



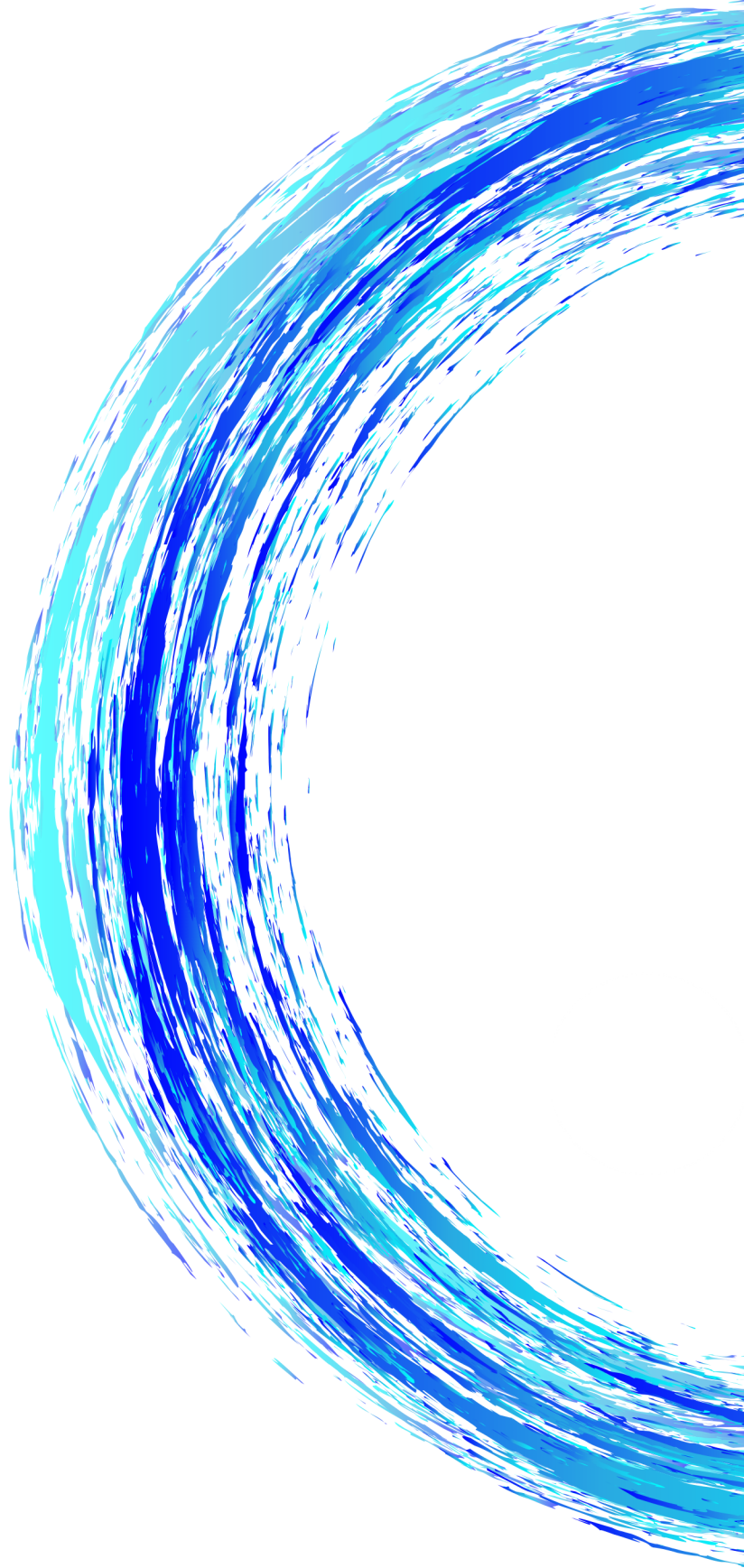
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Utility & Business Solutions

2024

# Utility Marketing Playbook

Your ultimate guide to marketing the critical goods and services offered by your utility. Get a head start on creating a winning marketing strategy in 2024.

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# Utility Marketing Playbook 2024



In the ever-evolving landscape of the water utilities industry, having a comprehensive marketing playbook is nothing short of essential. While water utilities play a vital role in providing clean, safe water to communities, effective marketing is often overlooked. A well-crafted marketing plan can serve as a guiding light, helping water utilities navigate the challenges of communication, public awareness, and customer engagement. It's a powerful tool that combines strategic insights and actionable tactics to elevate the profile of water utilities, drive conservation/adoption efforts, and foster trust among consumers and stakeholders alike.

In the following guide, we will explore the crucial components of a successful marketing strategy tailored to the unique requirements and obstacles of the water utilities sector.

Flume is proud to partner with water utilities around the nation to help them drive product adoption and manage our most precious resource. If you'd like to learn more about the various ways Flume can help, please reach out to us at [partnerships@flumewater.com](mailto:partnerships@flumewater.com).



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Part I

# Know Your Audience

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## Understanding Your Audience

First and foremost, you must gain a deeper understanding of your customer base! The customer is the heart and soul of a great marketing strategy, and the more you understand their pain points and goals, the better you can position your product offering. In today's highly competitive marketplaces, it has become very challenging to stand out from the crowd and get a strong message conveyed to the right audience. Detailed knowledge of who your customer is (demographic) and what drives and frustrates (motivation) them, is the marketer's best aid. This allows you to develop messages that resonate with customers on a personal level, and cut through some of the clutter. Not only does this increase the likelihood of making sales, but fosters brand loyalty and positive word-of-mouth, as satisfied customers recommend your products, rebates or other services to others.

Rather than adopting a scattershot approach that may not resonate with anyone in particular, you can create content, advertisements, emails and promotions that are specifically designed to captivate your target audience. This efficiency not only saves you time and resources, but also results in a higher return on investment (ROI). Furthermore, by tailoring your messaging and strategies to align with your customers' needs, you cultivate trust and credibility, two indispensable assets for long-term success in any market. In essence, understanding your customer base is the foundation upon which all effective marketing efforts are built: driving growth, customer satisfaction, and brand success.



## Pinpoint Customer Pain Points

Identifying customer concerns is a pivotal step in delivering products or services that truly address your customers needs. Pain points represent the specific challenges, frustrations, or problems that customers encounter, which your offerings should address. These can range from everyday inconveniences to more significant issues. Pinpointing them provides valuable insights into how to improve your offerings and marketing strategies. By actively identifying and understanding these pain points, you can develop solutions that not only meet, but exceed customer expectations, ultimately driving customer satisfaction, loyalty, and business growth. For utilities, vital programs like water conservation can often be at odds with the pain points and needs of your customers. A thorough understanding of what the base of the pain point is can facilitate the positioning of these initiatives and enhance consumer buy-in by effectively addressing these challenges..

Now that we understand the value in knowing our customer's pain points, let's get into how to find them! Here are five key strategies for identifying customer pain points:

- 1. Customer Surveys:** Conduct surveys to gather direct feedback from your customers, asking them about their challenges and where they feel your product or service falls short. Critical feedback is key to growth, so don't be afraid to solicit the negative! We also want to identify the things that work and get confirmation where possible.
- 2. Social Media Monitoring:** Monitor social media channels for mentions, comments, or reviews related to your industry or offerings to identify recurring complaints or issues.
- 3. Peer/Competitor Analysis:** We can learn a lot from other entities in the same industry as ours. Study your peers/competitors to identify common complaints or shortcomings in their offerings, which could signify unmet customer needs for your group.
- 4. Customer Support Data:** Analyze customer support interactions and frequently asked questions to identify recurring issues or concerns. This is a direct line to your customer and can be some of the strongest points of data you can gather. Conduct regular voice-of-customer analyses to identify new trends and track progress towards resolving prior complaints.
- 5. Customer Interviews:** Conduct one-on-one interviews with select customers to gain deeper insights into their experiences and pain points, allowing for a more personalized approach to solutions. These can be incentivized or chosen based on the customer's interactions with your brand. You will need to gather in-depth reviews both positive and negative to set your brand up for success.

## Build Marketing Personas

We've done our research, we understand the pain points, we have a plethora of information about our audience at our disposal - now what? Time to bring all of these points to life in the form of marketing personas! A marketing persona, also known simply as a "persona," is a detailed and semi-fictional representation of an ideal customer or target audience segment. It is a strategic tool used in marketing to create a deeper understanding of the people you aim to reach with your products or services. Marketing personas are based on market research, data analysis, and customer insights, and they typically include a range of information such as demographics, behaviors, interests, goals, challenges, and preferred communication channels.

### Example Marketing Persona

**SECONDARY AUDIENCE**

## BRITTANY LAWSON

"Want to do more" - Unfamiliar



Gender	Female (73%)
Age	26 (23-34)
Education	Bachelor's (51%)
Occupation	Restaurant Manager
Housing Status	Renter (55%)
Household Income	\$70k (<\$50k - \$100k)

**QUOTES**

"Are there instructional videos"

"Is it possible to see how much water I should be using and compare it to how much I am using?"

"Are there rebates to make this saving water cheaper?"

**MOTIVATIONS**

Brittany has been thinking a lot about the drought and what it means for her home state. She understands that residents are being asked to do more, but often feels at a loss about what it is she can do. Brittany often turns to her favorite influencer and social media group for solutions and is willing to try new things as long as the financial costs are in line with her savings goals.

