

Now That Content
Marketing Reigns

What's Next in Your Marketing Investment?



Introduction

The development of a reliable and measurable marketing plan is the foundation for growth in a company. For many B2B marketing directors, the challenge is execution. Too often a plan is not prioritized and is left untouched for weeks or months. Effective execution of a marketing plan requires daily interaction with objectives and strategies. Using an integrated approach to deliver the brand message to the right audience at the right time is key to success.

This white paper focuses on one element of the marketing plan: content marketing. It covers what should go into a high-functioning content marketing strategy. It will also discuss identifying the target audience, the needs of the audience and how the content is distributed to the audience.

According to the Content Marketing Institute, organizations that develop a content marketing strategy are more likely to consider themselves effective content marketers. They experience fewer challenges and

are able to justify their expenditures toward content marketing.

In fact, 88 percent of B2B marketers are engaged in content marketing according to Content Marketing Institute's Report: B2B Content Marketing 2016: Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends – North America. Content marketing has become the king of advertising. It is the foundation of a solid marketing strategy and is crucial to marketing efforts across the board.

Current marketing strategies commonly include the generation of content in the form of blogs, white papers, videos, images and infographics, to name a few. The distribution of this content is conducted through carefully chosen channels. The form of distribution for content is a critical part of any marketing plan. Even if a company creates high-quality content, a poor understanding of appropriate distribution channels will result in a failure of the marketing plan.



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The Strategy Has to Support the Goal

A well-built strategy includes a strong argument for why the organization is creating content. It accounts for risks and has a well-developed picture of what success looks like during and at the end of the campaign. The strategy includes a business plan that addresses goals, value position and details about the business model. All obstacles are identified and opportunities revealed.

The general purpose of a marketing plan is to positively impact the company's bottom line and often more specifically, increase sales. Many content marketing plans successfully create informative, creative content that is engaging for the reader but falls short of achieving these goals. Too many plans fail to demonstrate the return on investment (ROI) by converting prospects to customers. The marketing plan must not only create entertaining content, but also serve as a way to communicate information about the company's brand to the right people at the right time. Every piece of content received by the target audience should tell a uniform story about the brand, communicating what is unique and setting the brand apart from its competitors.

The content marketing strategy has to include a larger story that informs the target audience about the brand. This must be an engaging brand story that helps to create a connection between the brand and the reader. The brand story should be plainly laid out so that decision-makers can clearly understand the value proposition and how the brand will improve their business.



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Know Who Your Target Audience Is, What They Want and When They Want It

Before content can be produced, the target audience must be identified. Demographic profiles are insufficient in helping to uncover their motivations for buying or detailed buying behavior patterns. It's important to establish an exact definition of a "best client" during the planning stages.

Analysis of a target audience should determine the size of the potential client's company, their job functions and the various levels of seniority of those that will need to be contacted during the marketing process. This is important because organizations run the risk of wasting time and money contacting the wrong individuals.

Once the target audience is identified, the content must be customized to that audience, their business needs and expectations, and delivered through preferred channels. Your brand credibility is demonstrated not only by the content you produce, but also by ensuring it gets to the right person at the right time.

Each content item should answer a specific question, problem or challenge that the recipient is encountering. For instance, an IT director or CIO is most interested in the latest technological developments, while a CFO will appreciate content focusing on improving their return on investment.

Next, the marketing team has to create a distribution plan. This entails an analysis of the best ways to deliver content into the hands of the target audience. Distribution channels include traditional forms, such as direct mail, telemarketing and advertising, and newer forms, such as social media and email campaigns.



Identifying the Right Distribution Channel Mix is Crucial to Your Success

Selecting the best distribution channels plays a crucial role in the successful execution of a marketing plan. Not enough B2B marketers invest time and resources to identify the best mix in an effort to reach their goals. Different distribution channels serve different connection points. Only when content reaches the target audience can you expect the increased sales results you want.

Social media is a fast-growing and efficient way for B2B marketers to reach a large audience and build a following. LinkedIn, for instance, offers a social media platform that is geared toward business interactions and serves as a source of information and contacts for professionals. Users of LinkedIn are on the site specifically to make business connections, collaborate and seek out solutions, so it is an ideal vehicle for content distribution.

