

A photograph of four hikers standing on a grassy mountain ridge, looking out over a vast valley. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. The hiker in the foreground is wearing a large green backpack. The background features steep, rocky mountain peaks under a clear sky.

7 B2B Marketing Strategies You Need To Know About Build a Better Marketing Plan in 2017



Introduction

As marketers, it's hard sometimes to take a step back and look at the mix of our overall marketing plan. We get busy, caught in the day to day work of keeping up and getting out in front of our prospects and clients, and the opportunity to really look at what we're doing as a team, what new technologies have popped up, and what's working for others just doesn't come up that often. But taking time to think about what goals and objectives as well as what trends, ideas, and techniques are at the heart of our marketing strategy is important. They need to be revisited more often than you might think.

There are several of these – trends, ideas and techniques – that are going to be very important in the coming year, and what they all have in common is their laser-like focus on the customer. It's no secret the buyers are in control, but that doesn't mean marketers should hand over the reins. Because today's buyers demand more intelligence, more personalisation, and more of a genuine connection to the brands that they purchase from, B2B marketing needs to get smarter and more intuitive. Marketers need to build marketing strategies that shore up weak spots and play to strengths, and there's no one size fits all solution for everyone.

To get around that, marketers need to look at their overall strategy as a composite of strategies, techniques, and tools that target different needs, capabilities and demands of your buyers. From ABM to predictive analytics, your B2B marketing strategy should resemble a patchwork quilt of methods and techniques all knitted together by the needs of your buyers. By keeping the focus on your customers and their path through the buying cycle, you'll be able to evaluate each of the most important marketing trends and techniques and identify how to tie them all together to create a holistic approach to meeting the needs of your unique audience.

The Customer is Always Right: Customer-Centric Marketing

You've probably heard the phrase "The Age of the Customer." It represents the new world that we as B2B marketers must get acclimated to. In this world, the customer is not only always right, they're also at the center of everything. They increasingly determine and control the types of content and interactions that we created for them within our brands. Customers are sending out millions of data points to help marketers understand their needs and desires. So, you know that they want personalisation, and you're doing your best to customise their path through the buying cycle – but are you really giving them what they need? And if not, how can you?

In the new world, 35% of B2B marketers rate customer satisfaction as their top measure of success. (*2016 State of B2B Marketing, Salesforce*). So our first goal is to make sure that we're providing the kind of customer experience that is going to ensure the satisfaction of our buyers. Enter customer-centric marketing. The goal is to guide your buyers to a purchasing decision by offering the tools and resources they need to effectively evaluate and hopefully choose your products or services. You want to educate buyers, but also want to engage them. These buyers are savvy regarding the variety of options available to them when they're interested in a new product or service. They know what the



“35% of B2B marketers rate customer satisfaction as their top measure of success.”

2016 State of B2B Marketing, Salesforce



READY TO BECOME A B2B
MARKETING TRAILBLAZER?

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competition says their strengths are, and they can already spot potential weaknesses. What they're looking for is an experience. So as marketers, the job becomes less about giving them a better understanding of the product and more about giving them a better understanding of who you are as a brand, and how choosing you means they'll have a better buying experience and be more satisfied with their purchase than they would with a competitor.

How do you go about doing that when they haven't tried your product yet? Start by keeping one thing firmly in mind: you're here to offer a solution. So while you're guiding your buyers, look for ways that you can offer solutions to smaller problems and pain-points, or offer information that will educate and empower them. Buyers will move at their own pace through the sales funnel – the job of a marketer is to make sure you are ready to meet a pretty diverse set of needs, problems, issues and pain-points at each different stage of the buying cycle.

The Science of Value Add

65% of high performing marketing teams have built the customer's path through the buying cycle into their strategy. (2016 State of B2B Marketing, Salesforce). They know that the way to get your customer's attention is to keep them at the center of everything you do. Making your customers the center of your marketing efforts starts by understanding why they've come to you in the first place: they've got a problem, you've got a solution. The thing is, to get them to evaluate your solution, you've got to build trust, and trust starts by demonstrating that you always deliver the one thing all buyers are looking for: value.

This is really where you can center your marketing efforts on your customers. For each piece of content, each communication and each interaction that you have with your customers, think about how you can offer them something valuable. This is the same as offering a solution. Say they come to you looking for a piece of restaurant equipment. While they consider whether or not to buy a commercial stove from you, they should also receive helpful tips on the best methods of hiring good waitstaff, or tips and tricks for choosing the freshest produce. They might also be interested in a guide to great table linens. To make sure they get the benefit of this added value, distribute some of your content without requiring them to complete a form. Have sales reps who are in contact with your customers offer guides, tips and tricks that might be helpful to them, and make resources available that are purely aimed at helping them build a better business.

The goal of adding value is to make all of the interactions a customer has with your brand meaningful. You won't be 100% successful every time, but if you're aiming to always offer them something they can use, you're demonstrating your commitment to their success, and that builds trust. At the end of the day, that trust is what you need to move your buyer through the sales funnel and close the deal.



