the course of the next year and beyond.

Here are a few examples:



[Furniture company Erik Joergensen](#) gets it all out in the open, bringing forth the focal point of the site—the furniture. The website’s design brings you right into the room and feels so true to life there’s no space for regimented boxes or containers here.



[Skinfinity skin care products](#) knows there’s nothing to contain when it comes to beautiful skin. Their website is clean, simple and elegant, offering a visual experience that mirrors the products they sell.



[Seedlip Drinks](#) wants you to focus on one thing when visiting their website—the story, brought to life with background video that transports you to a place where good taste and high quality is unquestionable. The text and navigation is almost an afterthought; when you visit this site, you know what to do.



[Toujours Jaune](#) is more like an interactive infographic than a website. The design breaks all boundaries, with images acting as navigation, and animated graphics that let you know you’re on your way to a new experience. The gentle background music doesn’t hurt, either.



[Yard Agency](#) shows off its work like a movie. There are no grids in these fluid, almost psychedelic transitions from page to page, and with no boxes holding them back, the full scope of each campaign can be fully enjoyed.

Broken Grids

As its name suggests, the Broken Grid approach is very much like that of Open Compositions, where the focus is to eliminate the traditional grid layout. However, in this case, instead of disappearing, the grid is used as the foundation where elements can be intentionally positioned to offset the grid pattern. The juxtaposed elements create visual tension that helps to excite and retain the attention of the audience.

Here are a few examples:



[Sage Culture art gallery](#) positions its site elements like items in the gallery itself. There may be grids guiding this website, but they're cleverly and beautifully used to show off what visitors came to the site to see.



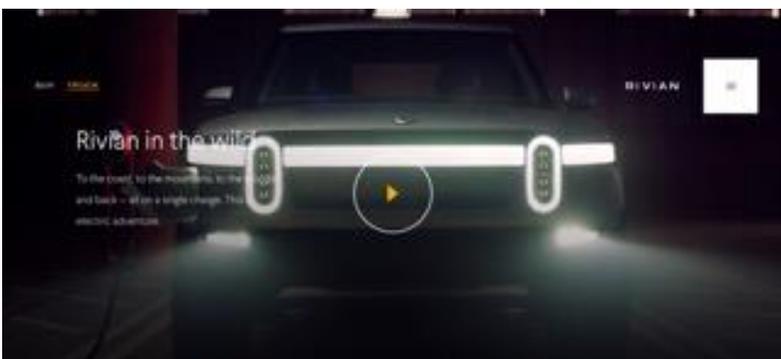
[Titan Viita watches](#) position their watch front and center, allowing users to catch a nearly three-dimensional view simply by scrolling. You may find yourself scrolling back and forth just to see the seamless transitions over and over again.



[Mathieu Levesque, photographer and director](#), gives you the feeling that he's directing the website as you're scrolling through. Moving components activated by scrolling break all traditional website conventions and open his portfolio to the user as though he was showing it in real life.



The powerful [#ExistingWhileBlack campaign from the Huffington Post](#) brings stories to life through an interactive website that utilizes broken grids to draw the user in to each scenario and tempt them to want to learn more.



[Rivian trucks and SUVs](#) come right at you in this website experience built around what it feels like to drive a Rivian. Traditional website grids are disguised behind the truck's headlights and stylish interior, so the user focuses only on what Rivian wants them to see—the vehicles.

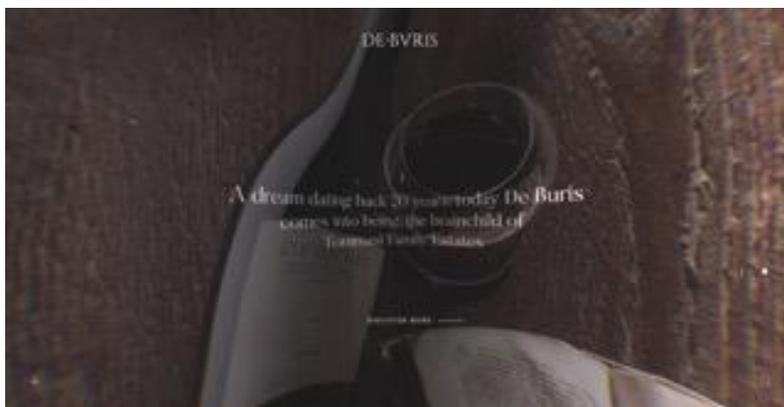
Mono Color Palettes

Mono color palettes is another one of those “trends” that has been around for some time but is now being fully adopted across multiple industries. As the digital landscape has steadily moved to utilize a more minimalistic approach to UX, brands’ color palettes have evolved along with it. While an extensive color palette can be used as a visual tool to inform users about a multitude of brand or product elements, limiting a color palette to one or two colors can reduce clutter and help enhance an overall brand aesthetic or experience. These uses are the cases where less is more, and we like it.

