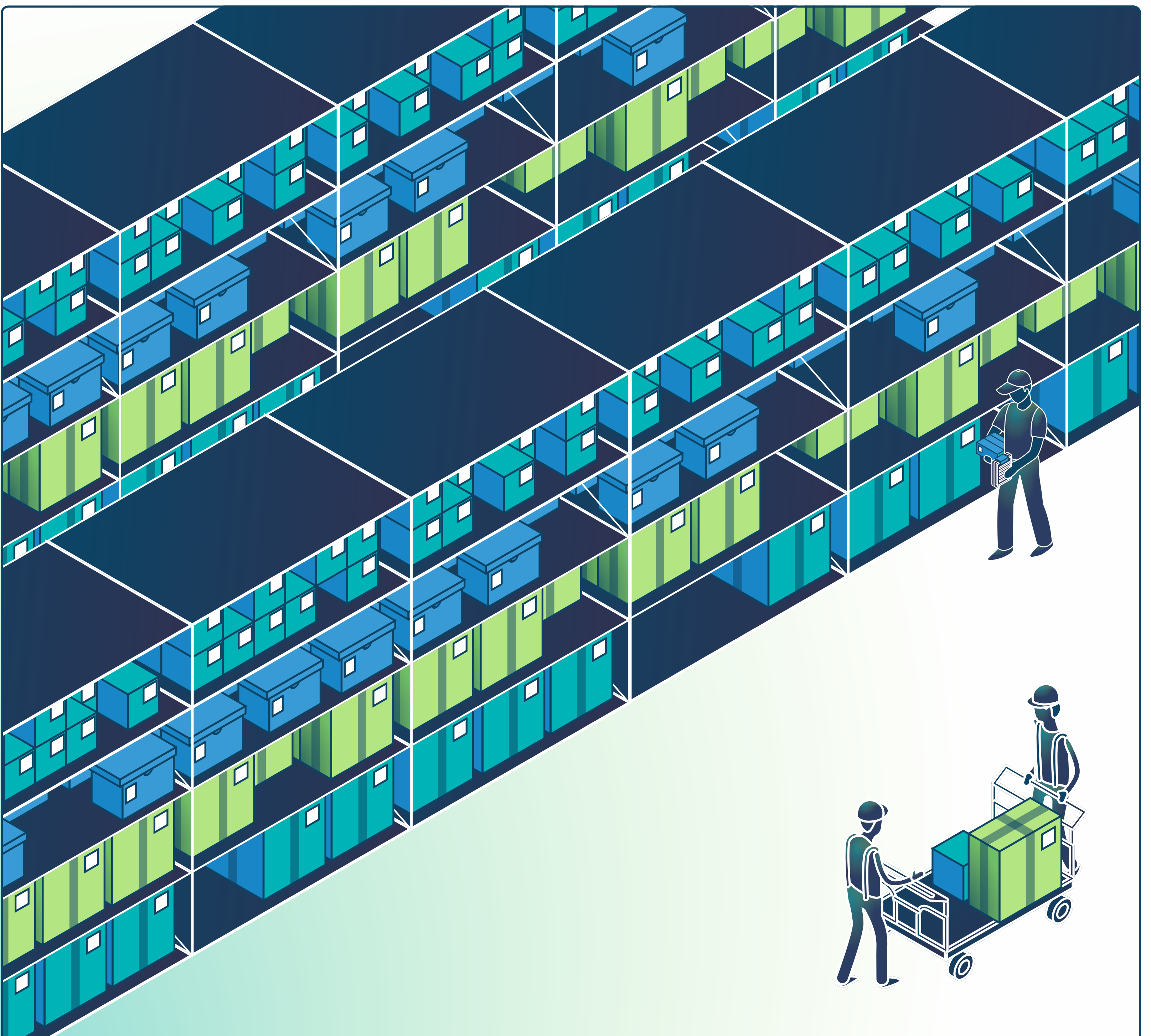


# Guide to 3PL Marketing



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**As a **3PL owner**, you probably don't spend a lot of time thinking about marketing.**

**Your days are filled with shipping and receiving orders, solving logistics issues, ensuring order fulfillment accuracy, and keeping your customers happy. There's rarely time to think about how to market your services better to attract new clients.**

And yet, in a 2021 study, 74% of 3PL providers said finding or retaining clients is one of the biggest challenges they face.

One of the most frequent questions our logistics clients ask us is how they can reach more customers and expand their Third-Party Logistics (3PL) businesses.

## **The answer is simple: Marketing.**

In this eBook, we'll explain how marketing can help your 3PL business find new clients and keep your existing customer base satisfied.