Discovery: Getting to the Bottom of Your Buyers' Pain Points

Learning to understand the issues and problems your buyers face isn't something that happens overnight, at least, not every time. More often than not, you'll find yourself looking for ways to offer your buyers more of what they want, and that's the first step. From surveys to sales calls, getting feedback is a good way to find out what's driving your buyers, and what's driving them crazy. If feedback isn't enough, focus groups, reviews and success communities are all good ways to find out what looms largest in your buyer's minds.

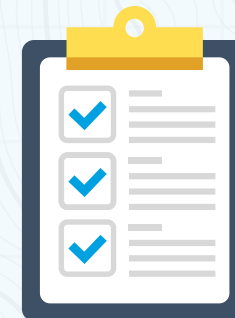
Part of discovering your buyers' pain points is the idea of 'meeting them where they are.' You're not just promoting a vision of a better version of their business, you're also helping them get there. So whether your prospects are established, mature operations or fledgling start-ups, it's important to offer the kind of communications and content that will help them get to where they're going from where they are right now, one step at a time.



Discovery Checklist:

Are you asking your prospects the right questions? Sometimes what you choose to ask says more about how you'll treat them as buyers than anything. You can test-drive these questions in your sales conversations and communications with your buyers as a way to learn more about their needs and goals:

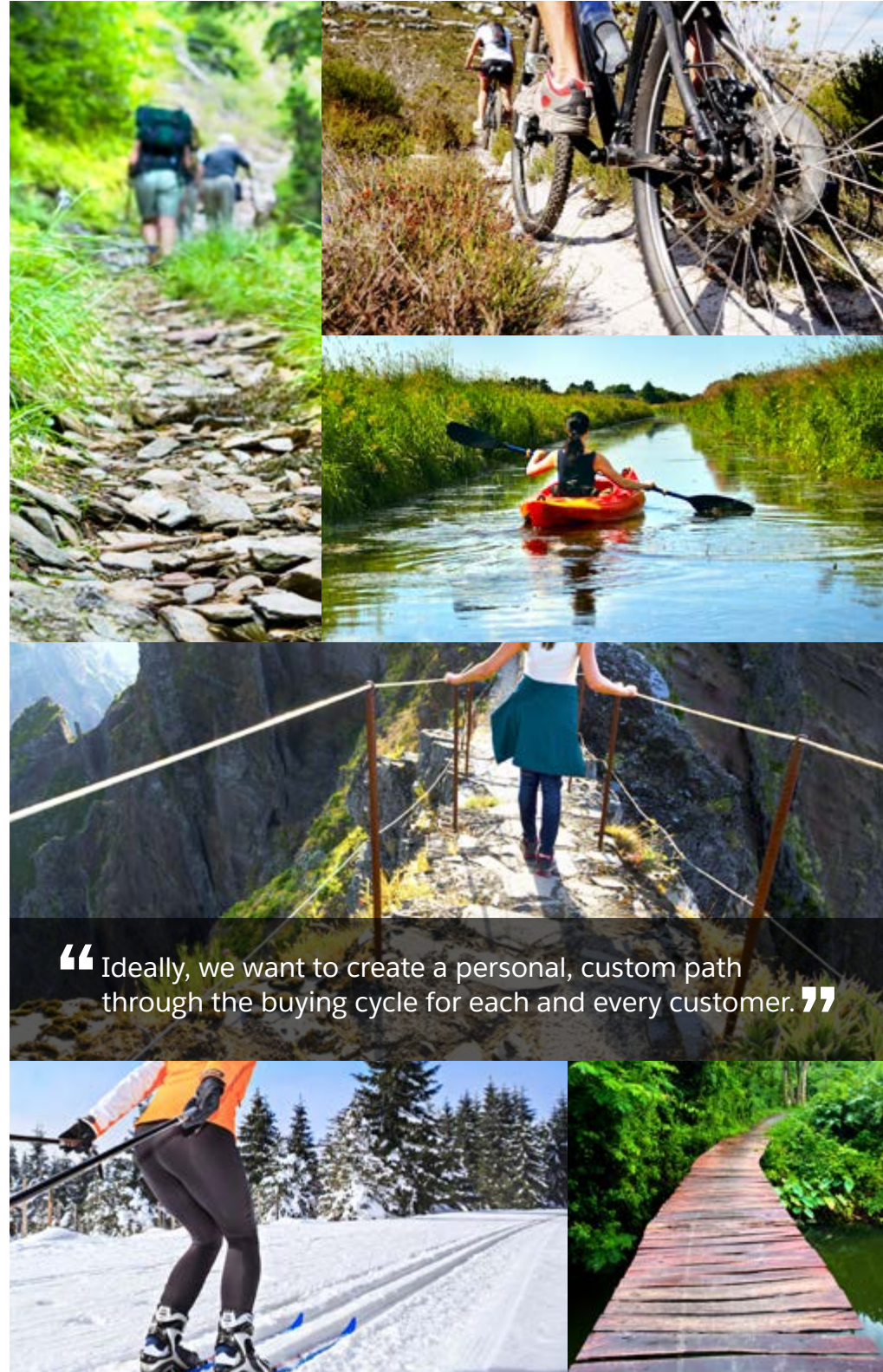
- What do you want most for your business?
- What do you want most for your customers?
- How do you define success?
- What's your current biggest goal?
- Where do you see your business in five years?
- Who do you most admire in your industry?



