

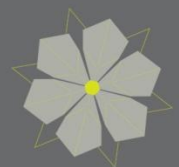
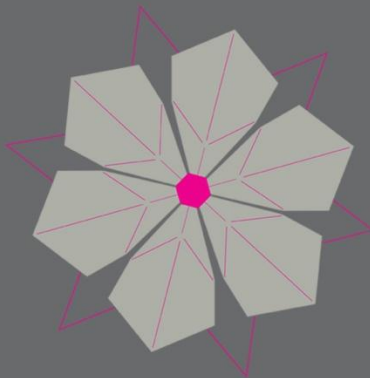
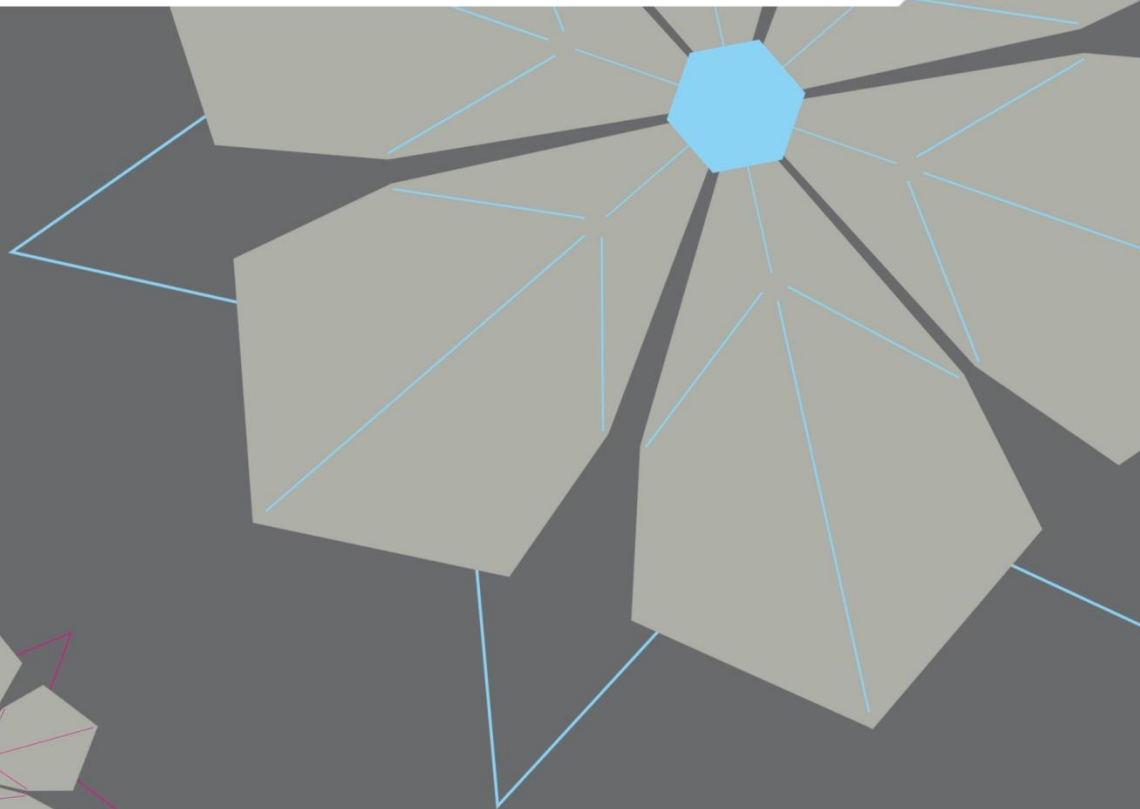


**Leapfrog**

# BrightonSEO luxury retail roundtable

Notes

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Southdown House  
130a Western Road  
Brighton BN1 2LA  
East Sussex

01273 322 830  
[enquiries@leapfrogg.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@leapfrogg.co.uk)  
[www.leapfrogg.co.uk](http://www.leapfrogg.co.uk)  
Registration Number: 4994294

# Contents

Market watch.....3

Industry best practice.....5

Insight and measurement.....7

Financial planning.....9

Key resources and allocation.....10

# Market watch

1. *Keeping up with the market - How do you assess the success of your competitors online? Who are trail blazing across multiple channels and how do you keep up?*

- Manually track competitors using a spread sheet
- Moz Analytics
- SEMrush
- Linkdex
- AnalyticsSEO
- NetVibes

Regularly search for your competitors online and see what they are promoting and if they are in the industry news.

Experience the brand yourself - go through the process of ordering something and see how the experience compares to your brand.

What do they do that you don't?

What is the experience like?

Regularly check your competitors landing pages to see the content they are promoting - gives a good indication of how much they are spending.