## **Here are the topics we'll be covering:**

- Understanding the Best Digital Marketing Practices
- Inbound Marketing Strategies and Tactics
- Outbound Marketing Strategies and Tactics
- Social Media Marketing Techniques
- How to Use Paid Media to Attract Customers
- Experimenting with Digital Marketing Strategies

By the end of this eBook, you'll not only have a better understanding of how marketing can help your 3PL business grow, but how to create and implement a multifaceted marketing plan that will generate a steady stream of new customers while helping you keep the clients you already have.

**Ready to get started? Let's begin.**

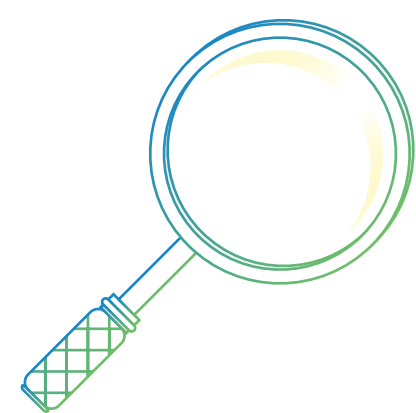


# Define Your Ideal Client

The first step on your 3PL marketing journey is arguably the most important. It’s also the one most likely to get skipped.

Defining your ideal client isn’t as exciting as designing and implementing actual marketing campaigns, but if you bypass this crucial step, even the best marketing plan will underperform.

The good news is that creating an avatar for your ideal client is easier than you would probably expect. With a minor investment of time, thought, and some research, you’ll have a clearly defined image of your perfect customer.



**Armed with that knowledge, you’ll better understand how to target your marketing plans for maximum effectiveness and the best results.**

With that in mind, let’s talk about how to define your ideal customer. Here are four key steps in the process. Following these guidelines will give you enough clarity to move forward with your marketing plans.

**01.**

Look at Your Current Customers

**02.**

Determine Their Goals

**03.**

Understand Their Problems

**04.**

Understand Their Buying Strategy

## 01.

### Look at Your Current Customers

If you're not sure where to start when defining your ideal client, look at the clients you already have.

Each of your current clients is a "victory" for your 3PL business. Would you like to have more of a specific kind of client you already have (this could be from a specific industry, or a specific sized company, or a client with a particular problem you solve)? Looking at your current customers can give you a template for understanding the kinds of customers you hope to attract.

## 02.

### Determine Their Goals

Now that you have a broad idea of who your perfect customer is, the next step is to dive deeper and determine their goals.

By understanding the goals of your target customer, you can better craft your marketing message to address those objectives.

Too often, companies take a scattershot approach to this, trying to be everything to everyone. This is not the way to go. By focusing on the goals of your perfect client, you'll create targeted marketing campaigns that are more likely to convert.

## 03.

### Understand Their Problems

The third step in defining the perfect client is arguably the most important.

Understanding your potential customer's problems is vital for positioning yourself as a solution in your marketing materials.

As in the previous step, the tendency here is to try to think of every problem potential customers might have. However, it's better to narrow your focus to several specific problems that you can help them solve.

Less is often more in these situations.



## 04.

### Understand Their Buying Strategy

Every business has a different approach to making purchases. Some are impulse buyers who find a solution and immediately jump in with both feet. Others are methodical. They do research, they schedule demos, and they read reviews.

Understanding how your ideal customer makes purchases is often overlooked when developing a marketing plan. This leads to missed opportunities.

Knowing how your ideal client goes through the decision-making process allows you to target your marketing collateral better. Providing suitable marketing materials at the right point in the buyer's journey can be the difference between winning or losing clients.