Effective distribution channels for B2B marketing also include email as a way to ensure content reaches the right audience. Content is tailored to the recipient, and the response to the email is easily measured through the monitoring of click-throughs to the sender's website, landing pages, social channels, forums and more.

Twitter is another site that offers unique potential for content distribution. The site's design force users to create punchy, powerful messages that drive their point directly to their target audience in 140 characters or less. It's an ideal place to link to a blog or other content items.

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Effective distribution includes more than one channel, and marketers are encouraged to include proactive channels in order to give content heightened impact. Two popular distribution channels include paid and earned content distribution. Using the advertorial approach, marketers can utilize companies like aNEWSme or OneSpot to pay for content distribution. Earned content distribution involves reaching out to the media for coverage. Marketers who are skilled at nurturing relationships with editors and reporters can find their content being used free of charge.

Distribution channels offer a variety of ways to connect content with the target audience; however, companies need to be careful in how they distribute their content and avoid becoming just one more bit of online noise. Online channels of distribution have expanded greatly. Consider that in 2000, there were only eight million sites on the Internet. Today there are closer to three-quarters of a billion.

Staying abreast of the various techniques used by search engines can help improve how web-based content is discovered. In fact, Google's algorithms dictate that marketers need to be producing as much quality content as possible; however, staying

up-to-date with search engine optimization doesn't necessarily address the distribution problem that so many B2B marketers encounter.

It's not uncommon for companies to follow trends, simply creating content, loading it on a website and linking it to social media. While they may be able to check a box saying that content was created and distributed, it may never lead to any additional visits to their website or convert any member of their audience to a customer. This type of behavior may allow a company to say that they are fulfilling the requirements of a content marketing strategy, but they will also be forced to acknowledge that their efforts were wasted when they measure their sales growth.

Many companies are certainly identifying valuable ways to include new techniques involving social media and other online channels into their strategies, but there are advantages to including more traditional, proactive distribution choices. One such choice is telemarketing. With so much marketing going through online channels, there can be a lot of clutter. Telemarketing is an effective strategy to help the target audience cut through the online mess and connect with a company.

Telemarketing is an excellent way to add a proactive approach to an integrated distribution strategy. It continues to provide the type of interaction through which trust is developed and relationships are built.



Differentiation: How to Stand Apart from the Crowd

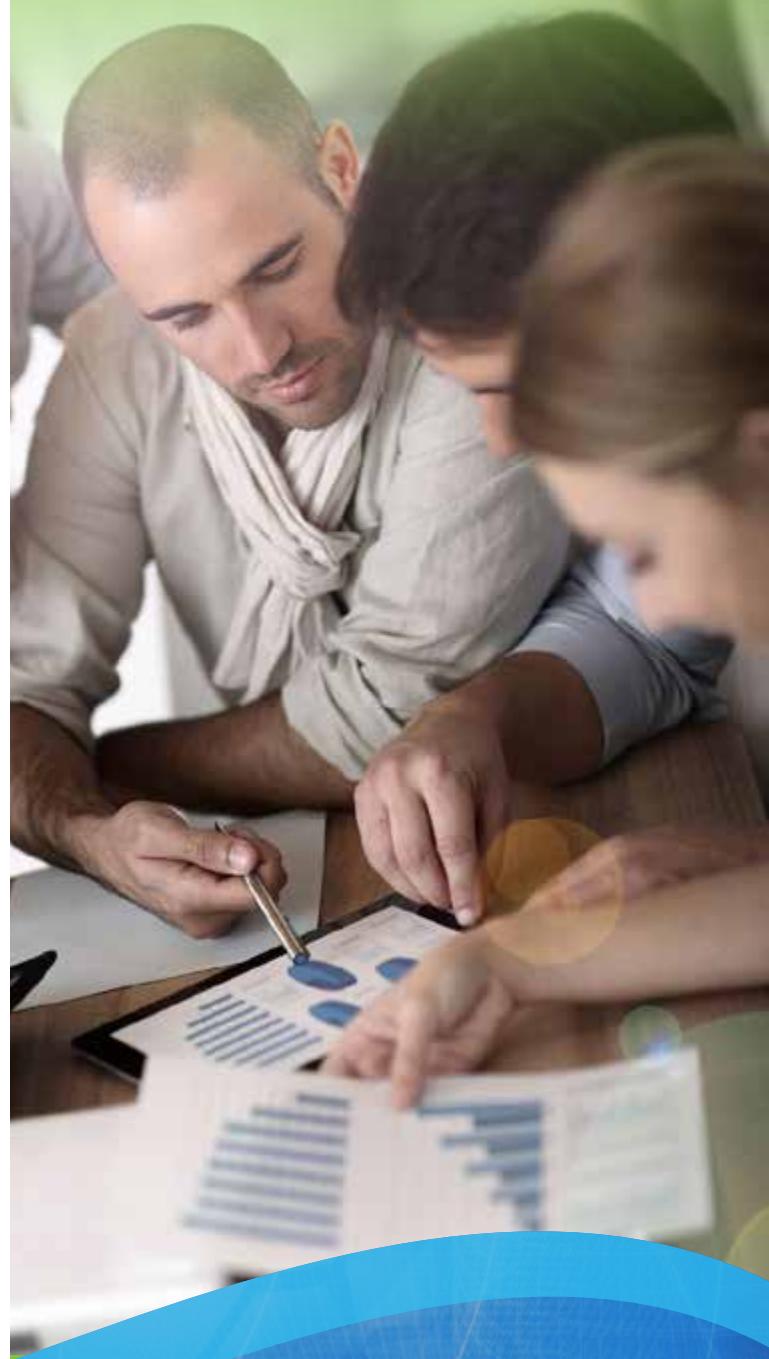
Differentiation starts with quality content and ends with targeted distribution. Quality content will grab the attention of the target audience and provide valuable discussion that establishes the company as a reliable source for information. The content also should be personalized if it's going to stand out from the crowd. Some content marketing techniques involve creating interactive experiences that encourage engagement. Engagement proves to clients and potential clients that they are valued by the organization.