Amping up the Personalisation

Now that you know what drives your buyers, you can work on giving them what they need. Personalisation isn't just a buzzword, it's quickly become the basis for our marketing-buyer relationships. Ideally, we want to create a personal, custom path through the buying cycle for each and every customer, but doing this at scale is difficult – unless you've got the right technology. Marketing automation features like dynamic content make personalising the content that your buyers see to their point in the sales cycle a lot easier.

Another way to create better personalisation is to look for deeper trends in the engagement of your target audience and create content that will specifically appeal to them. So, if majority of your target market is engaging with webinars, but not infographics, or your content is being shared often but it's not translating into workable leads, you can use these trends to identify where and how to target your marketing efforts. These engagement trends will change depending on your business goals, and natural changes in your target market, but they give a good starting point for creating greater personalisation.



“ Ideally, we want to create a personal, custom path through the buying cycle for each and every customer. ”

Trendspotting:

Where to Find Trends in Prospect Activity

Engagement rates on your emails are one thing, but some trends that can help you better target your customers are harder to spot. Here are four questions to ask that can uncover hidden trends and more deeply personalise your campaigns:

1

How are current customers using your products?

There could be a disconnect between how your product is being used and how you advertise it. There might also be great tips, tricks and workarounds that your some of your current customers have discovered that you'd want to share with prospects earlier in the buying cycle.

2

What are the biggest questions prospects have about your products?

This is a good question to help you uncover whether you messaging is clear and communicating the right ideas to your prospects. Talk to sales to find out what prospects commonly ask about and make sure that the answers they're given are in line with your messaging.

3

How do prospects describe your company?

How prospects see your company overall is a measure of how well you're promoting brand awareness and how clearly you're able to communicate your value proposition.

4

Is there enough web traffic?

Most people start researching a purchase with a search engine, so they should be likely to find your website. If your web traffic is low, you may want to examine your position in search results and look for ways to clarify the messaging on your website. Building rich, helpful, SEO-friendly content will help draw prospects to your site.

The Age of the Customer is not just a trend, it's a growing part of all of our marketing efforts and one that isn't going away. It's at the heart of each of the following techniques, and will continue to play an integral role in how we approach our clients and prospects.

It's Personal: Account-Based Marketing

Account-based marketing or “ABM” is a strategy that laser-focuses your marketing efforts to target an entire account instead of an individual contact. But if you – like most B2B marketers – have a high volume of accounts, it's not going to be easy to create individual campaigns, content and strategies for all of them. ABM isn't a new strategy, but it's recently come to the forefront of B2B marketing because of changes in technology that enable more marketers to implement account-based strategies that work for their business. Part of what makes it so appealing is the way that it shifts the focus so heavily to your buyer, and aligns marketers even more closely with the sales process. For marketers striving to build relationships and personalise the buying experience in the age of the customer, it's hard to beat a strategy that can accomplish that.

So how can you leverage ABM at scale without hiring one-hundred times as many marketers? The answer is simple: you get creative. If you can't implement a full ABM strategy, start small with just a handful of your most important accounts, or a single campaign hyper-focused for a particular persona. The first step is of course, choosing the right accounts or type of accounts to focus on. Typically this strategy is used by companies with enterprise sales, or to target top accounts that would yield a much larger amount of revenue than your average deal.



Whatever the criteria you choose to define which accounts are most important, make sure that the ABM campaign you create fits well within your overall marketing strategy. ABM requires a significant investment of time and resources to do it the right way, and you can't underestimate the level of personalisation that will be required to ensure that you're able to connect with the accounts you've chosen. Plan accordingly by allocating a stable of resources to the effort. Some companies have even found they need to restructure their team.



Get Sales On Board

ABM is all about alignment. It's a true team effort. Your sales team will be integral to creating a successful ABM strategy, even with just a handful of your top accounts. You'll need to agree on which accounts to target, and what your cadence should be in order to create the seamless buying experience that your buyers will be looking for. Look at average conversion times with previous accounts of the same size and type, and work out a plan for how you'll identify engagement and enable your sales team. Lean on your sales team for customer knowledge. ABM is customer-focused marketing times a thousand, so you'll want to make sure that everyone from the c-suite to the sales reps is on board, and understands their role in personalising each account's path through the buying cycle.



Maximise the Benefit of ABM for Your Target Accounts

Doing ABM right means putting in the effort to create a truly personalised campaign. This is a high-touch effort and you'll need to craft your campaigns very carefully. From the type of content and the platforms that you leverage to promote it to the tone and cadence, nothing can sound hollow or mass-produced. To manage this, your discovery process for unearthing pain-points, issues and problems has to be deep and meaningful. Send personalised emails that also offer custom content related to your accounts industry, size or business. Make sure that your sales team is having genuine conversations with each account, and looking for ways that they can offer solutions. For example, if your target account is in the construction industry, your sales and marketing teams might work together to offer an industry-themed direct mailer as part of a larger campaign examining the challenges of sourcing equipment or managing multiple building sites. Looking for ways to offer solutions is a way to center your focus on your buyers. Even if you're only implementing an ABM strategy with a few accounts, it's a part of customer-centric marketing that can offer stronger relationships with all of your clients and prospects.