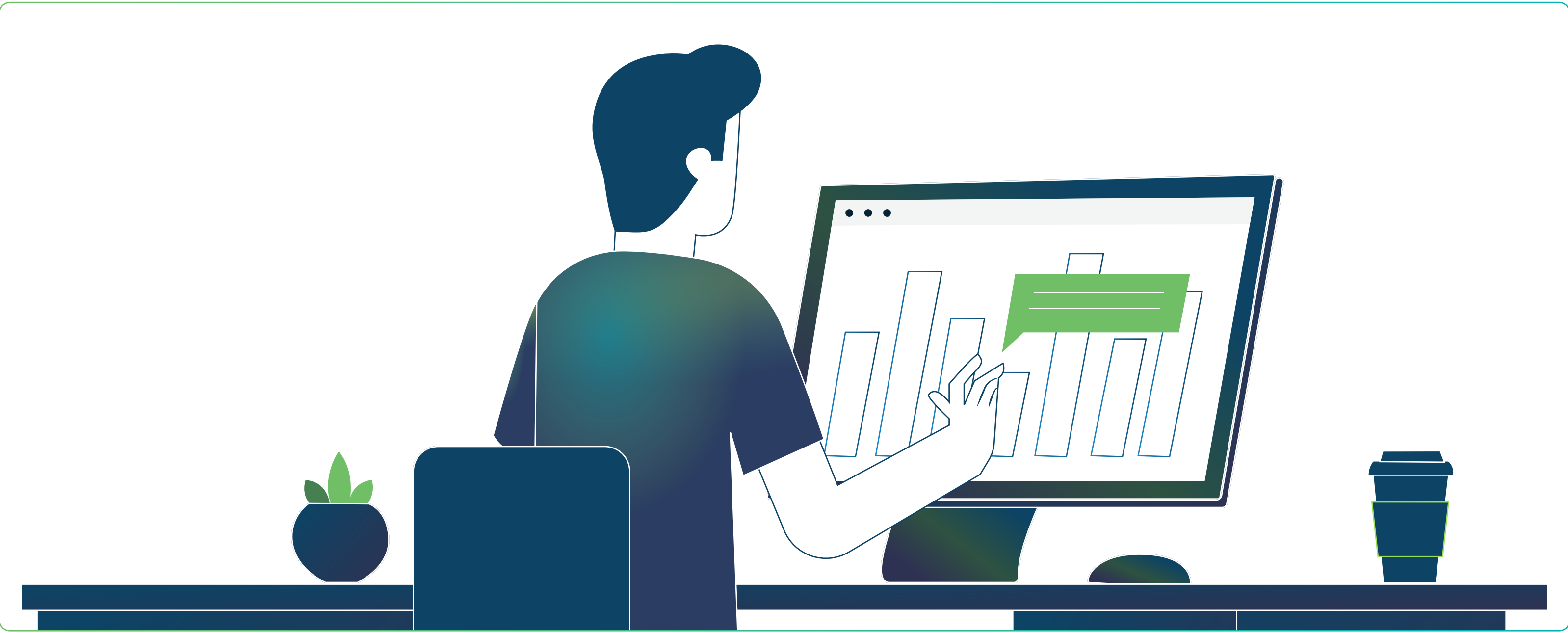
These are just a few of the things to consider when building your perfect client avatar. It's possible to go deeper here, diving into psychology and other components, but if you have a basic answer for these four key areas, you're ready to develop your marketing plan.

# Digital Marketing Best Practices

It's easy to get overwhelmed when it comes to best practices for digital marketing plans. Every marketing guru out there has a list of things you should and shouldn't do, but don't panic.

Breaking down all the best practices for all the different kinds of digital marketing is way beyond the scope of this eBook

However, a basic understanding of the dos and don'ts of digital marketing is more than enough to get you started.

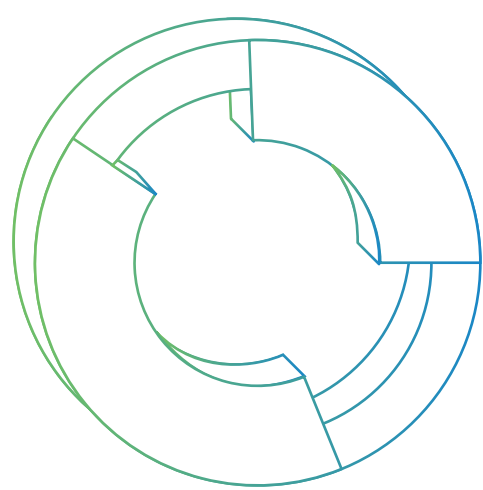


## Here are some key things to focus on:

What You Expect Your Digital Marketing to Accomplish	➔
The Right Channels to Reach Your Target Market	➔
How You Can Measure the Results of Your Plan	➔



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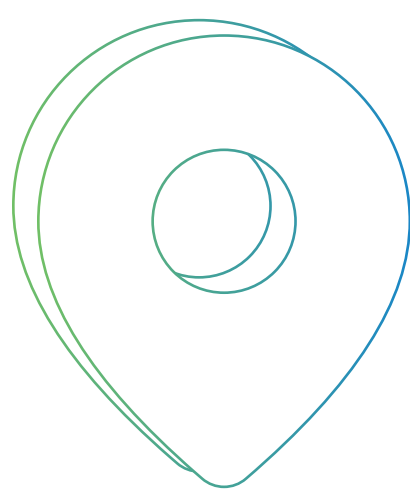


### What You Expect Your Digital Marketing to Accomplish

A plan without a goal is basically just a dream or a wish. Dreams and wishes are great, but for your business to truly find marketing success, you'll need to know what your end goal is.

Determining what you expect your 3PL digital marketing plan to accomplish allows you to build a strategy with incremental steps to get you to a win.

Without knowing your goals, you're likely to waste time, money, and resources trying to hit a constantly moving goalpost.



### The Right Channels to Reach Your Target Market

The second best practice to employ is determining what channels are best for reaching your market.

For example, if your goal is to have your perfect client find you through search engines, it makes more sense to focus on paid ads and search engine optimization than to develop email campaigns.