**PERSONALITY**



**GOALS**

- More knowledge about how to save water
- Save money while saving water
- Be a part of a movement
- Reduce anxiety caused by drought

**FRUSTRATIONS**

- Lack of knowledge on how to conserve
- Wants to do more, but wants to save money
- Cost of being environmentally conscious is high
- Often feels anxiety with news and drought

**TECHNOLOGY**

Smart Home Products 

Social Media 

News Viewership 

**BRANDS**

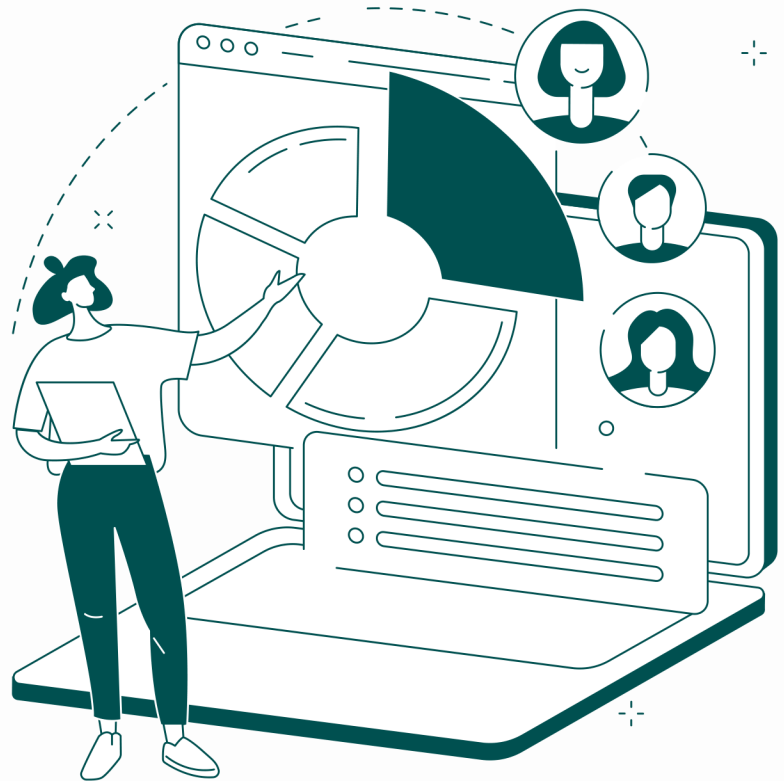
Trader Joe's, Northface, 4Ocean, The Brew

## Build Marketing Personas Continued

Creating marketing personas “humanizes” the data collected about your target audience, allowing more effective tailoring of your marketing efforts. By having a clear and relatable persona in mind, marketers can create content, messages, and campaigns that resonate with and engage specific customer segments. In turn, this leads to more successful marketing strategies, improved customer experiences, and better alignment of products or services with customer needs and preferences. Marketing personas are a foundational element in crafting targeted and personalized marketing campaigns that yield higher engagement and conversions.

### 10 Questions to Think About

1. What do they like?
2. What do they dislike?
3. What are their motivations?
4. What is their decision making process?
5. What are their demographics (gender, age, family status)?
6. What are their values?
7. What resources does the customer use to learn about current events?
8. What channels do they use to connect with people they know?
9. What are their shopping preferences?
10. Does the customer typically buy expensive or inexpensive products?



With our research conducted and personas made, it is now time to craft a marketing strategy to engage and attract customers to our offerings.

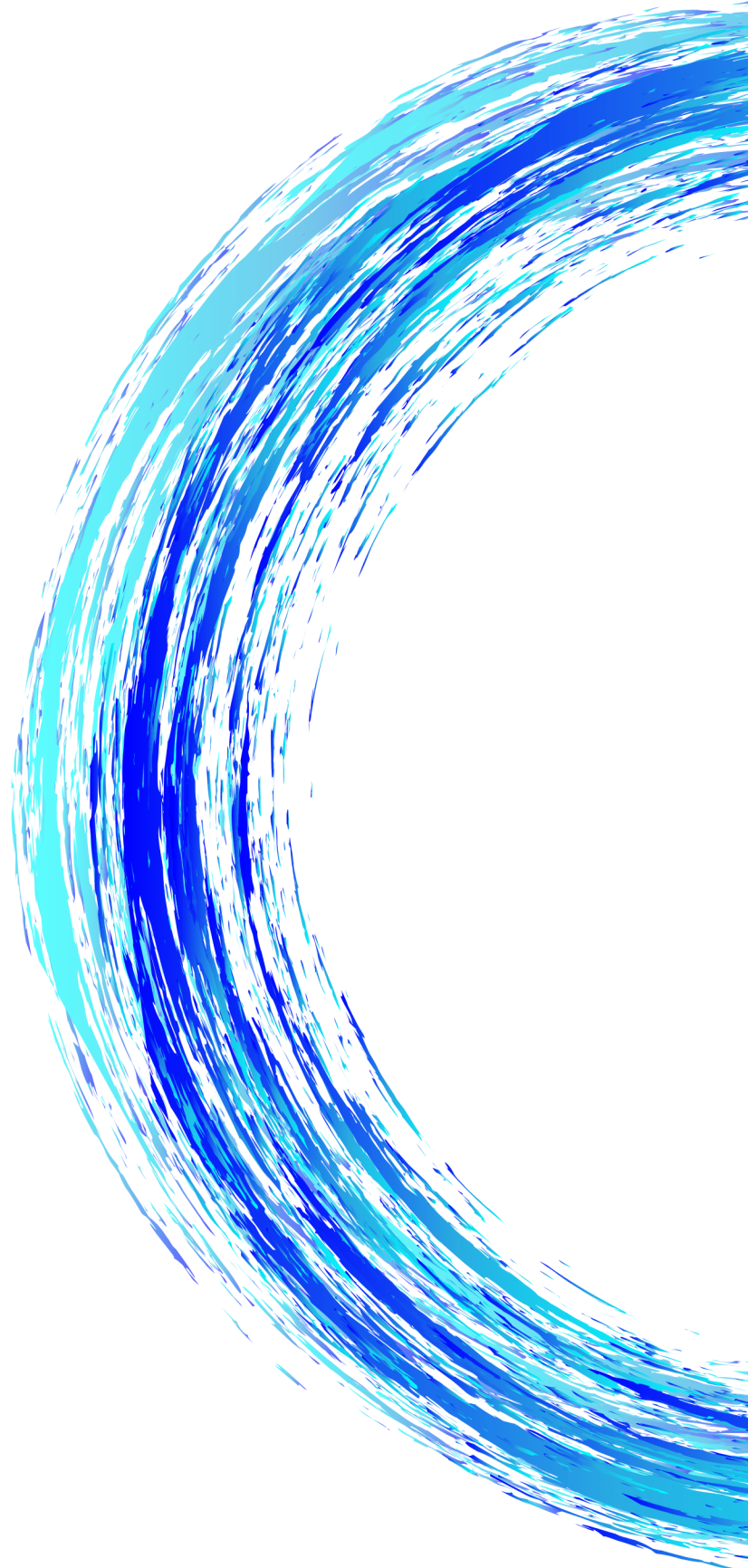




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Part II

# Craft the Perfect Message



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## Crafting Marketing Messaging

A strong marketing message is essential for effectively communicating with your target audience and a key mechanism in crafting a message that resonates with our customers. Here are five key components of a strong marketing message:

1. **Clarity:** Your message should be clear and easy to understand. Avoid jargon or overly technical language. Be concise in conveying your main point or value proposition. Be careful of internal company lingo that can cloud understanding from your general audience.
2. **Relevance:** This is really where our marketing personas come in handy. Your message should directly address the needs, interests, and pain points of your target audience. It should resonate with them and offer a solution or benefit that matters to them. Craft your messages with your personas in mind and ask yourself “am I addressing the needs of this individual with this message?”
3. **Differentiation:** Highlighting the core unique selling propositions (USP) of your product is essential in messaging to clarify what the product actually offers. While critical for understanding, be careful not to “feature dump” and simply list out everything the product can do without providing a compelling reason for the customer to care.
4. **Emotion:** Effective marketing messages often evoke emotions. Whether it's excitement, humor, empathy, or aspiration, tapping into emotions can create a memorable and impactful message. We also want to be cognizant of sensitive areas and match the emotions and feelings of the audience.
5. **Call to Action (CTA):** Your message should include a clear and compelling CTA that tells the audience what you want them to do next. Whether it's "Buy Now," "Sign Up," "Learn More," or something else, a strong CTA guides the audience towards the desired action. Including a CTA has been proven to significantly increase conversion rates.

A strong marketing message combines these elements to create a persuasive and memorable communication that resonates with your target audience and drives them to take action.



## Approaching Touchy Subjects

As a utility provider, you are likely to run into a couple of sensitive subjects with your customer base. High bill complaints, drought and climate change are just a few we have seen be regular points of contention in marketing. Addressing sensitive subjects requires a thoughtful and considerate approach to ensure your message resonates with your audience without causing potential controversy or offense. Here are some strategies to help navigate such topics:

- 1. Authenticity and Empathy:** Approach touchy subjects with authenticity and empathy, showing that you genuinely care about the issue and the people it affects. We have found positioning utilities as partners in addressing these issues demonstrates sincerity. At the end of the day, everyone wants a positive outcome and sometimes the customer just needs to feel you have their best interests in mind.
- 2. Education and Awareness:** Use your platform to educate and raise awareness about the issue. Provide accurate information and statistics to help your audience better understand the topic. Continuous and proper education can help reduce friction when the time comes to drive a desired action.
- 3. Storytelling:** Share personal stories or narratives that humanize the issue. Storytelling can be a powerful way to connect with your audience emotionally and create empathy.
- 4. Take Caution Using Humor:** If humor is used, exercise caution. Humor can be an effective tool for addressing sensitive topics, but it's also easy to misinterpret or offend. Test your messaging with a diverse group to ensure it doesn't inadvertently offend.
- 5. Transparency:** Be transparent about your intentions. A lack of transparency can lead to customers creating motives and reasoning on their own that often conflicts with the true intention of your brand.
- 6. Consult Experts:** When dealing with complex subject matter, consider consulting experts in the field to ensure your message is accurate and respectful.
- 7. Seek Feedback:** Before launching a campaign, seek feedback from diverse groups or a subset of your customer base to gauge reactions and make necessary adjustments.
- 8. Prepare for Controversy:** Recognize that even with the best intentions, you may face criticism or controversy. Have a plan in place for handling negative feedback or backlash, and respond gracefully and empathetically.
- 9. Long-Term Commitment:** If you're addressing an ongoing issue, demonstrate a long-term commitment to the cause rather than making it a one-time marketing effort. Show that your support extends beyond advertising campaigns.
- 10. Avoid Exploitative Imagery:** Be cautious about using exploitative or shocking imagery that may be perceived as insensitive or disrespectful.

