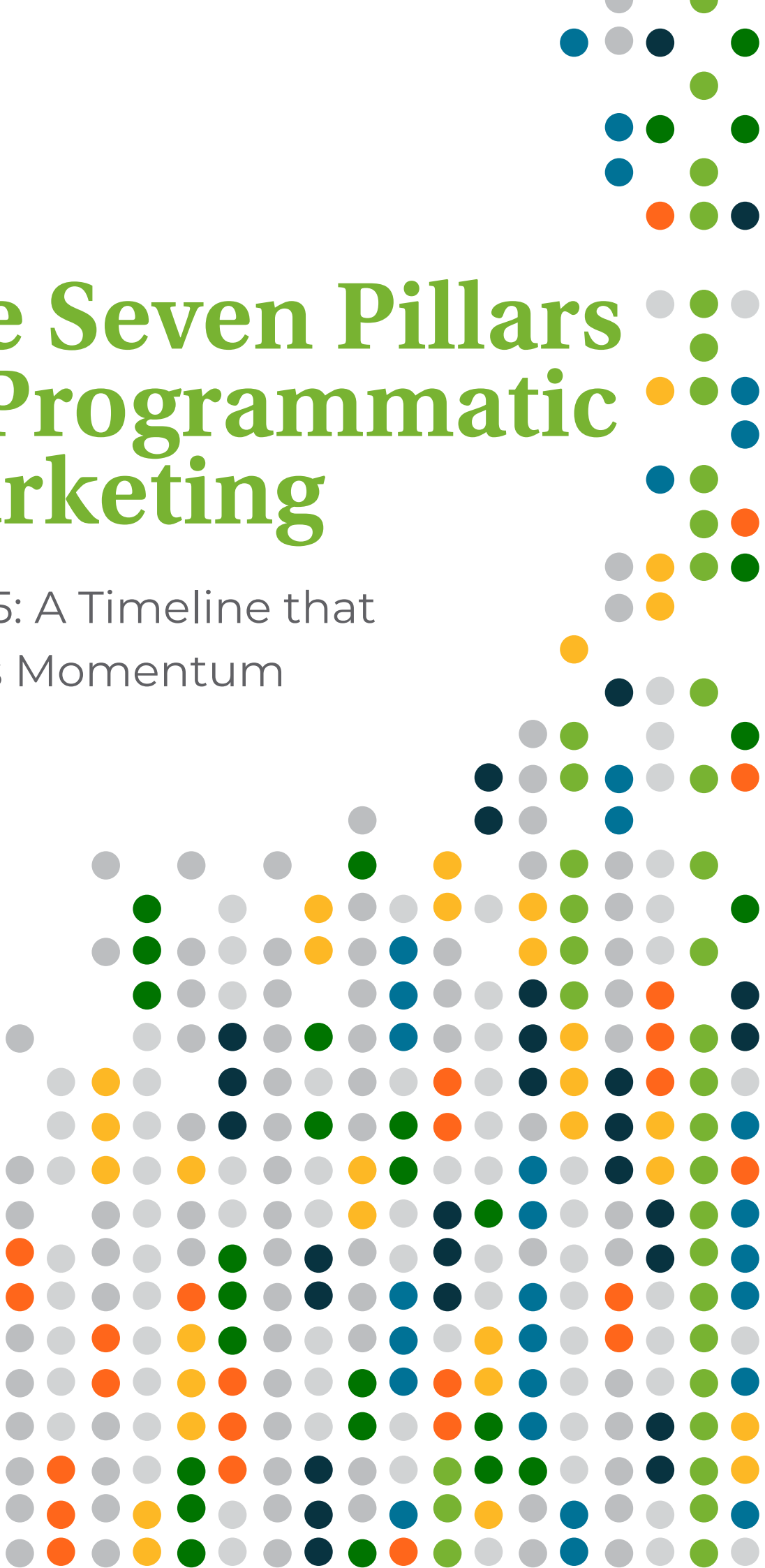
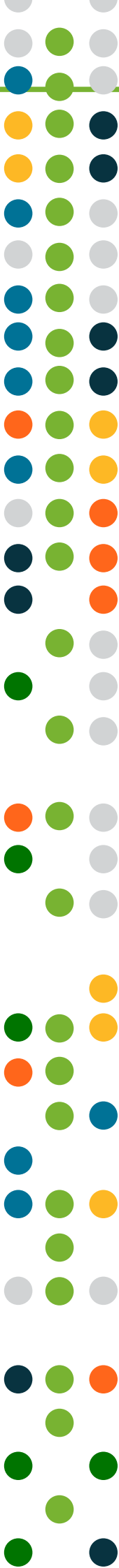




The Seven Pillars of Programmatic Marketing

Pillar 5: A Timeline that Drives Momentum





Setting goals and timelines is one of the most important steps in the marketing process. It allows you to track your campaign progress as it evolves from idea to execution. By creating reasonable timelines for each digital campaign, as well as your overall strategy, you can boost efficiency and ultimately your marketing ROI.

But we live in a world where instant gratification is the norm. We have fast access to everything—information, technology, and entertainment, for example. Social media has trained us to want things here and now. Sometimes, instant gratification can be extremely motivating for agency marketers, especially when your clients want immediate results.

On the other hand, short-term gratification can get in the way of your long-term marketing goals. Sometimes in work—as in life—you have to make tradeoffs. And depending on your campaign, results come over more extended periods of time. Delaying gratification can bring greater satisfaction because you can better appreciate the results of your hard work.

In this fifth pillar of our series on programmatic marketing success, we show you how to build marketing timelines that can increase your runway for success.