This is a bit of an oversimplification designed to make a point. A good digital marketing strategy for your 3PL will have multiple approaches. The key takeaway here is that it's always better to focus on a few key areas and do them well instead of trying to do everything poorly.

### How You Can Measure the Results of Your Plan

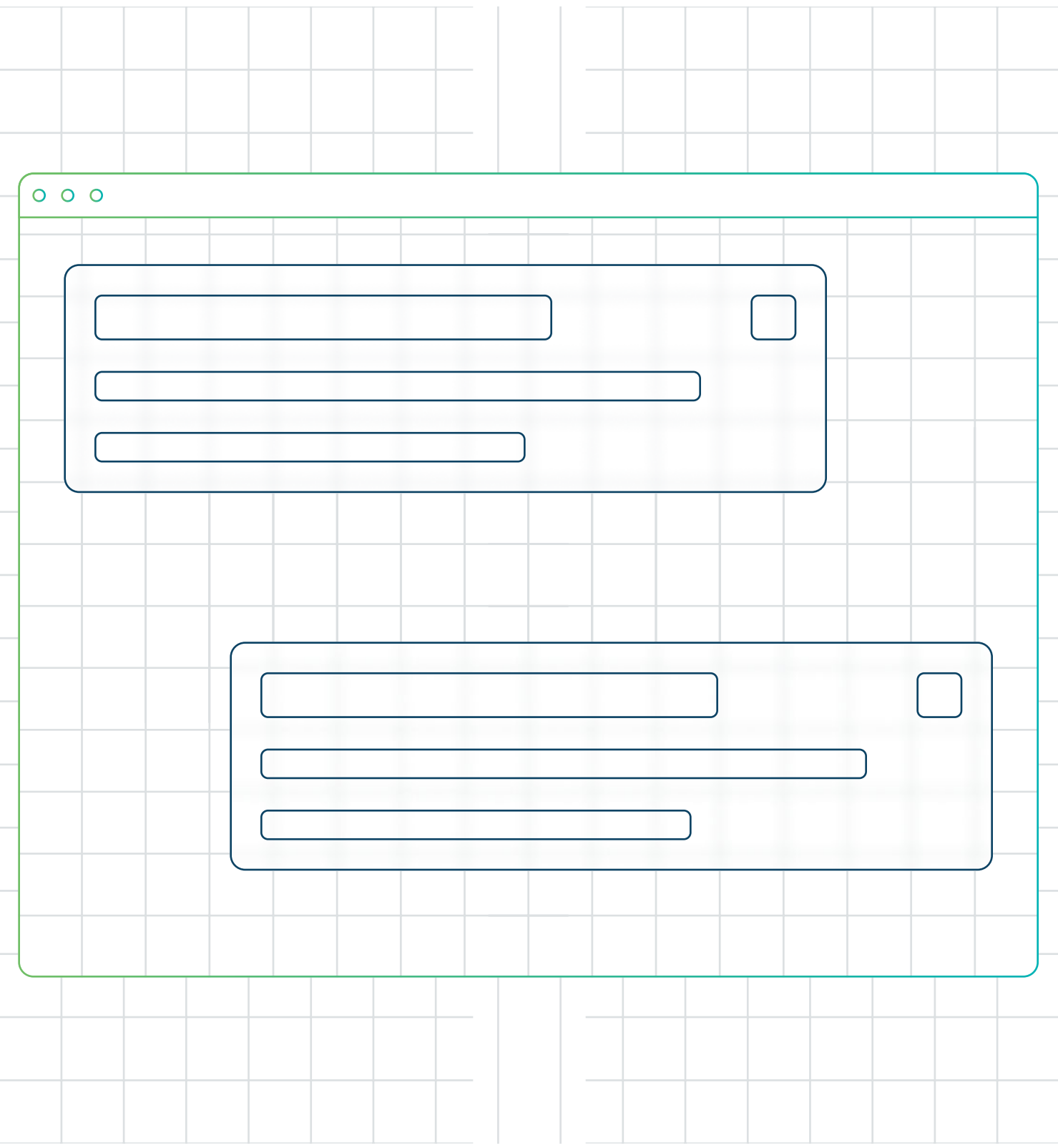
Finally, Once you've established your goals and highlighted the marketing channels you want to prioritize, the final best practice is determining how you'll measure your results.

Too often, companies skip this step or create some vague and meaningless metric that doesn't accurately show what success (or failure) looks like.

For the best results, it's important to define your Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) during the marketing planning process.

What those KPIs are will depend on what channels you're targeting. Things like leads, new customers, customer churn rate, and conversions are good places to start. From there, it's simply a matter of refining and focus.

Taking the time to create a way to measure your results is important. Armed with this information, you'll be better able to determine what's working, what isn't, and what to tweak and try next.