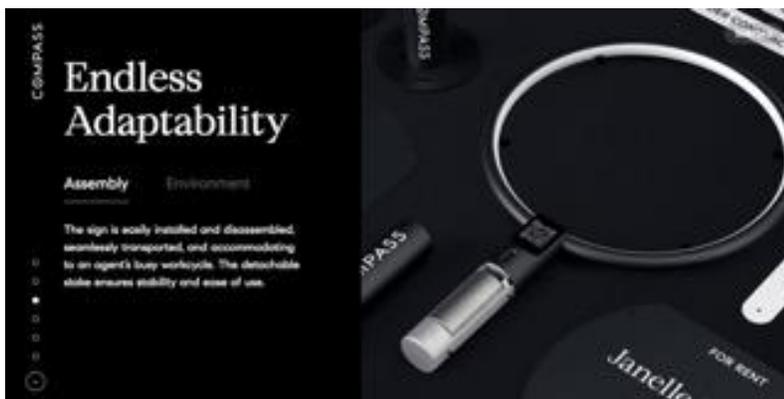
Here are a few examples:



[Libratone portable](#) music knows music and color can be one in the same, and each page features mono color palettes to bring those two ideas together.



[DeBuris Wines](#) wants you to feel sophisticated in the presence of its wines, and the dark, sleek black and grey color palette of their website conveys the feeling perfectly. The photos tell the story, and the colors reinforce it.



[Compass](#) offers up real estate technology that needs no bold colors to speak for its unique function. This black and white color palette allows Compass to show off its product and provide only the most important information in an eye-catching way.



[BalSoy balsamic vinegar](#) is simple, tasteful and elegant, much like the dark color palette of its website conveys. With a product like this one, bold or varied colors just don't quite fit. Opting for a mono color palette is a more authentic option that more perfectly mirrors the image of the brand.

We're excited for greater implementation of these design trends in 2019 to help set our clients' websites apart from the competition. When it comes to website user experiences, there is constant evolution. An effective, memorable and intuitive user experience is a combination of many digital marketing elements.

Our outlook on content strategy and design play into a next-generation website user experience, but other critical elements remain—like the development that makes it all go live.

When it comes to development in 2019, our Senior Web Developer is looking at tactics that will help drive engagement more effectively than some more long-used methods.

How Web Development Tactics are Driving Consumer Engagement in 2019

Tactics to Put Your Brand Right Where Your Audience Lives

Allow us to introduce a persona we'll call Sarah. She's an investment-savvy, white-collar worker who is looking to invest in innovative new technology to help her get ahead of her student loan debt.

In today's climate, Sarah knows the possibility of finding the next Apple, Facebook or Square could be just around the corner. To make sure she doesn't miss her investment opportunity, she needs information, and she needs it now.

Why the Internet Got a Little Push-y: Web Browser Push Notifications

Because Sarah doesn't have access to streaming, highly-targeting breaking technology news, what would most help her is an easy, intuitive technology to automatically notify her when important new content is published. And web browser push notifications fit the bill.

Web browser push notifications are an easy way to subscribe to fresh content from your favorite industry resources and news websites. Why do they work so well? Because just about everyone is constantly connected.

77%

Nearly 77% of Americans own a smartphone.

73%

73% of Americans own a laptop, desktop, or Mac.

55%

More than 55% of Americans own a tablet.

With the use of technology so [thoroughly widespread](#) in our lives, it becomes the task of today's marketer to determine how to facilitate frequent engagement with potential consumers by providing useful and informative content.

You might argue that Sarah could also just sign up for newsletters and updates to relevant online content, but like anyone with an inbox, she's frustrated by having to constantly keep up with the information being sent to her and deciding whether it's even useful.

While email marketing has been and will continue to be a go-to for consumer engagement, depending on the content quality, emails can suffer from low click-through rates (CTR); usually well below 10%, if the target user even sees or opens the message in the first place.

Our Senior Web Developer Steve Hanson sees browser push notifications as an effective solution to that problem, as they enable marketers to push relevant information to highly-targeted online consumers, no matter where they are or what they are doing.