## Approaching Touchy Subjects Continued

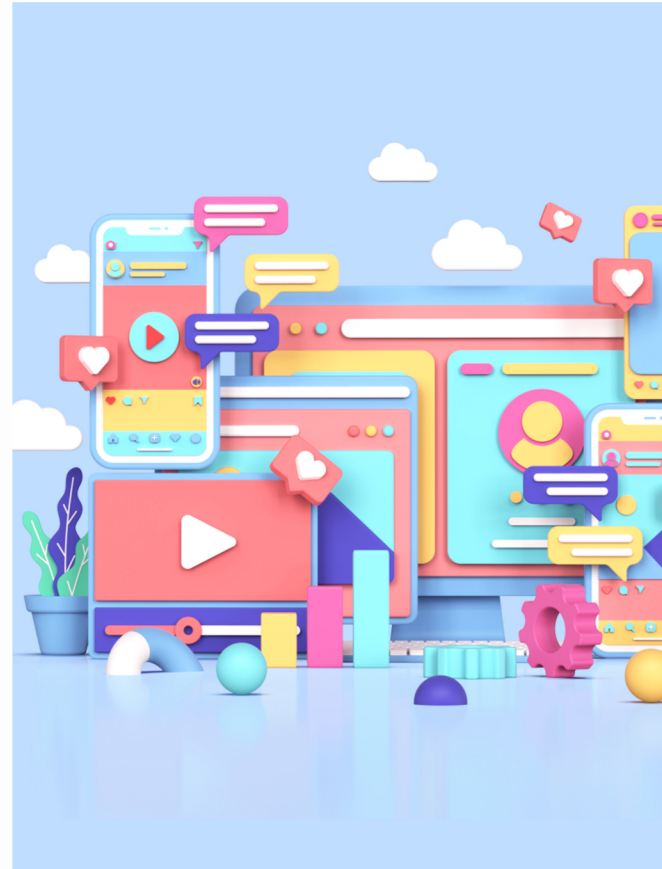
Remember that addressing sensitive topics in marketing can have a significant and meaningful impact when done correctly. It can also build trust and loyalty among customers who appreciate a brand's commitment to important issues. However, it's crucial to approach these topics with sensitivity, empathy, and a genuine desire to make a positive impact.

## Avoiding Messaging Fatigue

We've all been there - seeing the same messaging come up in our inbox time and time again. For example, the car insurance industry has some of the most prolific advertising there is, spending a whopping \$4.8b in advertising in 2020. To avoid messaging fatigue, these brands rely on humor, emotional connection and more straight-forward product advertising to diversify and keep consumers interested. And for the most part - it works.

Avoiding messaging fatigue is a careful balancing act that requires getting the right cadence and frequency without angering the very people we are trying to help. In practice, this is easier said than done and varies by situation. In truth, there isn't a magic number or hard fast rule to follow in regards to avoiding messaging fatigue. Instead, marketers should turn to various signals and strategies to keep fatigue at a minimum

To achieve this, it's crucial to diversify your content and communication channels, ensuring that you're not bombarding your audience with repetitive messages. Tailor your messaging to different segments of your audience, delivering content that resonates with their specific interests and needs. Additionally, establish a consistent posting schedule to maintain a steady, but not overwhelming, presence. Listen to your audience's feedback, monitor engagement metrics, and be ready to adjust your strategy to stay fresh and relevant. By striking the right balance between consistency and variety, you can prevent your audience from becoming desensitized to your marketing efforts and keep them engaged over the long term.

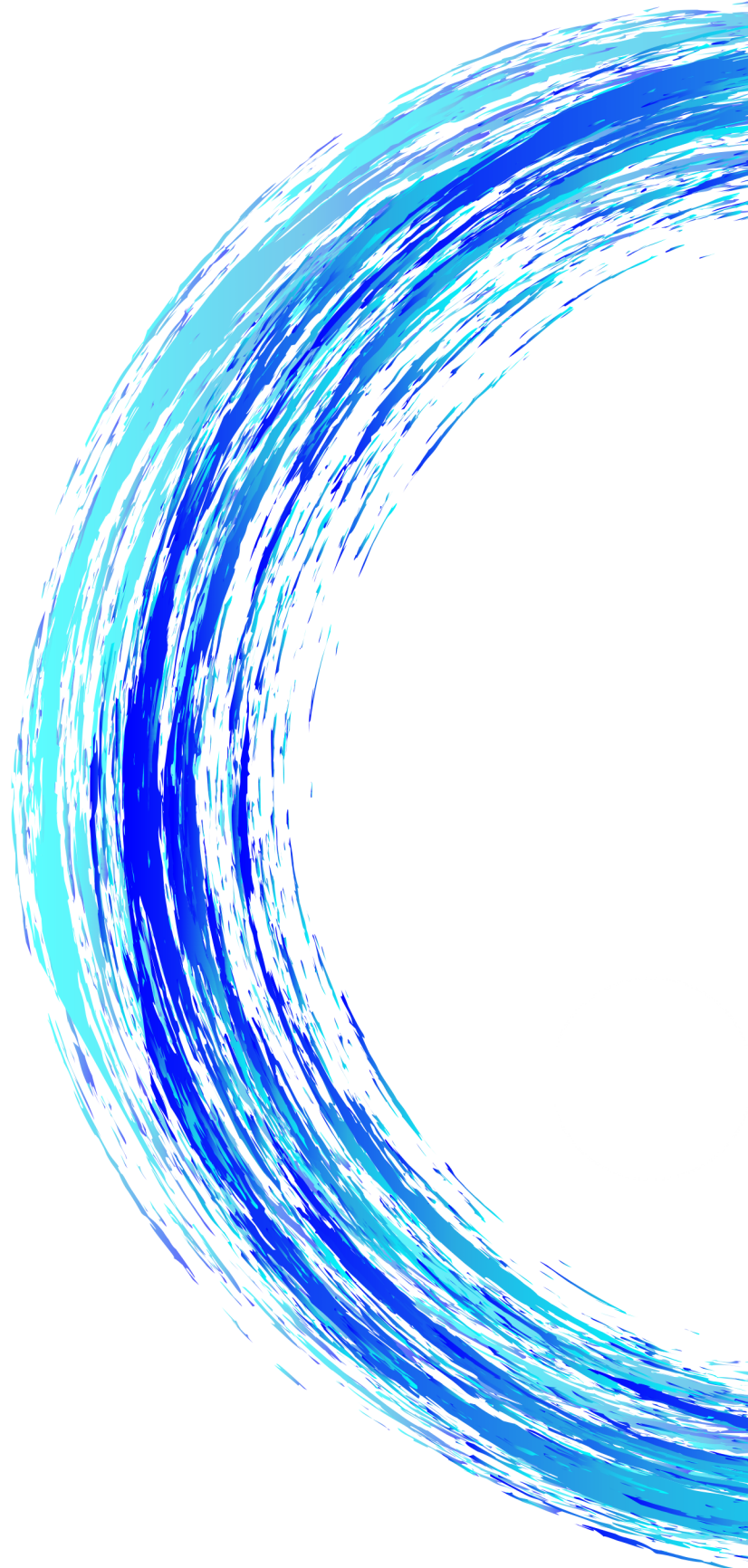




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Part III

# Create Something Special



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## Creative & Design

Strong creative in marketing is the heartbeat of effective campaigns. It's the spark that ignites connections, captures attention, and leaves lasting impressions. Creativity transforms a brand's message into something memorable and emotionally resonant, setting it apart in a crowded marketplace. It's the vehicle through which ideas are brought to life, turning products or services into compelling stories that engage, inspire, and persuade. Whether through visuals, words, or multimedia experiences, strong creative has the power to evoke emotions, drive brand recognition, and motivate action. In an era where consumers are bombarded with information, strong creative is the magnetic force that draws them in, making it an indispensable element of marketing success.

With the value of strong creative in mind, there are various mediums to manifest its expression. Your audience engages with various platforms and social networks throughout the day. Marketers must discern their presence and know how to capture their attention.

Let's take a look at some popular mediums available to us and where their strengths and weaknesses lie.



## Video Creative

**Strengths:** Highly engaging, conveys complex messages effectively, appeals to visual and auditory senses.

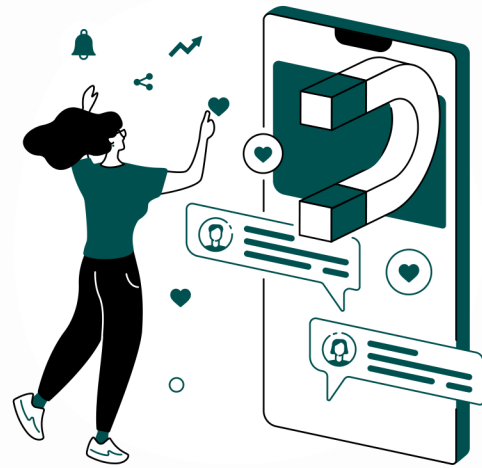
**Weaknesses:** Can be time-consuming and expensive to produce, may not suit all audiences.



