



WHITE PAPER

Marketing Road Map: What Happens Next?

Six Drivers Shaping The
Next Phase of B-to-B Marketing



Goldstein Group Communications

30500 Solon Industrial Parkway, Solon, Ohio 44139

440-914-4700 • www.ggcomm.com

Marketing Road Map: What Happens Next?



Six Drivers Shaping The Next Phase of B-to-B Marketing

The idea that marketing is shifting from traditional to online methods is so well-documented now that it's become an inadequate and even incomplete explanation for what's taking place in marketing today. In developing an approach for marketing going forward, there are several structural factors Goldstein Group is applying to its B-to-B marketing programs:

1. As the economy recovers, B-to-B marketing will not simply return to functioning as it did in 2008. It has changed structurally and permanently. Things will not "get back to normal."
2. The structure of trade media that has existed for 60+ years is irrevocably splintering. Once the dominant path to customer communications, it has now been replaced by more than a dozen other new avenues.
3. The few media outlets that survive will be stronger, not weaker, and they will remain a viable partner for gaining access to customers and prospects, although in new ways.
4. Marketing is math. The role of analytics and ROI performance tracking will assume a greater priority for the successful B-to-B marketer, and anything created will have metrics and analytics attached to it that measure its impact. Google is driving this movement, as the adoption of Google Analytics takes hold and spreads to dozens of other marketing automation and analysis platforms.
5. The philosophy of mass lead generation and low cost-per-lead programs will be replaced by "engagement." Companies will use technology more effectively to target and cultivate relationships with customers and prospects in ways that don't generate a lead, but foster relationships and experiences with individuals. There will be some high-tech/high-touch moments connected to this, which explains the growth of video and face-to-face event marketing in the past 12-18 months. Content, particularly for technical companies, will be critical for creating meaningful engagements.
6. The velocity of marketing will increase. It will be faster to build a brand, as well as easier to harm it. The risks in marketing for B-to-B companies have increased along with the greater transparency inside companies that new social media networks have created.
(Example: Twitter post on 4-30-10 from rickyg_sco – "Woohoo no longer an Acme employee)

This is how we see these drivers shaping marketing in the near term:

Social Media 2.0

The technology consulting firm Aberdeen made an interesting point recently on social media: "As control of a company's marketing messages – indeed its very brand image – continues to migrate from traditional media to social media, it has become imperative that companies not only pay close attention to how they are perceived in online conversations but that they also take appropriate action, based on the insights they glean."

The operative word? Control. It's no exaggeration to say that companies no longer can maintain exclusive control over their message and brand. This is especially true in this online world where users generate so much of the content we read.

While this is certainly the case today in consumer marketing, the lack of control in B-to-B marketing is fast approaching. Remember the basic rule of the Internet: whatever happens first in B-to-C (business to consumer) eventually migrates to B-to-B. As we've seen with tools both big (ecommerce) and small (Live Chat), this rule drives much of how companies approach web strategy and development within B-to-B.

This is already occurring in social media. Until now, the goal for most B-to-B marketers has been just to enter social networking and begin to control the dialogue, going forward the question of "how many people follow your company on Twitter" will evolve to a simple imperative:

- ***How do I LEVERAGE and apply my social media presence?***

Social media experts are beginning to hold social media to a higher standard: use it to engage customers (to deepen relationships), and use it to create relationships with customers and groups you're targeting. That latter goal is far more sales-driven than in the past, and it's only natural that social media has finally arrived with a sales imperative.

In addition, we'll see a higher integration with social media tools as they move further into customer support functions, augmenting or replacing in many cases the User Forum/Discussion Forum environment many companies use. This also is driven from the consumer world. As major marketers such as Best Buy and Nike monitor Twitter for negative posts and consumer complaints in order to respond directly and immediately, b-to-b companies will also create customer support extensions into Twitter and Facebook as the populations and traffic for those two networks in particular continue to explode.