Implementing Push Notifications

Browser push notification implementation is not even as complicated as you might think. CMS frameworks such as Wordpress and Drupal offer extensions to make push notification configuration and monitoring a breeze. Even without a CMS, push notifications can be enabled with a bit of scripting and some custom styles.

You may have experienced websites that prompt you to accept push notifications the second you land on a page. Well, the good news is, enabling push notifications on your own website doesn't have to be this "pushy" for your users. In fact, best practice for implementation is to detect an appropriate time to ask for permission—in some cases, separate logical categories for permission—and provide a stylized, attractive interface to manage notifications.

For example, consider the following reasons consumers like Sarah may want to subscribe to notifications:

<p>E-COMMERCE AND BRICK AND MORTAR STORES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coupon codes • Sales • Purchase order updates • Product updates <p>BLOGS AND SOCIAL NETWORKS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New posts • New comments • Responses to inquiries • Direct messages 	<p>NEWS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily digest • Breaking news • Story updates • Reader comments <p>SERVICE PROVIDERS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service updates • Status updates • Tutorials • Industry notifications
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What to Expect From Click-Through Rates with Push Notifications

Click-through rates with push notifications vary based on industry. Industries that tend to have more high-frequency users—users who visit as part of a daily routine—typically have higher CTR (e.g. finance, with a CTR upwards of 30%) than those websites whose users visit only as needed (e.g. e-commerce or seasonal businesses).

Compared to most free online marketing tactics, an average CTR of more than 10%, let alone of more than 20%, would be considered a ‘win’ in nearly all scenarios.

What to Expect From Consumer Reach with Push Notifications

Let’s reference the potential reach of a push notification compared to other options.

Email: To receive emails, the user must opt-in, usually twice, and must remember to check their inbox, which could potentially sort commercial emails into a promotional folder or even into the black hole commonly known as the ‘spam folder’.

Mobile App Notifications: Notifications on mobile apps require the user to first install an app, which is often not free, and then be using or frequently checking the mobile device for notifications. And let’s be honest, mobile notifications are sometimes ignored and archived, never to be seen again.

Web Browser Push Notifications: With web browser push notifications, the user can receive notifications on any device with a web browser installed, regardless of what tasks they are performing on the device at any given time. Coupled with the aforementioned superior CTR, push notifications look to be scoring a 'win-win'.

Are Web Browser Push Notifications Right For You?

It's clear push notifications are right for the investment-savvy Sarah to stay informed of emerging tech—and whether you're a content provider or a content consumer like Sarah, push notifications are likely right for you, too. After all, content consumers are looking for immediate, valuable information, and content providers want to be the ones to deliver it.

Whether you have a mobile app or not, emerging trends for 2019 indicate that web browser push notifications are another excellent tool to add to your online engagement strategy.

Another great tactic for increasing engagement, especially with mobile apps, is using Progressive Web Applications (PWAs). PWAs are an approach Fishnet's Experience Designer Jason Bean is keeping an eye on for 2019 as a way to elevate our clients' website user experiences and drive engagement in new ways.

Make Your Website for Today's User by Enabling Progressive Web Applications

Because Sarah wants easy, fast access to the most valuable information in tech innovations, those sites equipped with PWAs allow her to actually install the website as an app on her mobile phone or computer with a single selection. Gone is the app store download—PWAs are web apps that can take advantage of the same features native applications have enjoyed for years.

While the value of PWAs is better realized on mobile, it's an all-around great tactic for improving your website's user experience and increasing engagement. Many sites are able to deliver a fast, seamless, reliable and engaging experience, but poor internet connection or older devices can threaten that experience in a matter of seconds.

In fact, 53% of users only last three seconds before they move on to the next web page. Fortunately, PWAs ensure your website can reliably deliver content and keep your users interested.

What is a Progressive Web Application and How Does it Work?

PWAs act similarly to native apps but are built using the same principles as modern web development with only a few additional requirements. PWAs are installed directly from your browser onto your home screen, avoiding the app store completely. Once installed, they provide the fast, reliable and seamless engagement we've all become accustomed to with native apps.

Additionally, poor connections are no longer a risk to keeping users on your website. Your app data will get locally cached on the device, so users are able to access the information with no Internet connection.

Google first introduced PWAs in 2015, but it's only now in 2019 that they're really starting to gain traction as big powerhouses like Microsoft, Twitter and Apple are all backing the technology.