Personalise Your Content

A successful ABM strategy is content-driven, and goes beyond just using the name of the prospect in an email. To dig deeper and build a better connection to your target accounts, you can personalise your content by:

Business: This may sound rudimentary, but there are a lot of ways to use the business of your buyers as a way to personalise your content. Look at whether your target account is one of the largest employers in their area, or whether they facilitate a unique local business economy (such as the makers of shipping containers in a port city). For example, you could create a thought leadership piece for a shipping container business on how to overcome the difficulties of working with multinational brands.

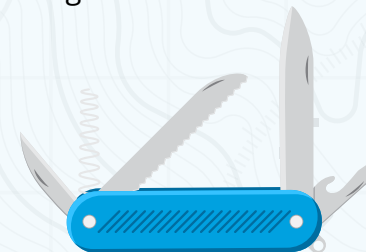
Timeliness: Does your key account have any milestones, such as founding dates and anniversaries, or any annual events? Acknowledging these with congratulations, discounts or relevant content helps you show your prospects that you care about what's important to them. If they are in the news or you know something seasonal about their business, this could be another opportunity.

Goals: Do you know the major goals of your target account and what they hope to accomplish for their business? Knowing some of their biggest goals can give you significant scope when you're considering how to demonstrate your value proposition. Looking for companies who've accomplished similar things, or highlighting ways that you can help them towards achieving a specific goal - such as expanding their verticals or opening new offices overseas, can really demonstrate your commitment to their success.



In Practice: Combining Your Marketing Strategies - ABM and Customer-Centric Marketing

More than likely, no matter which strategies you use, you're going to need to combine them in order to customise them to your buyer's needs. So let's look at how you can leverage customer-centric marketing as part of your ABM strategy. It may help to think of account-based marketing as just one form of customer-centric marketing. The hyper-focus on the customer is what makes this strategy workable, and it's imperative to its success – and it's also the foundation for customer-centric marketing. Combining the two means broadening the scope of your marketing efforts to ensure that things like thought leadership, and customer support are also personalised to the needs of your target account. Your sales team will be in the prime position to help with this because they'll be talking to your prospects every day. Use their feedback to go deeper and make your campaign more targeted.



Marketing to Sales: Sales Enablement 2.0

The age-old battle between marketing and sales has evolved alongside the changing needs of our buyers. We know that we need to work in alignment with our sales teams, but there's more to it than that. Bridging the gap between marketing and sales starts with expanding your marketing team's view of their target audience. While prospects and clients are critical, another audience that marketing can educate and inform is their own sales team. Make a point of working on initiatives to share more of marketing's content with your sales, and don't just make it accessible, but also educate sales reps on how and when to use it. This can help unite your teams around a shared understanding of how to communicate with your prospects. Alignment is a two way street, so don't forget to ask for their feedback on how content is resonating!

Marketers target their ideal buyer, seek to discover pain points and issues that they can offer solutions to, and ultimately help educate and guide those buyers into the sales funnel. You can do the same to enable your sales team. Helping sales reps build a better connection with their prospects and clients, and identifying any pain points that can be addressed through better education around messaging should be one of the goals of your marketing efforts.



Sale Enablement Begins at Home: Ways to Better Enable Your Sales Team

B2B marketers know that to build a streamlined buying cycle for the customer, they've got to be in sync with their sales team.

But how do you go about building relationships internally as well as externally? Here are three ways to better enable your sales team:

1

Understand what's involved in the sales process.

This seems like a given, but it's a critical part of bridging the gap between marketing and sales. Listen in on sales calls and find out what your sales reps are actually saying to their clients and prospects, and whether it aligns to what your marketing is saying. Sometimes marketing messaging is hard to translate into everyday practices. If buyers aren't getting the same message from sales, look for ways to reconcile the two.

2

Share your view of the target audience.

Everything we create as B2B marketers is angled at our ideal buyers, our target audience. But when it comes to connecting with our sales team, it may not always be clear to them why we've chosen to target different segments the way we have. If you're going after CMOs at companies of over 500 employees in size in your marketing efforts, then make sure your sales team understands why and how you're targeting them in the context of your campaigns.

3

Teach your sales teams how to use your content.

Content can be a helpful ice breaker, or it can be the final nudge to get a tough customer to close the deal. Not all content is created equal, and while we know this, does your sales team? Finding out how they use assets like eBooks and blog posts in their daily work with prospects can not only help marketers understand what their sales team's content needs are, but it can also help identify areas where they need to be creating more content.



In Practice: Combining Your Marketing Strategies - Marketing and Sales Alignment and ABM

Marketing and sales alignment plays a big role in successfully deploying an ABM strategy. Without it, it's much harder to create the deep personalisation that ABM requires. Your sales team is also an invaluable source of information on your target account when you're using account-based marketing. A unified approach will look a little different because of the need for a much greater level of personalisation than other marketing methods. The flow of content could look something like this:



Marketing creates extremely targeted content for each of the chosen accounts.