## Text-Based Content Marketing

**Strengths:** Provides in-depth information, boosts SEO, educates the audience.

**Weaknesses:** May be less engaging for visual learners, requires strong writing skills.



## Imagery & Visual Creative

**Strengths:** Quickly captures attention, versatile (includes images, infographics, charts), easy to share.

**Weaknesses:** Limited in conveying detailed information, may not be as effective for text-heavy content, can often be overlooked in specific placements.



## Audio Creative

**Strengths:** Highly portable and accessible, appeals to auditory learners, fosters loyalty.

**Weaknesses:** Limited to audio-only format, may require time to build a listener base, can be seen as disruptive.

## Creative & Design Continued

Each marketing medium has its own unique advantages and limitations. The choice of which to use depends on factors like your target audience, campaign goals, budget, and the nature of your message or content. An effective marketing strategy often involves a mix of these mediums to reach and engage a diverse audience effectively.

Here are 5 Tips for developing compelling creative that delivers:



### **No. 01 - Know What Your Audience Likes**

Understand your target audience's needs, preferences, and pain points. Create personas to visualize your ideal customers and tailor your creative to resonate with them on a personal level.



### **No. 02 - Tell a Captivating Story:**

Effective marketing creative should incorporate storytelling. Craft a narrative that engages emotions and makes your message memorable. Stories create a connection with your audience and help them relate to your brand or product on a personal level by reflecting their core values in the message.



### **No. 03 - Focus on Visual Appeal:**

Invest in high-quality visuals, whether it's images, graphics, or videos. Visual elements should be eye-catching, relevant, and complement your message. Aesthetic appeal can significantly enhance the impact of your creative. You've heard the term "dress to impress" right? Our creative is no different when it comes to quality! It is important to keep in mind that consumers often frame their perception of brands by the quality of their creative. If you are showing low quality visuals in your creative, consumers may perceive the level of service as low quality as well.



### **No. 04 - Simplify and Clarify:**

Understand your target audience's needs, preferences, and pain points. Create personas to visualize your ideal customers and tailor your creative to resonate with them on a personal level.



### **No. 05 - Test and Iterate:**

Continuously test different creative elements through A/B testing. Experiment with headlines, visuals, messaging, and calls to action. Analyze the results and use insights to refine and improve your creative over time.



## Creative & Design Continued

Remember that compelling marketing creative is a blend of art and science. It requires a deep understanding of your audience, creative flair, and a commitment to testing and improvement. It is very likely that you will create some items that flop in the marketplace - this is ok and part of the process! Every flop and every win is an opportunity to figure out what works and to improve. Consumer trends and perceptions are constantly changing and evolving - what worked great 2 years ago, may not work today. Iteration and A/B testing helps to continually evolve a brand's presence in the marketplace.

Here is an example of what a marketing campaign mood board may look like:

## Saving Water Doesn't Have to Be Hard

**Flume Users Have Reduced Their Water Use 10-15% on Average: So Can You**

We all want to conserve water and save money on our water bills, but it's hard to know where to start. Flume takes the guesswork out of water conservation by giving you the tools you need to manage and save. With Flume, you'll be saving money AND the planet.

**With 24/7 leak detection, water user budgets and real-time use data, you can rest easy knowing your actions are working towards a better future.**

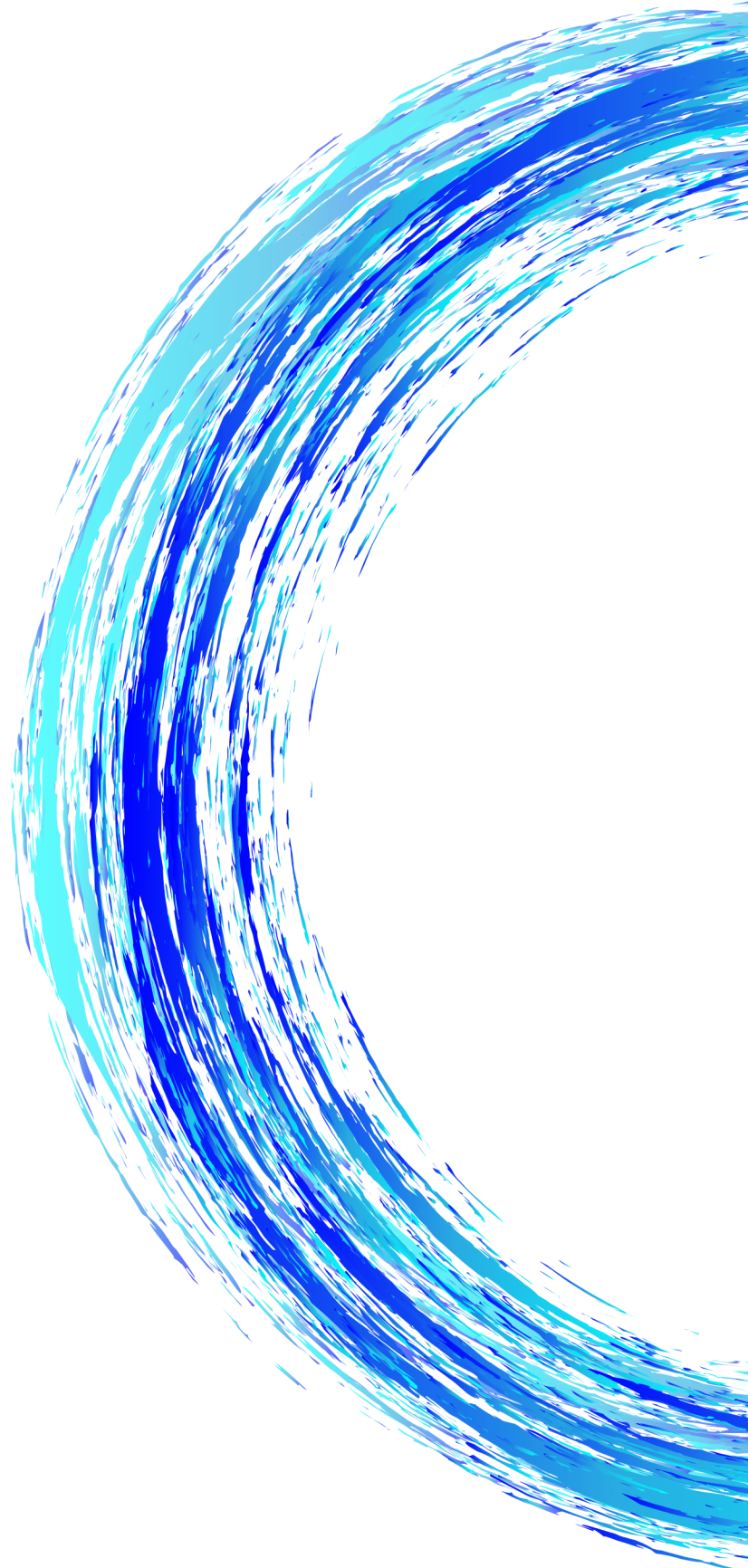




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Part IV

# Time to Strategize



## Building an Effective Go-to-Market Strategy

You have relentlessly researched your target audience, your creative is top notch, and your storytelling skills are akin to the late, great Dr. Seuss. It's time to put it all together and devise a go-to-market strategy to get your wondrous works of art out in the world and in front of your audience.

This is referred to as your go-to-market (GTM) strategy and details the who, what, when, why and how of your market campaigns. It serves as a roadmap to effectively introduce your product or service to the market, maximize reach, and drive successful sales and growth. A successful GTM strategy is not a one-size-fits-all approach, and what works for some brands, may be harder to replicate for others.

In this chapter, we will take a look at some of the best marketing levers a utility can pull to drive marketing campaigns



## Email Marketing

Email marketing offers several key strengths for utilities:

- Firstly, it provides a direct and personalized communication channel with your audience, allowing you to tailor messages to individual interests and behaviors.
- Secondly, it's highly cost-effective, offering an impressive return on investment (ROI) compared to many other marketing methods.
- Thirdly, email marketing is scalable, making it suitable for both small businesses and large enterprises. It also allows for easy tracking and analysis of campaign performance, enabling data-driven refinements.
- Lastly, email marketing fosters customer engagement and loyalty by delivering valuable content, promotions, and updates directly to subscribers' inboxes, maintaining a consistent brand presence and building trust over time.

Remember that the key to a successful email marketing cadence is finding the right balance between providing value to your subscribers and avoiding overwhelming them with too many messages. Pay attention to email performance metrics (below) and adjust your cadence based on subscriber behavior and feedback. What works best for one audience may not be the same for another, so it's essential to continually refine your approach based on data and audience preferences.



## Email Performance Metrics to Track

Performance marketers should focus on optimizing several key email metrics to assess the effectiveness of their campaigns and drive better results. Here are some essential email metrics to prioritize:

1. **Open Rate:** This metric measures the percentage of recipients who opened your email. A high open rate indicates that your subject lines and sender name are compelling and relevant.
2. **Click-Through Rate (CTR):** CTR measures the percentage of recipients who clicked on one or more links within your email. It's a crucial metric for assessing the relevance and engagement of your email content. Stronger content should lead to higher CTR and vice-versa.
3. **Conversion Rate:** The conversion rate indicates the percentage of recipients who completed a desired action after clicking on a link within your email, such as making a purchase, signing up, or downloading a resource.
4. **Bounce Rate:** Bounce rate measures the percentage of emails that were not delivered due to issues like invalid email addresses or full mailboxes. Reducing your bounce rate is essential to maintaining a healthy email list.
5. **Unsubscribe Rate:** This metric represents the percentage of recipients who opted out of your email list after receiving a campaign. Keeping your unsubscribe rate low is essential for retaining your audience.
6. **Email Sharing/Forwarding Rate:** This measures how often your recipients share or forward your emails to others. A high sharing rate can help extend your campaign's reach to new audiences.
7. **Revenue per Email:** This metric calculates the revenue generated from each email campaign. It's especially important for e-commerce and sales-focused campaigns.
8. **Email Deliverability:** Assess your email deliverability rate, which measures the percentage of emails that successfully reached the recipients' inbox. Low deliverability can harm your sender reputation and overall campaign performance. If your list is 100k strong, but your email deliverability is only 50%, it may be advisable to investigate further to ensure list health.
9. **Spam Complaint Rate:** Keep an eye on the rate at which recipients mark your emails as spam. A high spam complaint rate can negatively affect your sender reputation and deliverability.