Diversifying the channels through which the target audience is impacted will help get more content in front of more people. While the top channels involve various social media sites, smart B2B marketers are also using e-newsletters, the company website, blogs, events, case studies, videos and telemarketing to get content in front of more people.

Telemarketing is a distribution channel that allows a company to set itself apart. While a company may be able to post a white paper and then link it to a direct email campaign, decision-makers are flooded with these types of communications. Including telemarketing in an integrated distribution plan adds a personal, proactive element that cannot be achieved in an email or social media update.

Telemarketing allows a company to distribute content based on a prospect's or client's specific business needs, as well as follow up with their target audience to determine whether the content is being received and to invite the potential customer to ask questions or take action that leads to a sale. During the conversation, the telemarketer also gathers critical information about the potential customer's interest in the company and the likelihood that they will convert to a paying client.

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The Importance of the Multi-Channel Approach

One cannot complete an explanation of distribution without including a discussion of multi-channel distribution. Many B2B marketers utilize a multi-channel approach as an effective way to connect with their target audience. It involves consistently spreading content across digital and non-digital channels.

B2B buyers are multi-channel customers. They use a variety of touch points to find the vendors with the right solutions.

According to Forrester Research, B2B buyers research the products and services they want through online channels and expect all the content related to the products and services to be consistent across channels. In fact, Forrester's research highlights that two-thirds of B2B companies say their multi-channel customers have higher lifetime values than other customers.

Telemarketing fits soundly in this strategy as it provides a tangible communications platform that decision-makers in the B2B arena have come to appreciate. In fact, they look to telemarketers to keep them up-to-date on the products and services that are driving their industry.

Telemarketing is a proactive channel that can provide the type of interpersonal communication that leads to a better understanding of the audience's wants and needs. One of the strengths of a proactive channel



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like telemarketing is that it allows organizations to get to know their target audience in ways that other channels don't offer. Once the brand story and credibility have been established, relevant targets will retain that information and know where to go when products or services are needed.

Integration is a powerful tool for marketers to use because it's equally important to B2B buyers. With more importance being placed on the multi-channel approach, B2B marketers need to further integrate sales channels with consistency in the outgoing message. Furthermore, B2B buyers are now entering the buy cycle at various stages, which means marketers need to be able to nurture relationships at multiple levels.

The popularity of multi-channel marketing requires multiple touch points with clients and more personalization in communications, which is why telemarketing is so important to maintain long-term buyer relationships.