Marketing ensures that sales is educated on how to use the content, as well as marketing's objectives for each asset.



Sales distributes the content via sales reps working with each target account in personalised 1:1 emails to gradually build trust and a stronger relationship with the account.

Magnetic Content: Inbound and Content Marketing

With buyers now fully able to educate themselves to reach a buying decision, reaching them with your marketing efforts often depends on inbound marketing. This is especially true if you have a large potential customer base and you need to reach them at scale. It goes hand-in-hand with the way that buyers approach the buying cycle: they educate themselves by consuming content and familiarising themselves with brands. To connect with them, marketers are having to focus on the customer experience in order to stand out from the competition. Most B2B marketers are already practicing inbound marketing, whether or not they call it that. Blogs, content assets like white papers, social sharing, infographics, research reports, webinars, eNewsletters – all of these can come under the inbound umbrella because they're all about bringing prospects 'in.'



When it comes to creating good inbound content, start with a strong focus on your target audience (it is the age of the customer after all). Every piece of content you create needs to add value – whether in the form of usable information, step-by-step instructions, lists of resources and tips, or conversation pieces that stimulate and add a unique viewpoint. For marketers who've made inbound part of their strategy, this means putting effort into identifying the topics, conversations, and pressing problems that are going to resonate with your target audience. From there, things like SEO and keywords will play a role in whether prospects are finding your content as they move through the buying cycle. One way to enhance your SEO without hurting your value-add is to look for trending topics in your target audience. Creating content around the things that they often search for, or aren't sure about, or the majority are simply talking about will help you appear more easily in search results, and will demonstrate to your customers that you can provide relevant solutions.



Promoting Your Content

How, when, and where you promote your content is one of the most important parts of the content creation process. While it's possible to generate a following without promotion, it's not the easy way, and it's certainly not guaranteed. Most marketers know to use social media, and create mobile-friendly methods of viewing and downloading content, but don't overlook older methods of marketing. Inbound is a popular strategy because it gets results, but older 'traditional' marketing methods like banners, pop-ups and other 'outbound' techniques can help you promote your inbound content. With the limited attention span of today's buyers, making use of any feasible technique to get your messaging across is will give you a higher likelihood of success. Just remember to test, test, test and then hone in on the most effective channels.

“82% say LinkedIn is effective for sharing content and engaging audiences.”

Curata

Each channel that you use to promote your content will have it's own preferred 'language,' style, and tone that makes communicating there either easier or more difficult depending on your business and your target market. It's no secret that most B2B brands prefer LinkedIn for their main social media platform: 82% say it's effective for sharing content and engaging audiences (*Curata*). But, some B2Bs, like General Electric, have found

an amazing amount of success with platforms like Instagram. Whether to go with the more conventional (LinkedIn) or branch out to the more unusual (Instagram, Pinterest) will depend on what your goals are for your social communications. It can be harder to track engagement on social media, and having a profile is not necessarily going to result in more leads. Instead of aiming to use these platforms as a means to an end, use them as a means to communicate, and an opportunity to show off your company's unique value proposition.

The same can be said about blogs. As a channel, a blog is a great vehicle for thought leadership content, but it's also a good place to be less formal and offer more insight into who you are as a brand and what your business is all about. A blog with a solid subscriber base can also funnel top-of-funnel (or even middle and bottom of funnel) prospects into your sales cycle. The posts themselves can promote other types of content that you've created and help drive traffic to gated content.

Channels for Promoting Your Content:

Social Media: Think of social media as a two-way street. It should be a conversation between you and your target audience, so try to avoid simply posting all of your content as if it were a banner ad. Instead, you can place banner advertisements on your key social media platforms and angle your posted content towards entertaining, engaging, or sharing industry know-how. Sharing gated content here works well so long as you're transparent and offer a good mixture of 'free' un-gated content and insightful information. Blog posts, infographics, video and images are going to do the best when promoted this way.



Website: This is your store front, and for many of your prospects, it's the first interaction they'll have with your business, so make sure it's a good one. Even more importantly, make sure you cater to your prospects up front. Keep a section with resources well-updated with everything from thought leadership to "How-To" guides, and personalise it with dynamic CTAs. Make it easy to find 'more information' on products, and create a clear 'flow' that would direct a person who's never heard of your brand or product or has very limited familiarity with it to the right places to educate themselves. Carefully test banner ads and CTAs on your homepages and throughout your site to make sure you're sending the right message.

Email Marketing: Your email marketing campaigns are a good way to promote your content to your opted-in subscribers. A combination of both eNewsletters and personalised 1:1 messages with links to useful or helpful content can give your prospects and clients an easy way to find relevant information. The trick here is to make sure that you're personalising these emails as deeply as you can.

Content Sharing Widgets: Outbrain and Taboola are two examples of webpage widgets that link different pieces of content to one another based on topic. Tools like these change the way that your target audience interacts with your content by offering 'related' content from all over the internet. Say your business sells medical equipment. A prospect browsing a blog on the medical industry, might also see suggested content from your website underneath. The beauty of this is that any related piece of content becomes a platform for advertising your own.