# Inbound Marketing Strategies and Tactics

Some of the inbound marketing tactics that can significantly impact your 3PL business include content marketing, artificial intelligence, video marketing, influence marketing, and podcasts.

Content Marketing	➔
Artificial Intelligence (AI Chatbots)	➔
Video Marketing	➔
Podcasts	➔
Influencer Campaigns	➔





## Content Marketing

Content marketing is one of the most effective ways to generate and nurture leads for your business. By creating and distributing digital content such as eBooks, white papers, blog posts, and videos, your 3PL business can improve your search engine rankings, generate brand awareness, and attract potential customers.

After browsing through your website, interested prospects may want to learn more about a specific topic. That's where content assets like eBooks and white papers can really make an impact.

A downloadable eBook allows you to collect the customer's email and other key information while providing value for prospects to make their 3PL provider decision. Your white papers and eBooks should be promoted on your blogs and throughout your social media to ensure potential customers can find them.

## Video Marketing

Approximately 70% of B2B customers watch videos before becoming customers as part of their research process. Both short- and long-form videos can engage decision-makers and spark their interest in learning more about your company.

Videos can cover a variety of entertaining and informative topics, including:

- Solutions to pain points
- Details about specific topics
- Interviews between industry professionals
- Warehouse demos
- Video blogs (vlogs)
- Capability demos

## Artificial Intelligence (AI Chatbots)

AI chatbots on your website can answer basic customer questions and help key decision-makers to find the exact information they need when they need it, freeing up your customer service and sales to tackle more challenging customer inquiries.

## Podcasts

Podcasts have been booming in recent years as they have become more accessible. Your potential customers listen to podcasts to stay up to date on the latest freight industry trends, find solutions to common pain points, and hear insights from business thought leaders.

Another benefit is that podcasts allow your company leaders to make a personal connection with both prospects and your existing customers.

## Influencer Campaigns

The use of niche influencer campaigns is an effective inbound marketing strategy, as influencers generally have a significant following of fans that trust their opinion and recommendations of your 3PL company.

When working together with a niche B2B influencer, make sure your guest post touches on the pain points of your target audience. This will significantly increase the likelihood your prospects will engage with your call to action.

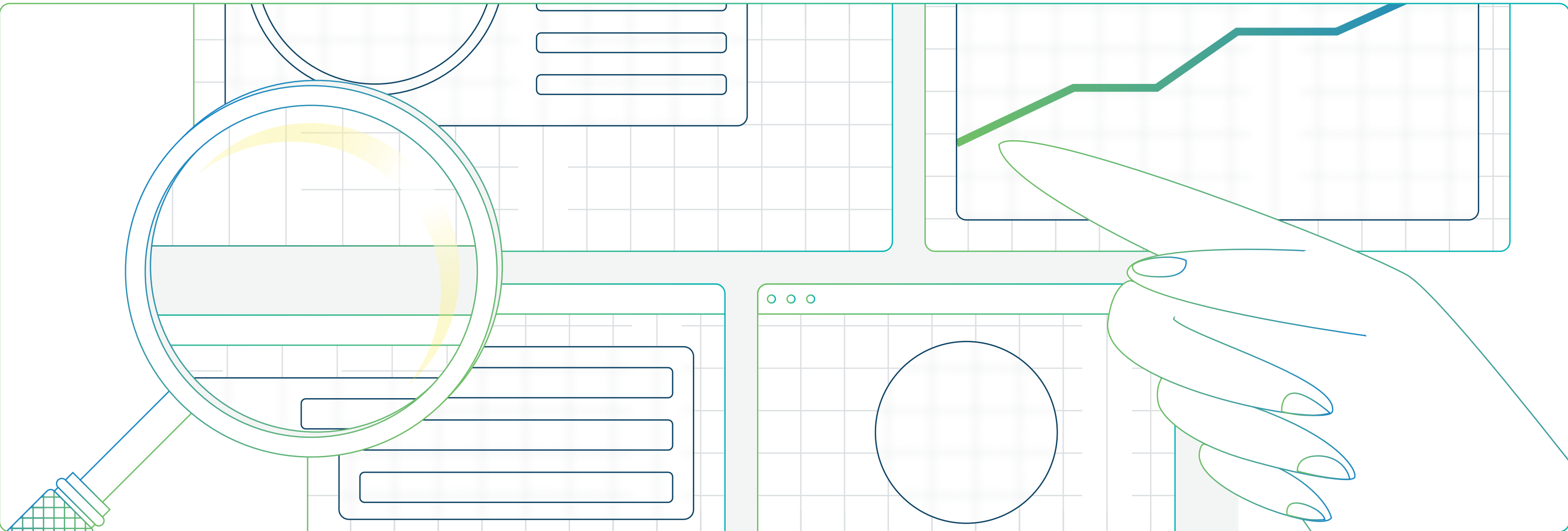
Inbound marketing is a great way to grow your 3PL business. Small investments in content and influencer marketing can lead to big spikes in organic growth for your warehouse.