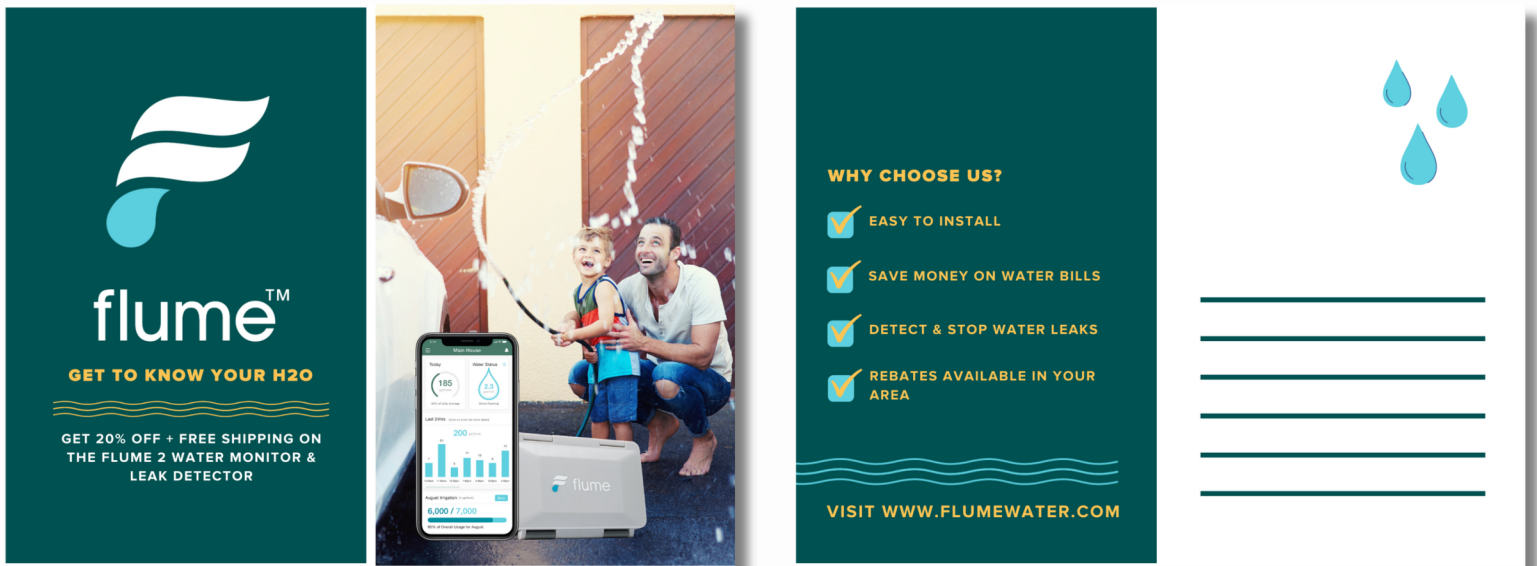
By continuously monitoring and optimizing these email metrics, marketers can refine their email campaigns, enhance engagement, and drive better results, ultimately improving the return on investment (ROI) of their email marketing efforts.

## Direct Mail Marketing & Bill Stuffers

Direct mail marketing offers several strengths that make it a valuable strategy in the modern marketing mix. It provides a tangible and physical connection with your audience, making it memorable and leaving a lasting impression. Secondly, it allows for precise targeting, enabling you to reach specific demographics, locations, or customer segments effectively.

Direct mail can also be highly personalized, making recipients feel valued and understood - this is key to an effective direct mail strategy. Additionally, it has a higher open rate compared to some email marketing campaigns, increasing the likelihood that your message gets noticed. Utilizing a captivating experience when opening the mail assures higher share-of-voice as attention is focused on the physical product. Lastly, direct mail can be integrated with digital marketing efforts to create a multi-channel approach that reinforces your brand and message across various touchpoints. Direct mail can come in the form of individual mailers or an attachment included in your billing process.

While direct mail has some strong benefits, it is harder to gauge performance or efficacy of a direct mail campaign. While innovative companies have found ways to leverage direct mail for performance marketing, implementation costs can be high and a recurring expense for multiple campaigns. Using a third party vendor, utilities have the benefit of negating some cost, but it's crucial to prioritize the expense of creating mailers to ensure a positive return on investment (ROI).



## Paid Social

Paid social marketing on mainstream platforms such as Meta (Facebook), X (Twitter), Instagram, YouTube, Nextdoor and more have been a mainstay in the marketer's playbook due to its scalability and ability to narrow audiences to the right groups. While the maturity and capability of platforms vary, most paid social channels offer:



1. Precise audience targeting options, allowing you to reach specific demographics, interests, and behaviors, ensures your message reaches the most relevant potential customers.
2. Flexibility in budgeting and campaign management, enables you to allocate resources according to your goals and adjust campaigns in real-time for optimal results.
3. Robust analytics and performance tracking, allows you to measure the effectiveness of your campaigns and make data-driven adjustments.
4. Ability to be highly visual, makes it suitable for showcasing products or engaging storytelling.
5. A wide range of strategy options enable campaigns to focus on driving brand awareness, website traffic, and conversions, making it a versatile tool in the digital marketing toolkit.



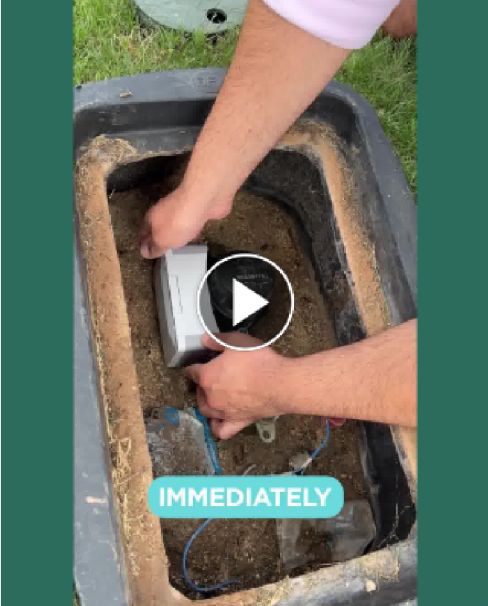
## Paid Social Continued

Paid social channels excel at reaching customers in their preferred online environments, designed to captivate and sustain interest for extended periods. With an estimated 4.9b users across the globe, social media sites have dominated the modern age as a means to stay connected, get information and share ideas. The downside of such high engagement is that you have countless other brands and companies vying for the same attention. Advertisers spent over \$113b dollars on Meta in 2022 and this number continues to grow even as new challengers, such as TikTok, come to challenge for the throne.

The highly competitive ad placements on social media networks create a careful balancing act of funding enough to get exposure while keeping your budgets and ROI intact. To succeed in these channels, leverage strong audiences and create diverse, captivating and unique creative to target your ads effectively.



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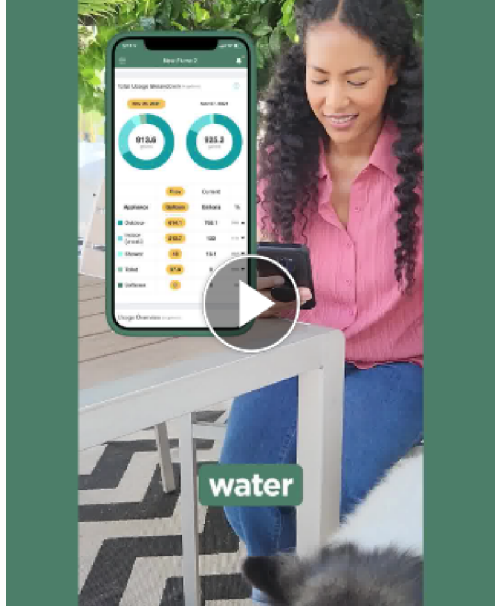


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## Owned Social

Owned social marketing leverages a brand's own social media channels, such as company profiles on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Followers of your brand's social profiles have put their hand up and said "I am interested in what you offer, and I would like to be in the loop!" These can be some of the strongest interactions your brand will have with customers and the best part is...it's very low cost to set up and maintain!

