

PART

I

The Fundamentals of Social Media Lead Generation

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Why B2B Is Better at Social Media Than B2C



Be a marketing superstar. It isn't any more difficult than being ordinary. As a business-to-business (B2B) marketer, you are a core contributor to the growth and success of your company. It is your hard work, balancing the demands of generating quality leads on a limited budget that helps fuel the sales team. Unfortunately, this hard work and diligence often goes underappreciated.

Seventy-three percent of chief executive officers (CEOs) believe marketers are not able to demonstrate how their strategies and campaigns help increase their organizations' top line in terms of more customer demand, sales, prospects, conversions, and market share. This is according to the "2011 Global Marketing Effectiveness Program"¹ by Fournaise Marketing Group.

End this false perception today!

B2B social media marketing is a new set of marketing tools that integrates with existing marketing strategies to help you work smarter instead of harder. When done well, social media marketing can reduce marketing expense, increase lead volume, and provide a clear and measurable return on investment for your marketing dollars. Don't fall victim to the marketing status quo.

The Marketing Status Quo

For decades, B2B marketers would start the year off with a marketing budget and then divide it among print publications, industry trade shows, and some direct mail campaigns. This process involved renting attention from someone else. Renting is expensive.

B2B marketing of the past has been about writing checks for fun ideas and interrupting potential customers with cold calling or direct mail. Enough is enough.

Today's marketing should be about delivering measurable results for the business.

B2B marketing is at a crossroads. You, the marketer, now stand in the face of the most empowering moment of your career. It doesn't matter if you are the chief marketing officer (CMO) or if you have just started your first job in marketing. This is your opportunity to be great at the career you love. Let business-to-consumer (B2C) marketers worry about coming up with the cute mascots.

What Your Marketing Could Be

Marketing greatness is at your fingertips. Open your hand and grab it. Tomorrow is a day in which B2B marketing attracts the best and brightest minds in business. Social media has ushered in a new tool set that complements the skills of B2B marketers more closely than any marketing innovation ever. This book will empower you with the social media tactics, keen content creation insights, data analysis, and reporting methods that will take you to a level of B2B marketing that few CEOs could even imagine.

B2B companies are better suited for social media marketing than B2C companies.

Stop. Go back. Read the last sentence again. It is true.

In the initial adoption of social media marketing, an unfortunate phenomenon happened. It became widely accepted that social media marketing was applicable only to B2C companies. This stereotype ignores five key ways in which social media marketing is better suited for B2B companies. If your boss questions why your B2B company should be using social media for marketing, simply share these five reasons with him or her.

Five Reasons B2B Companies Are a Better Fit for Social Media Marketing Than B2C Companies

1. *Clear Understanding of Customers*—Even more so than B2C marketers, B2B marketers are closely tuned to the behavior, habits, and

desires of their prospects and customers. B2B marketers go far past demographic data. As a B2B marketing superstar, you have clear and detailed personas for every prospect you are working to reach. Having this level of familiarity and clarity is a major advantage in social media marketing.

2. *Depth of Subject Matter Expertise*—B2B companies are trailblazers. They develop new industries or innovate in existing ones. This type of leadership and disruption traditionally means that B2B companies' employees are the leading experts within a particular industry. Because social media is often used as a platform for educating prospects through content and relationships, having the depth of knowledge is a clear boost in the quest for social media marketing success.
3. *Need for Generating Higher Revenue with Lower Marketing Budgets*—You are a miracle worker. You generate leads and brand recognition for your company sales team with a short-handed staff and less budget than you really need. B2B marketers are always looking for value on a quest to maximize cost per lead. Social media acts as a lever to help reduce cost per lead and enables you to do more with less.
4. *Relationship-Based Sales*—The B2B sales process is all about relationships. With large purchase prices and lengthy sales cycles, building strong relationships with sales leads is critical. The social web facilitates relationship building throughout the sales and marketing cycle to help improve lead quality and reduce sales cycle length.
5. *Already Have Practice Doing It*—B2B marketers have long been social media marketing pioneers, even though they might not have known it. Long before the social web, you were publishing newsletters, quarterly magazines, and other marketing tactics that map to many key social media marketing methods. B2B marketers have a history of telling business-focused stories and educating customers with content.

Don't believe us?

Then believe a shipping logistics company that *increased overall quote requests by 270 percent* using social media and inbound marketing. Lynden, Inc. (www.lynden.com), a transportation and logistics company that operates in some of the most remote areas of the world, has leveraged blogging, search engine optimization (SEO), and landing pages to increase quotes for their service online by 412 percent. These results seem astounding, so how did they do it?

Lynden has been blogging since 2009 and creating content to attract new website visits from search engines and social media channels. They use the data and performance from past blog posts to optimize and increase the performance of future content they create. They also track new inbound links that are created as a result of their blog posts and how they rank for specific keywords related to their business.