(Interesting fact: Facebook traffic actually PASSED Google in March 2010 for the first time in the U. S.: <http://www.imediconnection.com/content/26208.asp>)

None of this changes the underlying purpose of social media:

- Shape and extend your brand proactively by creating content for social media environments; this content should build credibility in the company as well as in your staff expertise
- Connect to customers and prospects on a deeper level by fostering two-way experiences
- Replace the splintering trade media market by creating a network of our own that we can reach out to and connect with

So, going forward, social media will continue to assume higher priority for branding and messaging within b-to-b companies. New tools will be developed that improve social media's ROI in sales and customer service, as well as the awareness-building objective that drive the earliest implementations of social media.

Content as Competitive Advantage

The depth, quality and relevance of content will assume a far greater role in positioning a company going forward, particularly in technology marketing. There are three factors driving this:

- The customer's most precious commodity has always been time, or more specifically the lack of time. If I'm a busy engineer with more projects than I can handle, I'll be only too happy to concentrate my time just on those who provide content that "helps me do my job better." Tell me what I need to know, he/she will say. Make me more productive. Solve my problems in less time. Provide me the right answer in less time. And make that all easier for me to uncover.
- This time-crunch is exacerbated by the wild proliferation of online content, bloggers and low-quality publishers. The massive flow of information is overwhelming to us all and will create a backlash of limitation. We're already seeing open rates of emails, newsletters and online magazines crashing. People will opt out of receiving information that is marginal, and migrate to those companies and publishers that collect, compile, and create content of such high quality and relevance that it makes good use of their time.
- In the near-term, though, the splintering of media will be both a positive and negative for marketers. It will be positive in that there will be more places to publish good quality content. It will be a negative in that there will be so many places it will be harder to achieve "the big hit," the big impact you get with a placement that is seen by all.

Handbooks, webcasts, videos, white papers, narrated PowerPoints, application notes – these are all important levers in creating quality content. Our challenge is to help these proven tools evolve to be more engaging, more relevant. Can we incorporate user-generated content into our online environments in ways that enhance the experience, improve the content, and deepen the engagement? How can we get customers to provide application notes and videos? Can we create user-generated handbooks, for example?

The most famous analogy of this comes from the consumer world, of course. The value for an iPhone or iPad comes less from the technology platform Apple created (although the user interface is certainly impressive) but more from the thousands of individual apps created by an army of developers. That created content far beyond what Apple could imagine or certainly pay for. Another example is Wikipedia, which uses thousands of editors to create and patrol its pages as a platform for creating better content.

The philosophy of engagement will favor marketing organizations that not only discover new ways to create and push out content, but uncover ways to involve their audiences in order to generate content that is more relevant and engaging. It must be so valuable to them that they will be driven to participate in creating it and want to share it with others.

Our action item for the near term must be to find new places to “get published.” While past success was determined by being published in print, now we want our content to be published on Google, in Wikipedia, on Twitter, on various web sites, shared via Facebook, and proliferated throughout search engines in a variety of manners. This applies of course to blogging. As a technique, that has assumed even more priority going forward, as Google’s preference for blog posts in its rankings has only served to elevate the importance and urgency of effective blogging.

Last, companies will need to use technology to become more targeted in the types of content they dispense, at the correct stage of the buying cycle. A handbook offer, for instance, should appear earlier in the buying cycle, when you’re building credibility and interest in a solution. Once the prospect is evaluating vendors, testimonials and product selector guides are more appropriate here.

Does Print Still Matter?

Yes.

If only it were that simple to make the case for print! The fact is that while we’re all excited Facebook has 400 million users, we can’t be distracted into forgetting that many print outlets continue to generate readership. And that remains the bottom line. Just as companies must pass the ultimate test of “engagement” in their own materials and websites, traditional print media must retain the quality of their own editorial in order to engage readers and keep them coming back issue after issue. If readers SPEND TIME with a magazine, that magazine is important.

Today, thousands of relevant, targeted customers and prospects read magazines. While there are in fact many online communities emerging that are similar, there are strong magazines that remain that are effective in delivering loyal readers who spend hours with every issue. Again, it’s not a question of circulation; mailing a magazine that never emerges from its polybagged envelope and gathers dust on the recipient’s desk is of no value. The more accurate metric is readership, of course, and marketers must be vigilant about pressing for that data and applying it to their marketing budget decisions.