In Practice: Combining Your Marketing Strategies - Inbound Marketing and Marketing and Sales Alignment

Inbound marketing is all about pulling prospects into your sales funnel without overtly pitching your product. Marketing and sales alignment comes in where identifying and qualifying leads is concerned. By making sure that both teams are in agreement on the characteristics of the target audience and ideal buyer, marketing's lead generation strategies become more effective. And with a clear understanding of when and how to qualify marketing-sourced leads, your sales team will be able to keep their pipeline full.



Clever Content: Interactive Media

Interactive media is a growing trend that's combining content and design to offer your clients and prospects a even more engaging experience. It includes content such as quizzes and video, as well as gameification. The great thing about interactive media is that while it can be resource intensive, it's often a powerful way to communicate with your clients and prospects, and can have a longer shelf-life than other types of content. If you're just starting out with interactive forms of content, a good 'first step' is video. Creating videos such as demos and animated shorts can take complex information about products, services or dense technical concepts and make them much more digestible.



You can mix interactive content and more traditional forms of content such as whitepapers and blogs. This kind of blend can look like a selection of content suggestions after prospects take a quiz, or embedding a link to your whitepaper (or the whitepaper itself) into a dedicated microsite with video and other types of content. You can also use content like quizzes to help your clients and prospects segment themselves as they interact with your website. For example, if you're in the financial services sector and you're looking to target larger firms, you might offer a quiz that requires companies to choose their company size or revenue as one of the data points. You could then offer content based on the outcome, and offer prospects who've taken the quiz the opportunity to sign up for a customised eNewsletter.

Promoting Your Interactive Content

Interactive content covers a broad range of different types of content and platforms, and it's an area that lends itself well to social media and sharing. As you create it, emphasising its shareable nature will help encourage your prospects to repost, forward and tag others, expanding your audience. Adding social-sharing buttons is another way to create a kind of 'feedback' loop between your brand and your prospects and clients. Use them to make it easy to share quiz results, and to repost video and animation clips on networks like LinkedIn and Twitter. There are also tools like Bitly, and Click-to-Tweet that you can use to encourage prospects to share your content.



In Practice: Combining Your Marketing Strategies - Inbound Marketing and Interactive Media

Interactive media works well as part of an inbound marketing strategy. Videos are an especially powerful form of communication, and they're nearly ubiquitous. 51.9% of marketing professionals say that video is the type of content with the best ROI, so when looking for ways to expand your library of inbound content, video is a valuable tool.

Filling The Pipeline: Email Marketing and Lead Nurturing

Email marketing is still the backbone of B2B marketing - email is 40 times more effective at acquiring new customers than Facebook or Twitter (*McKinsey*). That said, while people expect email, they don't always want to engage with it. Still, it remains one of the most effective ways to personalise your communications with clients and prospects. The personalisation starts with how you segment your list. We all use the same general methods for segmenting by location, or by job title and function or company size, but if you want to target your prospects more deeply, it may also be worth segmenting by engagement, essentially listening to what your prospects are telling you about their interests. One way to this is by lead nurturing.



“Nurtured leads make 47% larger purchases than non-nurtured leads.”

Annuitas Group

Lead nurturing works a bit like a funnel in the sense that as you move prospects from one nurturing campaign to another, you are in fact, segmenting your list down into more detailed categories like ‘prospects who engaged with the last email send’, or ‘prospects who have clicked a link through to a landing page about topic A vs. topic B.’ You can also apply the principles of lead nurturing to other characteristics, such as current clients who have downloaded white papers, or prospects who have participated in webinars. Each of these segments creates an opportunity to speak directly to the experience of your clients and prospects. In the emails you send to these groups as you nurture them, you can use the information you have to demonstrate your understanding of their needs. It's no surprise then that nurtured leads make 47% larger purchases than non-nurtured leads. (*Annuitas Group*)

The other great thing about lead nurturing is that you don't have to guess what will work best for your prospects. As they move through the nurturing campaigns, they'll self-segment, and if you're using a marketing automation solution you don't even have to manually move them from one nurturing campaign to another. Instead, you can build out your campaign ahead of time and funnel prospects into new campaigns automatically.

“In 90% of emails, the Call to Action “more info” does better than CTAs like “try me now” or “buy now.” ”

Admitter Agency

Never Underestimate the Value of Good Content

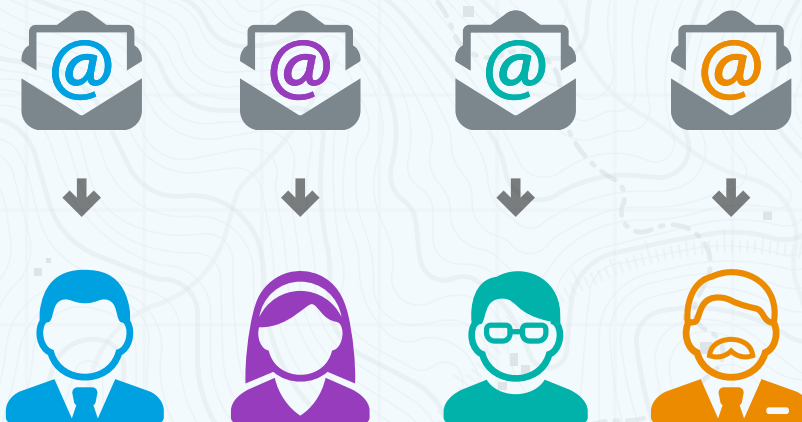
According to emailmonday: “Analysis of the campaigns of B2B email marketing agency Admitter shows that in 90% of emails, the Call to Action “more info” does better than CTAs like “try me now” or “buy now.” We’re bombarded every day by thousands of email messages. Instead of just offering a product or deal, offering your prospects tangible information they can use or share or educate themselves with is much more likely to get their attention. Good content has become the deciding factor when it comes to whether or not your emails drive engagement within your target audience. Give buyers what they want by keeping value-add firmly at the front of your mind with each and every email and eNewsletter.