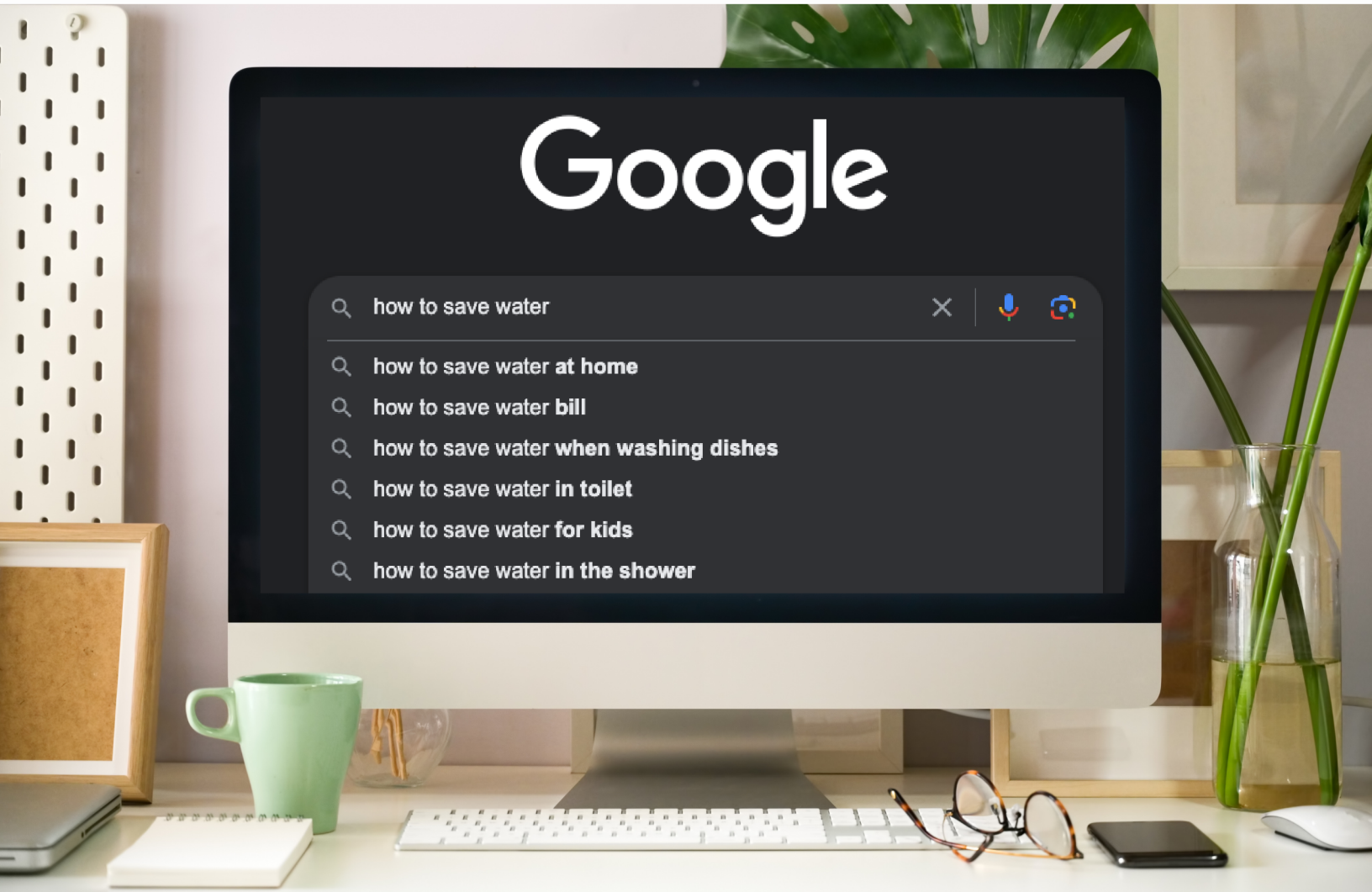
Owned social strengths lie in the direct control and engagement it offers. It provides a channel for brands to communicate with their audience - fostering engagement, loyalty and real-time interactions - and gives brands a platform to share company visions, initiatives and goals. Social media assets are very cost-effective, requiring minimal effort to set up and maintain. Every post doesn't have to be selling something or showcasing a big initiative. Sometimes, your customers just want a glimpse of what the brand is doing or cares about. This can open the door for a wide range of content possibilities.

Additionally, owned social marketing allows for organic growth through followers and advocates. It serves as an excellent platform for sharing valuable content, promotions, and updates, ultimately enhancing brand visibility and strengthening customer relationships. A regular posting schedule on your social media channels is essential to any marketing campaign and should be integrated regularly. Consider making a content calendar that will outline the specific areas of focus and scheduled postings throughout the year. The key is to be consistent, and not let your page "go dark" because you aren't sharing regularly.



## Paid Search

Paid search advertising can be a cornerstone in a marketing campaign due to its incredibly high customer intent. Potential customers are always researching products, looking for solutions, asking questions and generally browsing popular search engines like Google or Bing. The ability to show ads on highly targeted searches (keywords) gives you an opportunity to be front-and-center when potential customers are looking for what you offer.



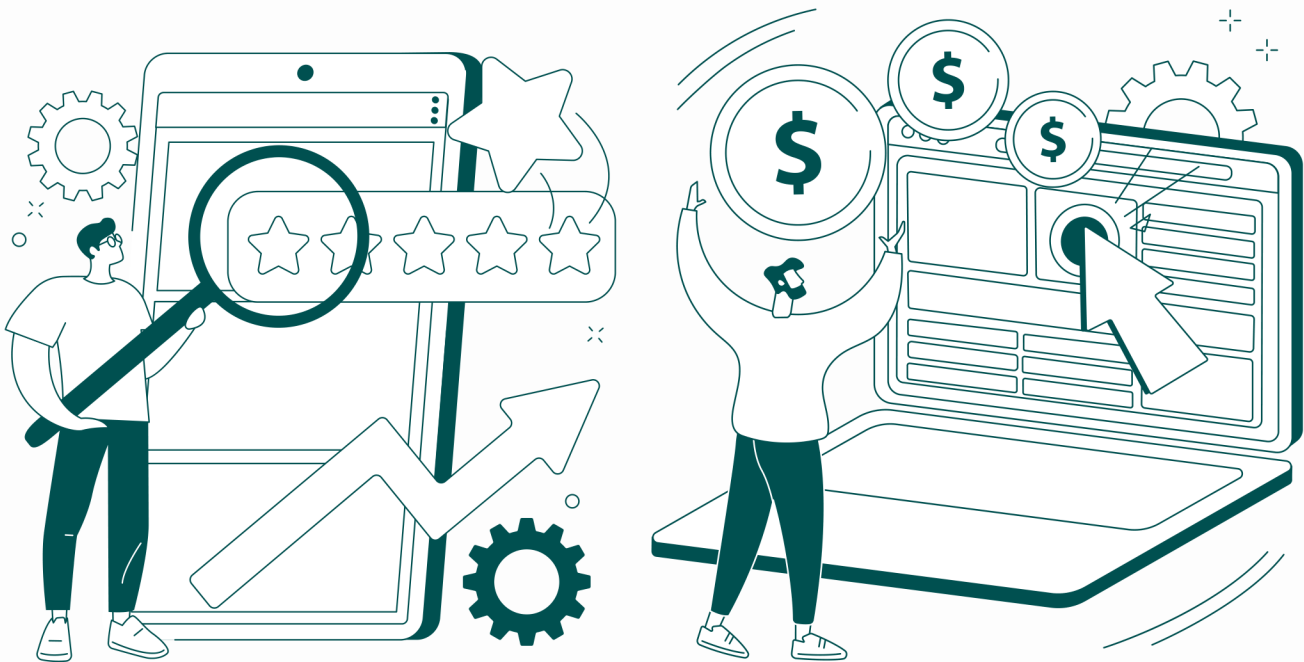
With an unlimited number of potential search queries available, narrowing down your target keyword list can seem like a daunting task. But putting yourself in the shoes of your target audience can help identify potential queries to consider bidding on.

## Paid Search

Ask yourself, “how would I search if I wanted to find information about this item?” Write down all the potential queries that come to mind, then make shortened and extended versions of each query. Think about the alternative ways of saying a specific word and write down the variations. Before you know it, you will have dozens of queries at your disposal! Keep in mind - the more keywords you have, the more money it will cost to serve ads on. Separate your keywords by level of intent to identify what may be a best performer:

- “Jacket” - Low intent, very broad - Most potential volume
- “Blue women’s jacket” - Medium intent, very specific - Lower volume, more competitive
- “Blue women’s jacket near me” - High intent, indicating looking for fast purchase - Lowest volume, may be niche or highly competitive with high cost-per-click (CPC).

Certain search queries can be extremely competitive, resulting in increased costs to secure top positions in search results. As a general rule of thumb, longer keyword strings tend to narrow the audience, leading to increased CPC for advertising. A balanced paid search strategy will have a mix of broad-to-narrow searches being bid on.



## Earned Media

Earned media marketing, often referred to as "word-of-mouth" or "organic" marketing, is a powerful strategy that leverages the influence of others to promote your brand or content. The benefits are numerous. Firstly, it is incredibly cost-effective, as it relies on the goodwill and advocacy of satisfied customers, fans, or influencers who share their positive experiences voluntarily. Secondly, earned media builds credibility and trust since recommendations from trusted sources hold more weight with consumers than paid advertising. Thirdly, it can result in viral or exponential reach, as enthusiastic advocates can share your message with their networks, expanding your brand's visibility far beyond your own efforts.



To achieve success with earned media marketing, follow these three steps:

1. **Deliver Exceptional Experiences:** The foundation of earned media marketing is providing excellent products, services, or content that genuinely impresses and delights your customers or target audience. Exceptional experiences inspire people to talk positively about your brand.
2. **Encourage and Facilitate Advocacy:** Encourage satisfied customers to share their experiences through reviews, testimonials, and social media. Make it easy for them to do so by providing shareable content, widgets, and referral programs. Engage with your audience on social media, respond to comments, and foster a sense of community.
3. **Leverage Influencers and Partnerships:** Identify and collaborate with influencers or partners in your industry who align with your brand values. Their endorsements and content can significantly boost your earned media efforts. Build relationships with industry thought leaders and journalists to earn media coverage and mentions in reputable publications.

By prioritizing exceptional experiences, nurturing brand advocates, and leveraging influencer and partnership opportunities, you can harness the full potential of earned media marketing, enhancing your brand's reputation and expanding its reach.

## In-Person Events

In-person marketing events offer a unique and invaluable opportunity for brands to connect with their audience on a personal and emotional level. They provide a platform for face-to-face interactions, enabling genuine conversations and relationship-building. These events allow brands to showcase their products or services in a tangible way, offering attendees the chance to experience them firsthand. Additionally, in-person events foster trust, as attendees can see the people behind the brand and the quality of the offerings. Such events can lead to memorable experiences, long-lasting customer relationships, and increased brand loyalty.