When Social Media Isn't Right for B2B

This book isn't about sugarplums and gumdrops. Don't think of it as some idealized view of marketing. Instead, it is meant to serve as a reference, inspiration, and a compass for B2B marketers looking to improve and help drive more revenue for their business. Because this book isn't another sugar-coated glamorization of social media, it is important early on to cover situations in which social media marketing *isn't* right for a B2B company.

In these situations some aspects of social media could work and help support other inbound marketing objectives such as search and branding, but the truth is, when it comes to driving transactions, there are better options.

Do you answer yes to any of these questions?

Does your company have fewer than five potential customers? In the B2B space, some companies exist that have an extremely small niche. They fill a need by providing a product or service for only a handful of customers. When your customer base is so targeted, you have to be direct with your limited marketing budget. Regular face-to-face meetings, customer events, and other tactics are a better fit for this niche. Social media helps individuals and companies scale their social interaction. However, when your scale is small, you are less dependent on the scale that social media can provide.

Do purchasing decision makers spend all of their time behind a highly secure firewall? In situations in which you provide products or services to the military, electrical power grid, and others, key purchasing decision makers spend their time in a work environment that is secure and locked down from access to most or all of the information available online. If this is the case for your customer base, then using the Web won't be a successful spend of your marketing budget. The success and engagement of social media depends

on the ability to reach and connect with customers digitally and in person. For companies in this environment, the digital option should be a lower priority.

Is your company missing an internal advocate for social media? Sometimes it is not about your customers, but rather, about your organization. One thing that successful organizations have in common when it comes to leveraging social media and word-of-mouth effectively is that they have buy-in from key advocates within the company. At many companies it is the CEO, but at least it is a key decision maker within the organization who can supply the needed resources and leadership to allow the organization to be successful. If you don't have this, then spend your time finding someone within your organization who can fill this role instead of rolling out a social media effort prematurely.

Does your company need to generate a high volume of short-term sales? Can social media drive sales? Yes. Can it drive targeted short-term high-volume sales? In most cases, it cannot. If you have a plan to sell x number of units of a product over the next three to four weeks, then social media isn't the right choice for you. As Chris Brogan, coauthor of the book *Trust Agents* says, creating transactional opportunities on the Web takes trust, but trust takes time to establish. If you don't have time, then you must go a different route. These are most likely direct response, pricing incentives, or enhanced sales support.

Does your company have the resources to be successful? A major issue with social media is that most people think that since most online platforms are free, it should be cheap to add social media to their marketing or communications mix. It isn't cheap. Social media marketing done properly takes a lot of time and the support of staff who understand the business of their customers. Many organizations now are simply letting social media happen as an experiment. The problem with this is that, most of the time, these experiments are drastically underresourced and handicapped from the beginning. Understanding the resources that you need and having them in place is a critical factor for success. *Hint:* You will always need more time and money than you expect for executing your social media tactics.

We are not saying that companies in the situations outlined here, can't use social media for their B2B organizations. Instead, we suggest that for

these opportunities, there are better ways to leverage the limited pool of resources available and social media should be lower on the priority list.

B2B Social Media as an Annuity

The social web is not linear. Information and interactions happen across the social web in every direction. There is not one clear path. It is critical to understand this simple idea of a nonlinear communications channel. It is this idea that allows you and your organization to begin to think of marketing as an asset, instead of an expense. In the status quo world of marketing where B2B marketing is about renting eyeballs and writing checks, it is easy to view marketing as an expense. In a B2B social media world, marketing is an annuity.

According to Wikipedia, an annuity is used in finance theory to refer to any terminating stream of fixed payments over a specified period. B2B social media marketing functions as a marketing annuity. It delivers website visits, leads, and customers over time, long after the work and budget for the social media tactic have become a distant memory.

Unlike a financial annuity, social media's annuity isn't fixed. Instead, it is compounding. Each tactic stacks on top of the other for exponential results over time. Your management team understands annuities. Help them understand how your marketing budget can become one.

Results Independent of Effort

In traditional outbound B2B marketing such as direct mail and print advertising, $1 + 1$ always equals 2. This is because you distribute an interruptive message for a fixed period. In today's marketing world, a marketer budgets to support a company blog post. The output of results from the blog is not limited to a single day or even a fixed amount of time. Heck, it isn't even limited to blogging. Search engine optimization and other inbound marketing tactics benefit as well. A major distinction here is the shift from renting to owning attention, because as a B2B marketer, you own and control your business blog.

Each and every article you publish has an infinite life span. An article you publish today has the potential to have a much larger compounded reach long-term than any initial promotion may have when it is first

published. The reason for this is the $1 + 1 = 3$ value of social media. Because a business owns its blog, it is likely to invest in promoting and marketing the blog long term to build an audience. This means that the potential pool of readers for each article is always increasing—to infinity, and beyond!