# Outbound Marketing Strategies and Tactics

Outbound marketing tactics are any kind of marketing where your company first contacts potential customers.

Outbound marketing activities include ads in trade publications and websites, trade shows, cold calling or emails, etc.

Many of the tactics you'll find below are effective tools for both outbound and inbound 3PL marketing.



Email Marketing	➔
Marketing Automation	➔
Webinars	➔
Targeting	➔
Cultivating a Unique Brand Voice	➔



## Email Marketing

Email marketing is a powerful and cost-effective marketing tool. Not only is it an efficient way to stay top-of-mind with your leads and existing customers, but it can also easily be automated to deliver highly personalized content and ongoing outreach, even when cold emailing a targeted prospect list.

Personalized email marketing significantly increases engagement between your brand and your potential customer.

**According to a study by Campaign Monitor, the ROI on email marketing is 4200%, meaning for every dollar you spend on email marketing, you earn \$42.**

Email marketing is one of the most effective digital marketing tactics and can be used for both outbound and inbound marketing, including lead generation, sales, lead nurturing, and customer retention.

Additionally, creating triggered, customized emails (such as when a customer downloads a specific eBook or white paper) helps to convert prospects into clients by meeting your customers at the exact time they are most likely to buy.

## Webinars

Live and previously recorded video webinars can be among the most engaging forms of digital marketing content.

Webinars are interactive in nature and provide a venue for prospects to ask questions, get the information they need about your logistics services, and allow potential customers to become more familiar with your company.

**When it comes to creating strategies to help your outbound marketing initiatives succeed, here are some techniques to implement:**

### Targeting

Software applications have made it possible to review large databases efficiently, and segment leads by multiple criteria. This allows you to avoid those leads that are not suitable prospects. This improves outcomes and slashes the amount of time and effort necessary for sales calls.

### Cultivating a Unique Brand Voice

Once you've established your position in the logistics marketplace, both your clients and prospective clients should be able to recognize your brand voice across all of your various marketing channels. Work on developing a brand voice that is unique to your company and easily distinguishable from your competitors.

## Marketing Automation

Savvy marketers are using automation tools to save time and money. Automated email workflows can be used to auto-send:

- Welcome Email sequences
- Transactional emails
- Invitations and reminders
- Blog updates, and
- Other key marketing communications

Customer journey automation can be used for lead generation, scoring your leads based on behavior and engagement, and lead nurturing.

In addition, social media automation tools can help your business automate various aspects of your social media marketing strategy, from publishing content to monitoring engagement to analytics.