## A/B Testing

A/B testing in marketing is a method of comparing two versions of a marketing asset (such as a web page, email, or ad) to determine performance. It involves dividing your audience into two groups and showing each group a different version (A and B) to measure which one elicits a more favorable response. By analyzing data and comparing the results, marketers can make informed decisions to optimize various elements of their marketing campaigns, such as headlines, images, calls to action, and more. A/B testing helps improve conversion rates, user engagement, and overall campaign effectiveness by identifying which variations resonate most with the target audience.



## Seasonality & Key Events

Through agility, strategic planning and adapting marketing efforts to industry-relevant seasons and key events, marketers can optimize performance and capitalize on the heightened consumer interest and engagement these occasions bring. We essentially want to create a reason for being in front of our customers other than “Hey! Buy this!” With this goal in mind, we can align our product offering to compliment events or time periods that matter for our customers. Dedicating time to research holidays, events and industry initiatives and turning that into a marketing calendar is an excellent approach for year-round planning and story development.



For example - the conservation department within a water utility could identify significant occasions like World Oceans Day or Earth Day to showcase how their initiatives contribute to making these days meaningful. Your customers want to see that you care about the same things they do, so aligning planned marketing material with key dates is incredibly valuable.

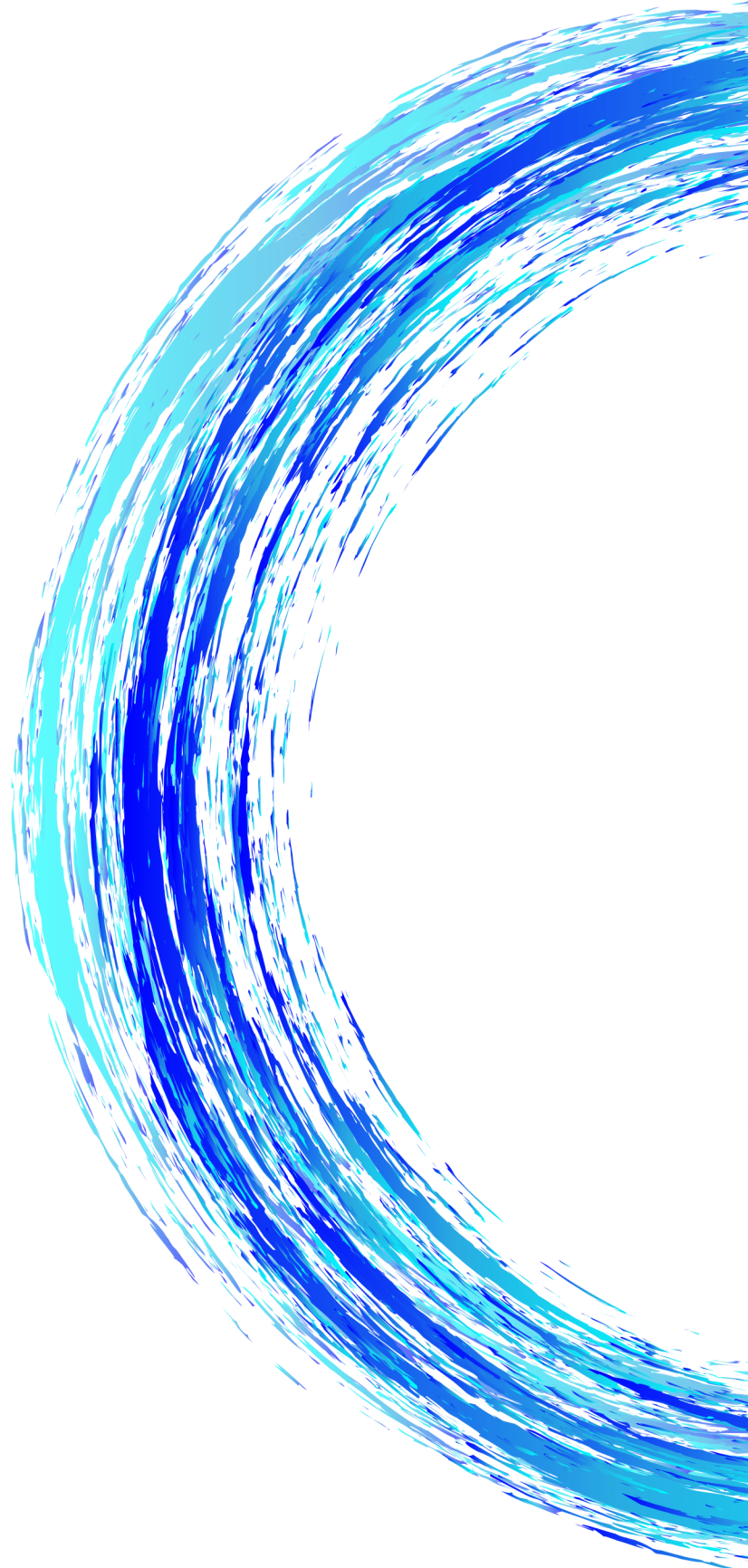
Seasonality also helps to identify when you should be pushing the hardest vs when you may need to taper off a bit or change the messaging you prioritize. In the case of water - water use is naturally higher in the spring through fall time when temperatures heat up and users are using more water than average. Your messaging strategy will differ during these times and your priorities may diverge from winter when water use declines. Customers will also be much more receptive to your messages if it aligns with seasonal timing.



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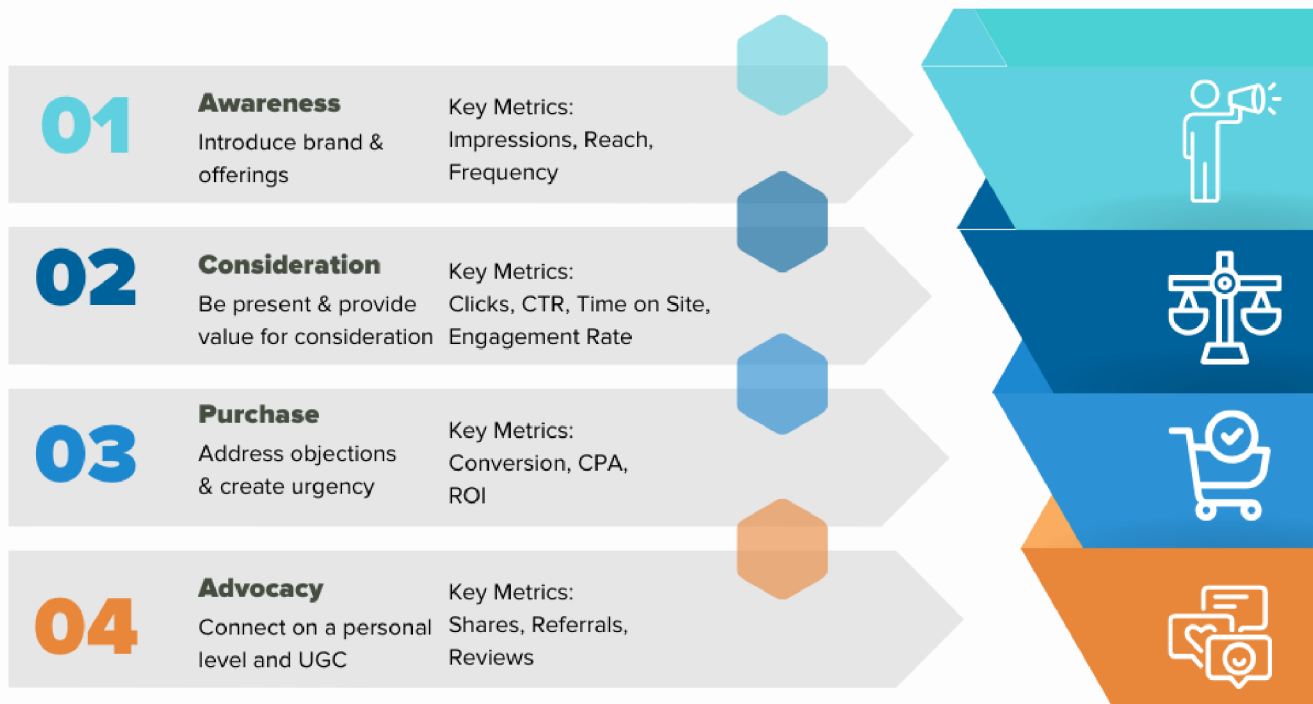
# Tracking Progress



## Performance Tracking

Now that we have thoroughly walked through elements of a great marketing strategy, it's time to bring it all together by applying our key performance indicators (KPIs) and tracking sources to make sure our efforts are effective. One of the worst things a marketer can do is throw a bunch of money out there and just hope it works. This removes our ability to optimize, scale, report or develop our marketing campaigns. Luckily, performance tracking is integral to the success of most platforms, and they provide a comprehensive suite of tools and metrics to consider when developing a campaign.

The specific KPIs that are most relevant to your marketing effort will be determined by where your customers are in the marketing funnel. A marketing funnel is a visual representation of the customer journey, from initial awareness of a product or service through the various stages of consideration/decision-making, and ultimately, conversion and loyalty.



It is absolutely critical for marketers to understand these metrics and how they change or are influenced within a given channel.

Going beyond in-channel metrics, it is also important to understand how people behave and interact while on your site. Free tools such as Google Analytics are relatively easy to set up and will show a vast wealth of information to help drive strategy and decision making.





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Part VI

# Bonus: Encouraging Installation

[www.flumewater.com/flume-utility-and-business-solutions/](http://www.flumewater.com/flume-utility-and-business-solutions/)

## The Benefits of Completing Installation

After a customer purchases a Flume device, we want to ensure that they install it. Flume installation consists of a 15 minute DIY installation (no plumbing work). Some customers are eager and install immediately, while others may get caught up with busy schedules and delay installation.