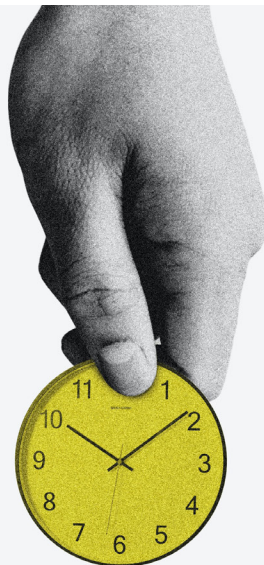
Marketing results don't happen overnight

When it comes to digital marketing, it's easier than ever to outline, design, schedule, and publish content. In some cases, you can access campaign data in real-time when ads go live. It can be tempting to adjust keywords, bids, and other variables as soon as results start coming in. After all, an effective digital marketing strategy depends on interpreting data and adjusting tactics quickly.

But sometimes, patience is the key to campaign planning. There are many components in a full-scale digital marketing campaign. Each part of the campaign deserves time to prove its worth and allow time for tangible results to develop. If you move on from any part of the campaign too soon, you may never know how effective your efforts could have been.

For example, paid (PPC) and organic (SEO) search campaigns are both foundational digital advertising strategies. Yet, they behave very differently. PPC campaigns can generate impressions quickly and show immediate results. SEO, however, can take from six months to a year to generate noticeable gains in rank and traffic. SEO results will never keep pace with PPC—It's simply not inherent in the tactic.

Giving your digital marketing campaigns time doesn't mean you'll lose ground on the competition. In fact, you could end up being a step ahead. A longer campaign calendar can better demonstrate how successful each campaign component was and for how long. A longer campaign timeframe can also help you properly allocate marketing resources. The more data you have, the more accurately you can decide which campaign components need more—or fewer—budget dollars.



How to build an effective marketing timeline

So what factors should you consider to develop effective timelines that drive marketing momentum? It's a careful balance between optimizing as quickly as possible and allowing time to collect truly useful information. We recommend starting with the launch date and working backward from there. It's important to think realistically about how much time is needed for each individual campaign component (i.e., display ad size, text, branding, design, landing page setup, editing/revisions, etc.). Then set deadlines for each task's completion within the boundary of the final campaign launch date. Putting time-based goals in place will help ensure your marketing team stays on track and is working toward an actual event.

Testing should be a key component of your digital marketing timeline. A/B testing compares the performance of two versions of one aspect of a campaign. For example, two variations of call-to-action (CTA) button text or an email with two different subject lines. Multivariate testing, in comparison, tests multiple elements of a campaign to identify the combination that yields the highest conversion rates. This may include landing page images, text, colors, and fonts. It's common for multivariate tests to exceed 50 or more combinations. Regardless of which type of testing you use, rolling out higher-performing campaign elements can improve long-term results.

Our recommendation for programmatic advertising is to build a three-month minimum timeline, which provides:

Ample time for ad creative, placement, and contextual processes.

Testing and optimization to maximize ad performance.

The ability to scale the best performing ads and media buys.

Of course, every campaign may vary slightly depending on its goals, digital channels, product offerings, and other variables. Some campaigns may be shorter due to seasonality or time-based offers (i.e., a sale event, holiday, or special promotion). If you missed it, check out Pillar 2 of our series, [Holistic Performance Metrics and Relevant KPIs](#), which offers valuable information about how to set effective campaign goals.

“It’s a careful balance between optimizing as quickly as possible and allowing time to collect truly useful information.”

Overcoming timeline setbacks

Inevitably, the best-laid marketing plans can hit roadblocks. After your programmatic campaign launches, you may realize that a CTA button or landing page link is broken, for example. Or, you may discover that your A/B-tested landing page isn't attached to your client's CRM. The result is that all those leads flowing into the database aren't being distributed to sales reps. Here are some other potential issues that can negatively impact your marketing timelines (as well as how to avoid them):

X Poor teamwork

How your team communicates can have an enormous effect on your campaign timeline. If communication issues are causing timeline delays, you may need to reshape how your team works together. A project management tool might help: when tasks are documented and checked off, you'll be able to set more realistic timelines and attainable goals.

X Mismatched campaign types

The type of marketing campaign you launch can directly impact your timeline. For ongoing campaigns, you can keep things simple and reachable by setting the same timeline week after week or month after month. Social media campaigns can take a long time to prepare, for example, but posts can be scheduled months in advance. If your team is finishing their tasks way ahead of deadlines, adjust the timeline.

X Unreachable goals

Your marketing timeline should reflect specific marketing goals. If your timeline is too short, you run the risk of missing your goal or extending your timeline. Alternatively, a long timeline could get in the way of other scheduled projects. A reasonable timeline will help you achieve your goals on time so you can move on to the next phase of your marketing strategy with confidence.

It's crucial to double-check every aspect of all of your marketing campaigns. Test each component and the entire flow to ensure that every aspect is functioning as it should. Many marketing campaigns are ongoing, however. If you're engaged in digital marketing, you're going to be producing content for quite some time. You'll never stop sending out emails or posting on social media. To drive marketing momentum set a measurable marketing goal for each campaign and a timeline for each goal. That way, you'll be able to adjust your strategy as necessary.

Driving momentum

More and more digital agencies use self-serve programmatic platforms to drive momentum in their marketing timelines. Today, media buyers need greater transparency into the buying process and direct access to raw, real-time campaign data. Programmatic platform operators are less reliant on multiple vendors and can act quickly and precisely during the strategic planning processes, as well as the execution and optimization phases. The result is that your agency has more time to analyze results and optimize your client's programmatic advertising campaigns.