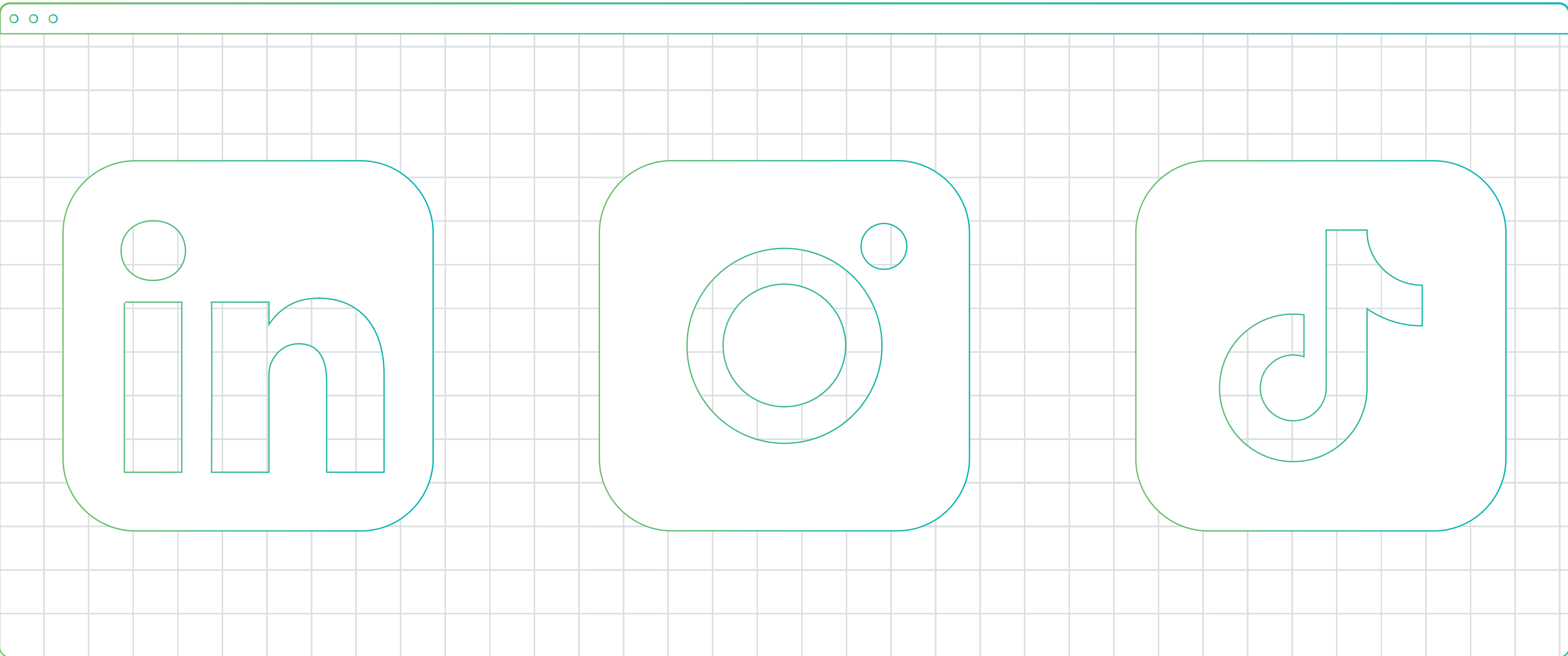


# Reach Customers on Social Media

Social media plays a vital role in moving your potential customers through the sales funnel.

Did you know that 84% of C-Suite executives and 75% of B2B buyers use social media when making a purchase? In fact, it significantly impacts executive-level purchase decisions.

Your prospective customers expect your logistics company to have a presence on popular social media channels. Why? Social media content helps to give your brand a personality that your customers can connect with, and it allows decision-makers to seek the advice of colleagues while making a decision.



LinkedIn	➔
TikTok	➔
Instagram	➔



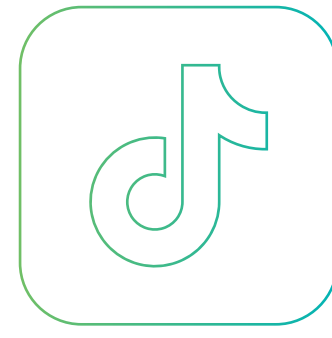
## LinkedIn

LinkedIn has more than 700 million users, primarily employers, business professionals, employees, entrepreneurs, and of course, corporate decision-makers.

Over 50 million companies have LinkedIn profiles, and its extensive reach and user demographic make it a perfect match for 3PL companies wanting to grow their network and generate more sales leads.

This platform is a 3PL goldmine when it comes to helping logistics companies recruit top talent and network with potential customers.

LinkedIn also provides one of the most effective additional platforms to disseminate your content marketing, such as white papers and eBooks. In fact, in early 2020, LinkedIn reported that content received 15 times the number of user impressions over job postings, with a 50% increase in year-over-year user engagement.



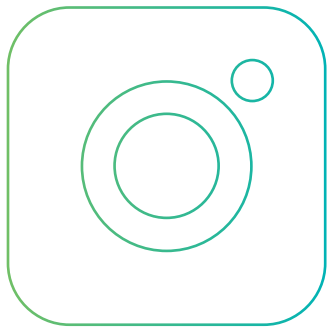
## TikTok

TikTok, a social video-sharing website, is a beneficial 3PL marketing tool due to its visual nature and potential for collaboration with content creators. For example, a collaboration with a popular influencer could feature the TikTok's branded merchandise (merch) being packaged up for delivery to customers at your warehouse.

Taking advantage of popular song trends by putting trending music under your video can help you reach additional viewers quickly.

Additionally, locally specific hashtags such as #DenverBusiness, or business-specific tags such as #smallbusiness can help your target audience see your content.

Still think TikTok is just dance videos for teens? [This simple video](#) from www.shipbob.com on what it's like to work with a 3PL company has garnered more than 86K views on the platform, and [this warehouse tour](#) has received almost 68K views.



## Instagram

**Instagram is not just for posting filtered photos of what you had for lunch – it's also a highly targeted platform to provide your prospects with authentic content that offers an inside glimpse of your company's culture and services.**

Real-time content, including video content (called reels), and live streaming, can add a much-needed human element to your 3PL business, helping you form a genuine connection with your potential and existing customers.

One more important thing to remember, Instagram isn't just about pictures and videos. Captions offer an effective opportunity to give additional context and provide a narrative to the images you post, and hashtags such as #SmallBiz and #SupportSmallBusiness help your audience find you.

No matter what social media platforms you utilize for your digital marketing efforts, you'll want to tailor your strategy for each platform to both meet the audience's expectations and get the best results for your business.