There’s more to good content than just added value however. Buyers respond to quality content that is also relevant to their interests. Mapping the content you create around each of your major nurturing campaigns can help you ensure that you have targeted content on hand to send out to clients and prospects.



In Practice: Combining Your Marketing Strategies - Email and Inbound Marketing

Inbound marketing gives you a great opportunity to send custom, targeted messages to your list. You can create content for each of the unique stages of your sales funnel, or for each nurture campaign, based on the needs of that segment. Distilling larger assets like eBooks and whitepapers down into blog posts, infographics, lists and helpful statistics. These smaller pieces of content can be more easily customised for your segments and then sent out as 1:1 emails in your nurturing campaigns.



Smarter Marketing: Data Intelligence and Predictive Analytics

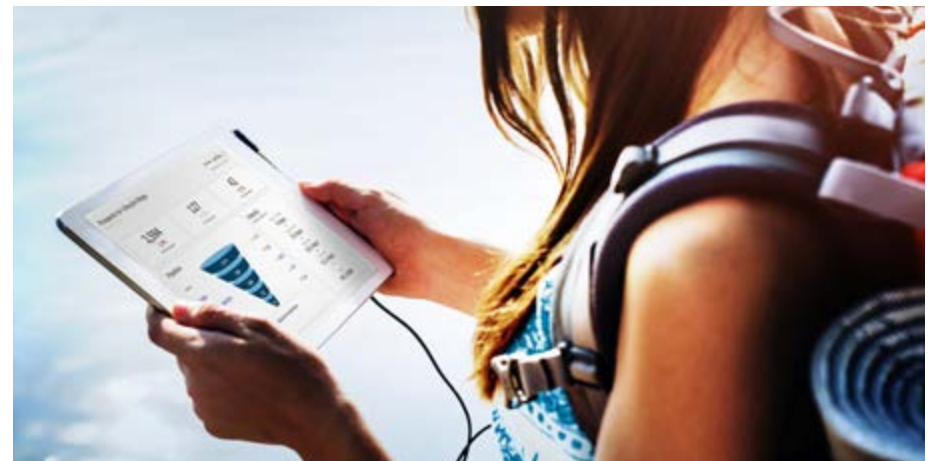
Today everything is smarter... houses, cars, phones, wallets – but is your marketing? Smart marketing involves a specialised kind of intelligence: the kind you get from your data. Marketers know they need data analytics, but it's more than just being able to track the performance of campaigns. Analytics is the language of the buyer. It's critical insights into what drives their behaviour and purchasing decisions, and ultimately, what you as a marketer need to do to reach them. Tools like marketing automation, your CRM and data analytics software are also getting smarter. Using the massive amount of data that marketers already have, these tools will be able to mine the data for trends and insights and 'learn' which types of buyers need which types of marketing and sales relationships. With data intelligence, marketers can provide real value to their clients and prospects. They can better understand and meet their needs, and eventually even predict them.

Marketers have data, and lots of it. Relatively few aren't analysing or tracking it at all, but there is a difference between data analytics and data intelligence. The former is what we know: open rates, clicks, likes, shares and downloads. But data intelligence is less about determining whether your buyers are engaged and more about determining how to engage them next. True data intelligence gives marketers a three dimensional picture of each unique buyer by charting their position relative to the target audience, and relative to current customers. It's the difference between looking at an image of a sphere and holding one in your hand.

What makes up data intelligence

What we realise as we continue to use data analytics is that it only gives us one half of the story, and data intelligence is required to get the whole thing. Data intelligence is both tangible and not – that is to say, it's not a software or a tool, but it can come from software and tools. It's more the ability to examine and cross examine your data to draw the right kind of insights, and tools and software with features like predictive analytics can give you access to it.

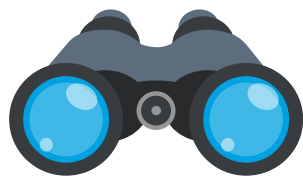
If you're wondering how to implement data intelligence as part of your strategy, the first place to look is at your data. Like any B2B marketer, you'll have a lot of it. A predictive analytics tool would take this data and automatically mine for trends and insights that can direct your overall marketing efforts as well as individual campaigns. That's true power of data intelligence: it comes from the vast collection of data we already have, and with each transaction, communication and interaction, our ability to better understand and anticipate our buyer's actions grows.