The Hard-to-Ignore Benefits of Using Progressive Web Applications

Beyond the overwhelming increase in retention and conversions, there are many other reasons to consider using this new technology.

- **Reduced development costs:** PWAs allow you to reuse your current website, therefore cutting down on development costs.
- **Lowered data usage:** Compared to native apps, PWAs use only a fraction of the data to deliver an experience that is better in many ways.
- **Zero updates:** PWAs update 'on-use' very much in the way a website is updated, so you and your users aren't impacted in a noticeable way.
- **Increased SEO score:** The fast loading speeds are great for boosting your SEO score with Google, helping you get found even more effectively

What to Consider Before Adopting Push Notifications and/or Progressive Web Applications for Your Business Website

Although these web technologies are still fairly new, push notifications and PWAs are absolutely something to consider when scoping out your next web project—with the right research up front.

Our clients are all different, just like no two businesses run the same way or have the same target customer. Like any digital marketing strategy, research to understand what your competition is doing, what your audience needs and how they interact with your brand is critical to understanding which tool to use and how to use it.

Push notifications and PWAs are especially helpful for websites that see a lot of traffic or have content that is frequently changing—for example, Sarah would most benefit from these technologies if they were provided by a stock market website or technology hot list that each update hourly.

These web technologies help your users get what they need from you faster and more easily, but before adopting the next shiny new tool or tactic, be sure it's not only something that will help grow your influence, but will help your audience.

As we know, audience engagement and growth is key for successful marketing—otherwise, your combined content strategy, design approach and development savvy might make you feel like you're shooting in the dark.

Our Marketing Automation Solution Architect Dan Umbro knows a thing or two about making it all “go” after it's created, and his outlook for the marketing automation landscape in 2019 is focused on what artificial intelligence can bring to the table.

Delivering Better Customer Experiences by Leveraging Artificial Intelligence.

2019 is the Year to Put AI to Work Making Better Audience Connections

Artificial intelligence (AI) is a buzzword that, like many buzzwords, is gradually realized to be anything but. And 2019 is the year when AI gets integrated into organizations' tech stacks as routinely as it if it were SEO.

In 2019, organizations will commit to making every part of their business smarter. In particular, we're focused on how AI will provide website visitors with personalized content experiences that will strategically move them along in the buyer's journey.

How AI Is Helping Brands Build Highly-Targeted, Personalized Customer Journeys

Typically, a customer learns of your product organically or through marketing efforts. The sum of their activity as they interact with your brand—through consuming content on your website, filling out forms, receiving emails, etc.—is what we define as the buyer or customer journey. Until recently, marketing teams would map out these paths as static experiences.

With improvements in artificial intelligence technology, content delivery platforms and marketing automation tools have made sizable investments. They understand the value in smarter content recommendations, helping prospects facilitate their self-nurturing process.

We'd like to briefly share how two of our technology partners are capitalizing on the trend.

Uberflip allows you to easily aggregate all your marketing content and create highly-personalized content experiences for your audience. One of the ways they empower you to offer such rich content is through their AI functionality, which leverages visitor intent data. By understanding who your audience personas are, where they came from and what they care most about, the platform is able to serve up personalized recommendations on any webpage.

Personalized recommendations increase the chances of a visitor consuming more content than generic recommendations by 60%.

- The Content Experience Report | [Read the Report](#)

Pardot is a B2B marketing automation solution by Salesforce. Starting in early 2019, Pardot will be fully powered by Einstein. This product update comes with two major enhancements:

- **Einstein Campaign Insights** will provide real-time data analysis and help marketers understand which factors drive campaign performance without having to sift through data manually.

For example, these insights showcase which personas or geographical regions are most engaged so marketers can optimize their campaigns over time. These insights can also highlight campaigns that are not driving asset engagement and ultimately uncover new audiences that could be relevant for future campaigns.

- **Einstein Behavior Scoring** tracks key buying signals—such as interaction with your website and email campaigns—and scores them based on engagement patterns. It automatically utilizes sales activity data and engagement history in Pardot to determine which prospects are most likely to convert.

In 2019, we're excited to deliver better customer experiences and shorter sales cycles, fueled by artificial intelligence. Irrelevant content will be a marketing error of the past.

In keeping with our philosophy that any digital marketing strategy needs to come from a place of purpose, our digital marketing teams will be focused in 2019 on identifying the right opportunities and executions for our clients to leverage these exciting new trends.

Want help with your digital
marketing strategy in the new year?

Contact Us Today!

603-373-8792