2. *How has the strong summer affected online sales within your business and how has it affected your budgets and strategy moving into the winter season?*

Overall, this summer has been bad for all brands online.

Around 50%-60% lower in some cases.

In particular, the Spanish market is now dead for holiday resorts.

3. *Customer experience is a hot topic, how has the need to have thorough understanding of your customers and how they experience your brand at every stage of the buying journey affected your marketing tactics?*

Keep asking questions about your customers - what do they need? What do they require?

Tools such as iPerception are helpful for assessing website usability and customer insight, in particular Crazy Egg which provides heat maps to understand what users are clicking on your site.

The best thing you can do is speak to customers.

Get insight from a variety of your customers. Speak to customers who have spent £5 on your site and also £500 and find it if your website fulfilled their expectations and what their experience of your brand was like.

Leave iPads on checkout points for people to leave a review after purchase and offer an incentive to do so.

Send a survey to your customers on your database. As they are already engaged with your brand they are likely to respond and this data is invaluable to gain customer insight.

The more you segment your customers, the harder it is to produce content and an experience that appeals to them all which can lead to an inconsistent brand experience for customers. Find the segment which is most profitable and on brand and work to improve the customer experience on this level.

# Industry best practice

1. *How do you keep on top of best practice in a frequently changing industry?  
How important is it that you follow best practice if you are still hitting KPI's?*

Sometimes you can't follow best practice due to the organisational structure.

Using specialist agencies was considered beneficial as individuals can't be clued up in all subjects e.g affiliates, e-mail, SEO etc.

Try outsourcing specialist digital work but oversee the work of an agency and try and retain a view of the big picture rather than getting bogged down in very specialist subjects.

Hire experts and leave the finer details to them such as PPC, data analysis and SEO.

Google Hangouts were considered really positive for gaining backlinks and Google is rewarding brands for using this technology. There is an issue with Google targeting people taking part in Google hangouts with advertising. The user experience of Google Hangouts is complex and not user-friendly.

2. *How have you been affected by changes in Google Best Practice Guidelines?  
(Have you been penalised or been given bad advice?)*

Since the penguin updates, some brands traffic was 80% down.

One company felt the work to clear their website of the penalties was so time consuming and complex that they would not bother until the next website redesign. However, this website only accounted for 5% of the company's profit. The website performed well for 8 years with black hat tactics.

One brand has 5000+ bad links and four penalties to remove. The process to remove them was incredibly time consuming and recovery is not instant. Learn from every penalty you have received.

As long as you show Google that you've made an effort to remove the links then they often will take this into consideration when ranking your website.

Some websites have started to charge to remove back-links, however this is illegal and you can report such requests directly to Google.

Track conversations with websites who have links in Google Docs so Google can see the correspondence you've had with these websites.

The turnaround to remove/disavow links is getting quicker as Google is getting more efficient.

Use 3rd party software to assess back-links and not just one version.

“Tools can help extract the data and pick-up on certain link patterns but a manual review is still the most comprehensive/important – you just need to know what you’re looking for” says Tony King, Head of Search at Leapfrog.

It’s hard to communicate with senior staff that it takes time to recover from Google penalties especially if they have limited knowledge of digital. It’s hard for people to understand why things with their website when black hat tactics worked so well for so long.

Google penalises long term bad links, you may need to ask them why your website is performing badly for this information.

3. When does best practice go against brand guidelines? Have you ever been stifled in delivering best practice DM methods by close control of the brand? How closely does brand protection contain what you can and can’t do (keyword selection, content etc). Is your focus on Brand related terms only?

Tight brand guidelines can often mean that sometimes you can’t do best practice.

Don’t delete bad reviews - it looks untrustworthy and it is impossible to only have good reviews.

One brands CEO doesn’t like the term ‘luxury’ as they felt that if the product is luxury then it should speak for itself. They wanted to be associated with ‘bold’ ‘nonchalant’ etc. which will never be searched for by people looking for these items. Luxury was a profitable search term so the company continues to bid on it as they can show the ROI of this. The consensus was that it works, just do it anyway.

It’s important to use customer insight to determine what keywords to go after when people haven’t heard of your brand, but it may not be the words you want associated with your brand. However, these can often be very profitable.

It was felt round the table that you should keep testing. If it works keep doing it, if it doesn’t, then ditch it.

# Insight and measurement

1. *Google analytics vs 3<sup>rd</sup> party measurement tools – do you get enough from analytics? Who has used Universal Analytics to tie in with 3<sup>rd</sup> parties?*

Google Analytics and Moz were considered the best tools.

The trust issue with Google Analytics related to them having potential access/visibility of your entire website data, not because the data is wrong.