Developing the Distribution Strategy

Developing a distribution strategy and measuring it as progression occurs is important. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are established by delving into the goals of the campaign; however, each goal must be tracked if it's going to be measured, which requires thorough documentation.

B2B marketers must also develop a distribution calendar, which outlines when and where content will be distributed. Outside of the standard dates on the annual calendar that relate to holidays and other important dates, a clear process has to be defined based on where a prospect was engaged in the buy cycle. Deciding what content he/she receives based on their interest and needs is equally important.

The distribution strategy should involve multiple channels, including a mix of indirect and more proactive techniques. Telemarketing is a proactive, traditional choice that offers a set of unique benefits to an integrated approach. No other channel offers the level of flexibility to make a change if or when it is needed. With telemarketing, you can react to new realities in a matter of minutes. No other channel is going to be as measurable or have a similar return on investment.

Telemarketing can be utilized to distribute information to the target audience, even those who aren't ready to enter the buy cycle.

Developing an integrated distribution plan requires careful attention to the mix of marketing channels, as well as the timing of content distribution. For instance, a company using an integrated approach might choose to combine email marketing with telemarketing for a uniquely tailored and personalized marketing message. The company would send out an email to a group of IT directors with the goal of directing the audience to a blog on the website.

In this example, the blog should discuss a specific solution to a challenge common for IT departments, such as the benefit of integrating customer relationship management software with their back office financial software.

Following the distribution of the email with the link to the content, telemarketing can be an effective tool for measuring the response to the blog. Telemarketing specialists can gather critical information, finding out whether the blog presented a helpful solution, identifying potential customers that may be ready to evaluate and purchase software and learning what types of other challenges IT directors are facing.

The value in using telemarketing is not only its ability to directly convey content, but also its ability to gain information from potential clients on what they like or dislike about the current product or service offerings. This becomes actionable data that can be passed across departments.



Adding the Human Touch

Telemarketing provides a unique opportunity to build trust between a company and a potential customer. The decision-maker at a potential customer site is able to ask questions and interact in a way that is impossible within other distribution channels. In addition, the warmth and camaraderie that occurs in a telemarketing conversation adds to the appeal of a company's brand message and personalizes the experience for the potential customer.

Great marketing outreach relies on the human touch. B2B buyers rely on the information they gain from telemarketers to justify their purchases. While decision-makers are often among the leaders in their organizations, they are also held accountable for purchases.

The human touch found in telemarketing interaction provides B2B buyers with the assurances they need to

make purchases without buyer's remorse or other repercussions. Telemarketers answer questions and nurture leads into the buy cycle. When the time is right, the buyers will make their move.

The human touch is also valuable when used to follow up on purchases. A telemarketer can set a calendar to make contact with the buyer to make sure the order came as advertised and that the product serves the purpose for which it was bought. This is the type of interaction that lends itself to sustained relationships, helps with up-selling and cross-selling, improves buyer loyalty and increases customer retention.

Even if a potential customer has not yet purchased from the B2B seller, integrating telemarketing into a content marketing strategy allows for an opportunity to follow up on content. A telemarketer can call the decision-maker and let them know, for instance, that a new white paper has been posted online or that a particular blog is receiving a lot of attention on the website.

Conclusion

Organizations now have more choices in how they distribute their content than ever before. While some alternatives offer a low-cost method of reaching out to masses of potential buyers, none are more effective than telemarketing in being proactive, providing the human touch, nurturing leads and pulling more decision-makers into the buy cycle.

Outsourcing telemarketing services is a valuable option for B2B companies that do not have in-house telemarketing specialists. Telemarketing requires a specific set of skills and training, and companies often find that outsourcing this area of marketing allows them to focus more on their brand message, content development and measurement of KPIs. Outsourced telemarketing is easily scalable and provides a valuable service for companies focused on an integrated marketing approach.

Blue Valley Telemarketing is a company that excels at developing and executing content distribution campaigns for clients who see an excellent return on their investment time and again. Blue Valley offers telemarketing as a valuable component to companies' integrated marketing plans, providing a personalized human touch to the connection with the target audience. Contact Blue Valley today for more information about content marketing distribution campaigns.



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