There aren’t as many magazines today. And many of their readers do spend a large amount of time on Google searching directly for product information instead of flipping through a print issue looking for product ideas. But there’s no denying that strong magazines deliver readers. And many marketing organizations use web analytics to track targeted response and simply end this debate.

Editorial quality will determine which magazines survive. Those that have cut back by using only freelancers, or less technical writers, or less experienced editors not able to sense the nuances of their industries will suffer losses in readership and attention from their time-pressed readers.

Lastly, we must realize that the successful magazines have in fact extended their audience reach they deliver to their websites as well. Magazines exist for an advertiser as long as they can create a community and deliver it to that advertiser. If they are able to deliver it in a print issue, or on the magazine's web site, they are both important. We believe there is leverage to achieve by maintaining a presence in both, a one-two punch of credibility and strength that speaks loudly to customers.

Art Anton, the CEO of Swagelok, tells the story about his first reaction to the financial crisis. At the time of Lehman Bros.' collapse, he was flying home from China, and en route directed that his marketing team assemble to meet with him immediately upon his return. Note that he didn't meet with his financial staff, his manufacturing staff, or operations staff, but his marketing people. He told them that in this period of rapid change, there is simply no better time to reach out to customers aggressively with the message that, "we know you'll be evaluating which of your vendors will be strong enough to survive this, and which ones you'll want to work with going forward." In that environment, he told his staff to use all means – including print – to communicate that message to their customers.

Leveraged Endorsement

Marketing going forward will be defined in many ways by influence. Whoever has influence has currency. Whoever has influence can drive impact. We want to identify those influencers and partner with them.

Large multi-billion dollar firms certainly have impact by nature of the size of their organizations. Yet that sheer size is leverage not available to most companies.

Consider the words of noted marketing expert Jack Trout: "Companies use the preferences of others to establish authenticity and to set themselves apart."

To pursue this concept, marketers in the near term should seek out complementary companies, publishers, trade show promoters and technology analyst firms that carry strong influence in a marketplace. By working together, the b-to-b marketer can achieve more together with a partner than it can on its own. It's the same impact we see when we co-sponsor a webcast with a publisher, that it generally doubles the size of the turnout than what can be achieved by the company on its own.

It recalls the Microsoft-IBM dynamic of the 1970s: Microsoft sought out a partnership with IBM not necessarily for IBM's technology but for the credibility and impact such a partnership would provide.

At its simplest level, media publishers have influence, because they can deliver an engaged audience. By definition of their brands, they can provide access to people we're trying to reach and connect with. While running an ad creates exposure and awareness, it doesn't go far enough to creating the engagement that we seek.

So marketers should seek engagement with partners to create events or content in special ways that connect with their readers. Face-to-face events that draw targeted qualified audiences have tremendous value. Trade shows that are able to bring in qualified buyers have value. Webcasts that are sponsored in connection with a valued audience have value. An article co-authored with a larger, more credible firm is more valuable than an article on our own.

Another example is seen by Gartner Group's "Magic Quadrant." The well known technology analyst firm routinely publishes its ranking of various technologies, and if your company appears in one of Gartner's reports, you instantly carry more influence and credibility in your market. It's the age-old value of the third-party endorsement, the traditional value of PR, but now we apply it by partnering with these companies in ways that allow their influence to spill over onto our brand.

Tactical Implementation

Each of these drivers are shaping the tactical traditional and online marketing programs put in place by Goldstein Group Communications. From web to print, we're building programs that bring a consistent, balanced and targeted approach to marketing today, with a unique approach based on each company's ultimate sweet spot. Contact us to learn more, or visit www.ggcomm.com for examples of how we apply these principles to companies facing marketing challenges similar to yours.



Goldstein Group Communications

30500 Solon Industrial Parkway, Solon, Ohio 44139

440-914-4700 • www.ggcomm.com

Goldstein Group Communications, a technology b-to-b agency, brings an unusual combination of corporate communications management and engineer-level writing capability to its national client roster. With deep experience in electronics and industrial markets, the agency is able to draw on its skills to articulate with impact and clarity the technical advantages its clients bring to their customers. Unlike other agencies, staff members for the most part have built their careers on the corporate side of the desk, rather than as agency executives, a perspective that results in a higher level of accountability and measurability in the agency's programs.