And remember, creative, engaging content always has the potential to go viral, putting your business in front of millions of possible customers

# Use Paid Media to Attract Customers

Depending on your strategy, your marketing mix will likely include some paid tactics to increase brand awareness and introduce your customers to your top-of-funnel content marketing. Here are a few to consider:

## Paid Search and Ads

Social media and Pay Per Click (PPC) advertising make it faster and more efficient for your prospects to search for the information they want to know.

Digital ads can be highly targeted by everything from location and job title to keywords and industry. This is why digital ads can effectively attract prospects and deliver them right to your website.

## Conferences and Events

People are beginning to travel more regularly again, and in-person events can be powerful ways to engage 3PL customers.

Conferences and events give potential customers a chance to learn about your company's services and provide prospects and your sales team with an opportunity to network.

## Search Engine Optimization

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) helps maximize the likelihood of prospects finding and clicking on your company's website when searching for a solution to their pain points, bringing a greater volume of highly-targeted traffic to your site.

An effective SEO strategy will increase the probability that your logistics company will appear in the top search results when potential customers search for keywords such as:

- 3PL
- Logistics Services
- Freight Consolidation
- WMS, and
- Warehousing Facilities

Effective SEO can be deployed without a major investment and can yield significant results in delivering your target audience directly to your website.



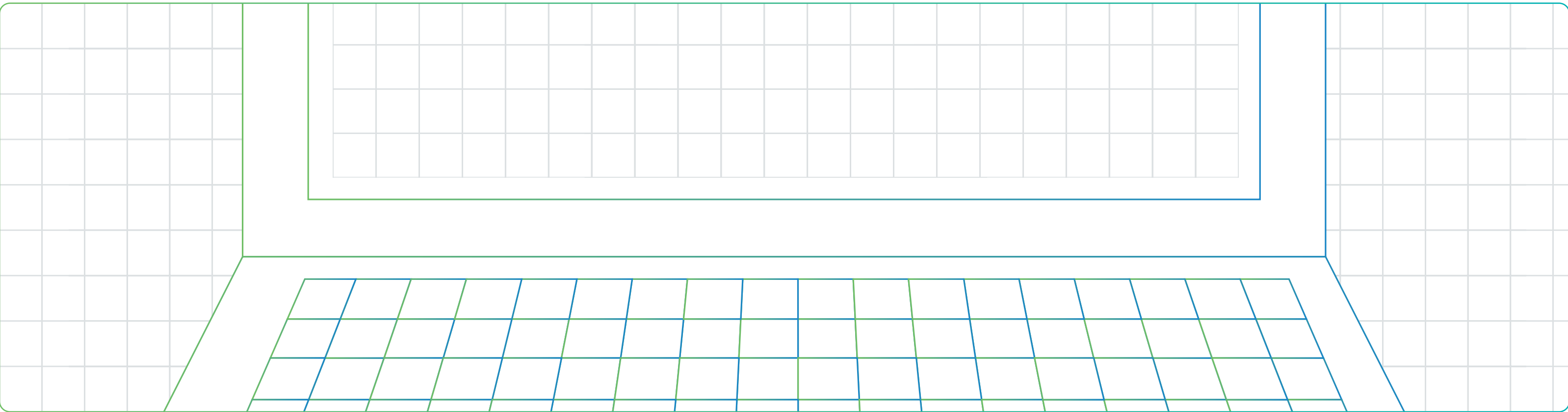


# Experimenting with Digital Marketing Strategies

Now that we've highlighted all of the digital marketing techniques at your disposal, you've probably already found a few that sound like a good fit for your 3PL business. That's fantastic!

One key thing to remember is that even though you may like one or two types of digital marketing more than the other options, it never hurts to experiment with all of them.

There's untapped potential in each of these approaches no matter your goals. Taking time to try each one can bring unexpected positive results.



Remember, you don't have to commit to a full content marketing program or spend thousands of dollars on paid ads to test the waters. Start small, try it out, and if it doesn't fit your needs, feel free to go back to focusing on what does.

The critical thing to remember is that marketing is as much an art as it is a science in the age of big data. Predictable outcomes are great, but trying new things and thinking outside the box can lead to growth opportunities you might have otherwise missed.

# Final Thoughts



Running a 3PL is a full-time job with a lot to manage and maintain.

However, as many 3PL owners have pointed out, finding and retaining clients is one of their biggest challenges. Marketing is the solution.

By this point, you now have a better understanding of how to market your 3PL to both find new customers and keep the ones you already have.

Good 3PL marketing isn't as hard as you've probably imagined. After defining your strategy and setting things up, it's easy to maintain (there is no shortage of marketing automation tools out there to help you schedule emails, social media, blog and video posts, and so on). Simply put, the rewards outweigh the cost and effort.

Ready to learn more about how to take your 3PL business to the next level? Check out [this page](#) for more details!