Google Analytics returns sampled data when assessing for longer time periods, you can increase the sample but 100% data is not always available. Regularly exporting monthly reports for your primary KPIs helps maintain visibility and true performance over time.

Some attendees had experienced IOS6 tracking issues. The reason these visits are being mis-attributed is a decision by Apple to move Safari search to secure (SSL) in iOS 6. The result of this decision is that the referrer isn't passed. In the absence of a referrer Google Analytics defaults those visits to (none) which shows up in direct traffic.

See article by AJ Kohn (recommended by Ned Poulter)  
<http://www.blindfiveyearold.com/reclaiming-lost-ios-search-traffic>

2. *How well do you know your customers and how important is that data? What type of customer insight do you have? Behavioural, Transactional? How do you use it?*

A key KPI is the bounce rate - it's a bad sign if you can't keep people on your website. If it goes over 60% Google will penalise you for providing irrelevant content.

Check where your bounce rates are coming from. A bounce from a homepage could be because the website wasn't what the individual was looking for so you may need to rework your content. A bounce from a product page could be due to product price, shipping cost etc.

3. *What are the key KPIs you use to measure success and how do you report success up the business?*

No one was responsible for reviewing the Google Analytics data.

The key difference between online and offline marketing is that you can track success so it is important that you do this and communicate results regularly.

Always spend money if it's going to make money.

No one was using marketing automation software or looking to invest in the foreseeable future. This was due to the brands being small and not having the resources to utilise the data it provides - it was not considered a priority.

Net-a-Porter has four analysts for their three websites and don't use Google Analytics to analyse the data, opting for SiteCatalyst (previously Omniture, now Adobe Analytics).



# Financial planning

1. *UK economy – long term recovery or a blip and how are you preparing financially for growth?*

Some brands were investing in territories that are profitable, not just the UK.

Invest in market share - prove strategies are working and performing when securing budget.

2. *How have your budgeting methods changed in the last few years? Where does the marketing budget come from? How do you get buy in? Is it increasing? How do you plan where to best spend?*

You should be flexible with budgets, and move them around as the market changes. If something is performing well, you should be in a position to spend more money in this area.

3. *What are biggest challenges to budgeting for seasonality (Christmas, sale periods etc)*

Christmas was planned in at different points in the year for all brands.

Some brands were budgeting two years in advance for 2015 and investing for trends which have been forecasted. They have a heads up on what will sell in advance.

One brand felt a big challenge was being forced to wait for the Visual Merchandising team to implement their work in stores so they can replicate it online. The VM team sits separately to the ecommerce team so they are treated as two very separate disciplines. This can be a barrier to planning seasonal activity as you want to provide a holistic experience both offline and online.

The E-mail campaigns in particular need to reflect what is going in stores and shop windows to drive people into stores.

The ecommerce team is often still thought of as the 'bad guy' stealing profits from offline stores. Email can generate footfall and drive people into the stores.

It was felt that when offline stores lost sales due to online, the ecommerce team felt they had to continually defend their work and existence.

The key reason for this was that the stores were targeted separately and it wasn't an Omni-channel experience. Online and offline need work together in harmony.

Pick up in store options have made the experience more seamless.

# Key resources and allocation

1. *In house or outsourced, which is the best fit for your business at the moment and how might that change over the next 12 months?*

Display ads, PPC and SEO are all flexible and are time consuming and require specialist knowledge so this is good to outsource.

When you work in-house it can get easy to get lost in what you are doing and lose sight of the bigger picture.

SEO can't just be outsourced as it needs to be ingrained across the team so everyone is working to produce valuable content to best practice.

Agencies can help to keep on top of best practice as you don't always have time to keep on top of digital industry developments. Specialist knowledge is appreciated as they can take a step back and see things that you don't always see when working so closely with a brand.

2. *How do you recruit successfully and ensure in house teams are as skilled as possible as the market changes?*

Recruiting the right skill set is a challenge. Make interviewees do a test as a piece of homework and present the results. Lots of people can blag their way in digital which is a problem when recruiting.

Look for people with a blend of skills that complements your existing team.

If you have the resources and money then go to the source - Universities and train people and offer graduate schemes to get the skills your business requires.

It was felt it was incredibly important for a team to spend time together regularly and talk so they can really understand what each role does and how they can work together.

Don't always send e-mails. Go and talk to people and brainstorm when you have a question, this makes people more aware of what different teams and individuals are working on and it can also help brainstorm new ideas and solutions with different skill sets.

3. *When working with agencies do you prefer to work project by project or to have a long term retained partnership?*

Test by a project and then go onto an on-going retained partnership once trust and relationship is built up.