Predictive Analytics

Trends. It used to only mean things like clothing styles and attitudes, but in the smarter world we now live in, trends have begun to mean much more. Trends in your data can be good or bad depending on the goals you've set, but either way, understanding these trends and knowing how to apply them to your marketing efforts is becoming increasingly important. One of the goals of data intelligence is to predict these trends, and give marketers the insights they need to intelligently adapt their marketing efforts to shifts in buyer behaviour before those shifts occur.

Predictive analytics will dig into your existing data looking for trends and offering insight into what deals are likely to close and what you'll need to do to make sure they do, and what actions your prospects are likely to take based on where they are in your sales cycle. It can then auto-assign a score to particular leads and opportunities, so that you and your sales team know at-a-glance which of your leads to follow up with first. This is smart marketing at its finest, because for example, once you know that it takes, on average, four marketing touches for a prospects to engage successfully with a sales rep, or that buyers who watch your demos are more likely to take another hand-raising action, you can adjust your marketing strategy to better engage prospects from the outset.



In Practice: Combining Your Marketing Strategies - Data Intelligence and Email Marketing

Picture this: not only does your marketing automation platform alert each of your sales reps to accounts that they need to follow up with, but it also reminds them of what they'll need to say to get that account to close. Predictive analytics can take personalising your 1:1 communications to a whole new level. You'll not only know your prospect's needs, but also what your sales team will need in order to make sure that prospect becomes a client. Imagine not having to guess whether the content that goes out in your emails is going to resonate, or knowing that the subscribers to your eNewsletter are also more likely to engage with sales within the next few weeks.



Multi-platform Marketing: The Internet of Things and Customer Evangelism

With the advancement of technology, being connected via the 'digital,' wi-fi, and our gadgets is becoming a larger part of our every day life. The internet used to end when you switched off your computer, but now, when your phone rings, so does your watch, and when you're jogging your fitness tracker is updating your stats on your computer. The smart world we live in just keeps getting smarter, and our connectivity grows with it. It's the Internet of Things, and learning how our products and services and our connection to our prospects and clients fits into this connected web is critical to helping us understand our buyers. This is unprecedented access to a whole new kind of data, live and in the moment. Now when we think of multi-platform marketing, we can start to understand the possibilities that includes. From mobile, to social to web and now to simply, a digital connection.

Offering our buyers a way to connect with the Internet of Things can be as simple as sending an email to notify a buyer of opportunities to correct issues or problems that they might be having – before they log a help request. B2B marketing lends itself well to this kind of connectivity, because for so many businesses the relationship between marketers and prospects doesn't end when they make a purchase.



Where Automation Fits Into The Internet Of Things

Whether you're alerting a customer that you've sent them a new filter because the old one will need changing now, or automatically updating the online how-to guides they download, automation is one of the strongest ways to connect to your buyers through the Internet of Things. It allows you to build 1:1 relationships with thousands of buyers at once, and gives you a manageable method of reaching your customers before they realise that they need to reach you. It also gives you super powers when it comes to targeting your marketing efforts. Imagine that you are a distributor of smart, connected fitness equipment that sells to gyms and fitness clubs. By tracking how gym members are using your equipment, you can make better recommendations to your customer about how many new machines they might need to purchase. You can also reach the gym's customers directly and provide added value with custom content and workout reports based on their activity.



How Greater Connectivity Can Spark Evangelism

Customer evangelists are every B2B marketer's dream. The difficult thing is how to encourage your customers to be your biggest fans. With the growing connectivity of the internet of things, buyers want a space to connect with one another and share their experiences with your brand. Peer reviews have a huge influence on the buying cycle, and prospects want to know what your current clients experiences were like to shape their own decisions. While forums, user groups, and success communities can be created and led by clients for clients, you can also create these spaces to allow your current clients and prospects to connect.



In Practice: Combining Your Marketing Strategies - IOT, Customer Evangelism and Data Intelligence

The Internet of Things is giving marketers access to more real-time data than ever before, and it's only going to increase proportionately. There's a fine line to walk here between being able to pre-empt your customers needs and wants, and being too intrusive. B2B marketers can successfully navigate this balance with data intelligence. It will become easier to make decisions about how and when to market to clients and prospects because marketers will have a much better understanding of how different prospects and clients interact with our content and messaging. The ability to customise more deeply than we could otherwise will allow us to connect with prospects the right way from the beginning.



Conclusion

There will always be important new trends and techniques emerging in the B2B marketing industry, but thinking of your marketing strategy as a single, static, unchanging thing can limit your creativity. The best way to reach your clients and prospects is to adapt your strategy to fit their unique needs, no matter which marketing methods you choose to use. Change is the only constant, and as your buyers change and their needs and focuses shift, so should your marketing strategy.

Choose the methods that work best for your unique clients and prospects, and when in doubt, keeping them at the center of your marketing efforts can help guide you to the right combination of tactics to reach and resonate with your target audience.





Reimagine Engagement: Smart. Powerful. Connected.

Your customers are smarter, more capable, and better-informed than ever before. This new breed of consumer demands a better breed of marketing, and the Pardot platform has the capabilities to get you there.

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