Once a customer installs Flume, you will be able to access their water usage data from your Flume Utility Portal. The more devices installed, the more data you can collect, and the more water savings you will achieve. Below is an example of a dashboard overview from the Flume Utility Portal.



Up to **85%** of Flume users that purchase through our utility programs complete installation. Customers that complete installation see the following benefits:

- **88%** of Flume users report a change in water use
- Flume users reduce water consumption by **14%** on average
- **75%** of Flume customers feel less of a need to reach out to their utility
- **70%** of Flume customers find a leak, **35%** find a leak within the first week of use

## The Benefits of Completing Installation Continued

By working with the team at Flume you will be able to tell who has installed their Flume device. We will build a shared customer sheet utilizing Google Sheets. On this sheet you will be able to see customer purchase information and completed installations. Once customers create a Flume account, you can also locate the customer in the Flume Utility Portal and see their water use data.

There are several ways to help encourage customers with busy lives to take 15 minutes to install their Flume, starting with offering a rebate.

### Rebates

Offering a post-install rebate encourages customers to install by providing a financial incentive.

There are different options for rebates, including:

- **Flume Rebate:** The customer's credit card is automatically refunded once the installation is complete. This is most common for Flume's utility programs and is typically a \$25 rebate.
- **External Rebate:** The customer needs to apply for a rebate through a utility or on a separate website.

If your program does not currently offer a rebate, be sure to bring this up with the Flume team.



## Flume's Part in Encouraging Installs

At Flume, we value our customers and strive to provide them with the best possible experience. One of the ways we do this is by encouraging customers to install their Flume device in several different ways.

- We send three install reminder emails (see template below) at the 15, 30, and 45 day marks to help encourage installation. These emails can be customized to meet your needs.
- We proactively email customers who are stuck on a step of installation with the installation and send targeted messages to offer assistance and tips for completing the install.
- Flume support is easily accessible, available, and quick to respond to your customers needs whether it be help with installation or any questions that may arise. The Flume Support team consists of smart and well trained humans based in California.
- Beyond having someone to help with specific needs, we have curated an ever expanding support center with a range of resources, including instructional videos and step-by-step guides, to make the install process as easy as possible.
- We value any feedback that customers have and use it to continue to improve our product and install processes.



Hi ,

Thank you for choosing Flume to help you cut down on your water bill, protect your home from leaks, and conserve water!

This is just a friendly reminder to take a few minutes to install your Flume. It's easy to do... Just follow these simple steps:

1. Download the "Flume Water" App from the App Store (Apple or Google Play) on your phone.
2. Open the Flume App on your mobile phone and follow the instructions on the screen. For more help, here is our [complete guide to installing your Flume](#).

**Once you install your Flume, we'll automatically refund \$25 back to your credit card.**

If you need any help getting installed, please contact our world-class support team. A live representative will get back to you within minutes during our support hours, 7am-7pm PT Monday through Friday, and 8am-5pm PT Saturday and Sunday. You can email us at [support@flumewater.com](mailto:support@flumewater.com), or check our help site at [help.flumewater.com](http://help.flumewater.com).

Thank you for being part of our Flume family!

## How Utilities Can Encourage Installation

We do everything we can to encourage customers to install their devices from our end. However, it is also important for utilities to encourage customers who have purchased Flume to install their devices. This not only provides a sense of unity in Flume's utility programs, but also helps ensure optimal program performance and customer satisfaction. Below are some things that you can do to help encourage a finished installation.

- Send monthly reminder emails to customers.
  - Send these emails to customers that have not installed the Flume device 45+ days after purchasing.
  - The customers who have not installed can be found on your customers sheet which includes email addresses.
  - Sending a reminder email from the utility side after the customer receives a few from the Flume side can help demonstrate harmony in our partnership.
- Utilize Flume support
  - Flume customer support is ready and eager to assist you and your customers. Don't hesitate to send any customer questions about Flume that you receive over to our world-class team.
  - Flume support can be reached via in-app chat or email at [support@flumewater.com](mailto:support@flumewater.com).
  - Flume support is open outside of typical workday hours to meet the needs of our mutual customers. The team is available weekdays 7 AM- 7 PM PT and weekends 8 AM- 5 PM PT. We typically respond to inquiries within 2 minutes during business hours.



## How Utilities Can Encourage Installation Continued

- Terms and Conditions
  - Our utility programs have a set of terms and conditions that each customer must agree to before purchasing. You can utilize this to help encourage customers to install sooner than later.
  - Be sure that the Terms and Conditions for your program state that Flume must be installed within 30 days of delivery or returned to Flume.
  - While there isn't typically a penalty for not installing within 30 days, you can fall back on this statement if needed.
- Offer in-person assistance for those that need it.
  - Installation is usually quick and straightforward, most customers can complete it without assistance. However, elderly or disabled customers may encounter difficulties when placing the Flume sensor on the meter, especially if they don't have anyone nearby to help them.
  - Offering help placing the sensor on the meter can go a long way in getting devices installed and customers that need it will really appreciate it.
  - Some utilities have contracted with an outside vendor to assist with these special cases. Flume can help in setting this up if this is an option that interests you.

**Our Account Management team is happy to meet with you to discuss how we can help you meet your installation goals. To set up a meeting please email [katie@flumewater.com](mailto:katie@flumewater.com).**

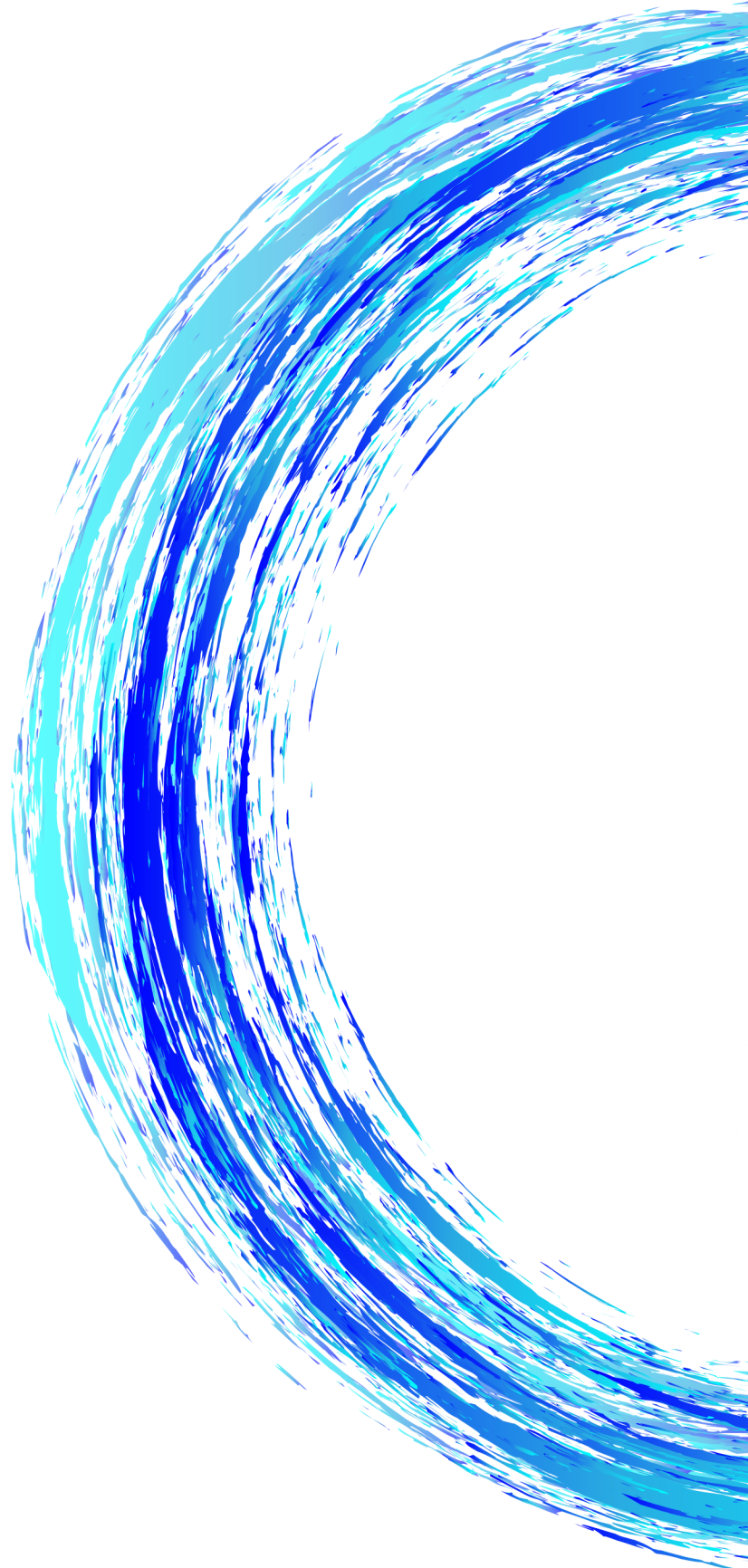




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Part VII

# Recap





1. Get to know your customers inside-and-out
2. Create marketing personas to help you better define and understand their needs
3. Develop compelling messaging that aligns with the pain points and goals of your audiences
4. Keep sensitive subjects in mind and be prepared to handle customer feedback and critique
5. Plan your marketing cadence to avoid fatigue
6. Utilize a wide range of creative mediums and test them all
7. Build your go-to-market strategy and channel mix
8. Consistently test, learn and track performance to optimize and grow your work

We hope you enjoyed this playbook and have already started thinking about some ideas to test with your utility marketing strategy! Flume is proud to partner with utilities across the country, developing innovative and compelling marketing strategies to help them serve their customers.

**If you have any questions or would like to see how we can help, please reach out to [partnerships@flumewater.com](mailto:partnerships@flumewater.com) to get started.**