In addition, every topic and idea has an adoption curve. People seek and consume ideas at different times as they have new business problems to solve.

Annuities Facilitate Scale

Every business has goals. Marketing is a key driver of business revenue and the actualization of the overall growth of the business. The problem with traditional B2B marketing has been that scaling business growth has been completely dependent on spending more money, since many results had an assumed fixed cost. However, as B2B marketing shifts to social media and results become more like annuities, scale isn't a function of marketing budget spend. Instead, scale becomes about consistency and efficiency. Taking actions such as consistently publishing blog content over time or building a LinkedIn Group, serve as an annuity to drive progressively larger results month after month.

Social Media Is Only One Piece

Social media isn't a silver bullet. Many consultants and marketing agencies would like marketers to believe that social media is a magic tonic to solve marketing problems. The truth is that social media isn't a cure-all. Instead, it is one piece of a well-planned and executed inbound marketing strategy that is tightly aligned to business objectives.

In this book when we discuss “business objectives” for marketers, we are talking about lead generation and sales. Although marketing can have other functions, lead generation is the fuel that helps a successful business grow and can speed your trip to marketing superstardom.

Integration wins! Great B2B marketers must solve for integration in every aspect of their work. Social media marketing results are amplified when integrated with e-mail marketing, event marketing, pay-per-click advertising, and other inbound marketing tactics that can be combined to maximize lead generation.

Building a Next-Generation B2B Marketing Team

Marketing superstars in the social media marketing world are incredible hybrids of many communications and business skills. Outbound marketing needed marketers who could set strategy, manage trade shows, work with an advertising agency, and deal with vendors. Notice something important missing in the job description of marketers in the past: customers. None of the skills directly solved the problem of understanding and working with customers.

Social media marketing injects customers directly into the marketing process, where they can accelerate or extinguish marketing efforts. Customers have moved front and center because the social web has democratized publishing. Anyone can publish information today. The cost and barrier to entry in publishing is almost zero. In this book, we will talk at length about leveraging the social web. One thing that should be clear is that the B2B marketing team of the future looks vastly different.

Storytelling + Data Analysis = Great Social Media Marketer

Marketers have historically come from varied educational backgrounds, with journalism and business schools leading the pack. The problem is that great marketers today need a mix of many skills. Great writing skills have long been a requirement for marketers, but being a great writer is no longer enough. A great B2B marketer today should be able to tell stories like an investigative journalist and be able to plow through pivot tables like an investment banker.

Marketing metrics are easier to track online. With automated tracking and data gathering come opportunities to analyze data to uncover ways to optimize and improve marketing results. However, there is nothing to optimize unless the marketing team has created and distributed interesting and engaging content. Think of a great B2B social media marketer as a brand journalist who can also crunch numbers to maximize the results of lead generation offers and calls-to-action. Don't waste time looking for someone who knows how social media tools work. Instead, hire someone who has used social

media to deliver quantifiable results. We will get into more detail about building and running a great next-generation marketing team in Chapter 14.

The Perfect B2B Marketing Leader

A great B2B marketing team is only as good as its leader. The job of a top-notch B2B CMO has both drastically changed and stayed the same. A CMO needs to be strategic and have a strong understanding of the industry and the business. In addition, in an online marketing world, a CMO needs to be great at marketing metrics and making strategic investment choices. However, there is one attribute—essential in today's social media marketing world—that many CEOs may overlook: no fear of failure.

With the hurdles into publishing and sharing information now so low, it is harder than ever before for a company to stand out. A great CMO needs to take risks and try new things, while also ensuring that the entire marketing team understands that risk and polarization are accepted and encouraged for the success of the business.

You are the star. Now that we have introduced some important B2B social media principles, it is time to learn all about social media lead generation.

This book is designed to be highly actionable. In order to turn every chapter into actionable marketing activities, we have included a three-step to-do list at the end of each chapter. You should do them. And you need your laptop. They are for your own good. Ready? Go!

Three B2B Social Media Steps to Superstardom

1. *Rally for support*—Any business effort fails without financial and management support. Use the key arguments from the section on why B2B companies are a better fit for social media than B2C companies to build a brief presentation. Your presentation should consist of no more than five clear and concise slides with data. Use this presentation to build internal support for social media marketing within your company.
2. *Integrate social media and traditional marketing*—Remember that social media is only one piece. Integrating marketing is always

more effective than taking a segmented approach. Examine both your social media and traditional marketing strategies and tactics. Schedule a two-hour block of time to look for integration points that connect your social media strategy, such as including links to your social media account on your direct mailings.

3. *Build a winning team*—It doesn't matter what part of your marketing career you are in; you can shape the direction of your marketing team. Push for interview questions and criteria that involve both storytelling and data analysis. When your company has an open marketing position, take 10 minutes to look through your LinkedIn contacts to determine whether you know anyone who has the right skills for the job. If you do, invite that person to interview.