



“Great B2B marketers are business thinkers first, marketing thinkers second.”

Business-to-business (B2B) marketing is often considered the serious, less exciting cousin of business-to-consumer (B2C) marketing. But it doesn't have to be this way. By recognizing that, in the end, all businesses sell to people not to other businesses, B2B marketers can steal a page from the B2C marketing playbook and have some fun.

As B2B marketers, we're always looking for the next tactic that will bring in more leads. Updating tried and true B2B marketing practices by borrowing B2C tactics is one way you can build your brand, connect with customers and maximize sales.

# What is B2B marketing and why is it unique?

Many mid-sized B2B companies have little to no experience with marketing and a rather tenuous grasp of the concept as a whole. As a consequence, budgets can be low to nonexistent. Management may simply view the marketer as a sort of glorified graphic designer, good for pulling together a brochure or two, or slapping a logo on a trade show giveaway. So, what makes B2B marketing fundamentally different from B2C?

## It's a different sales process

Purchase amounts are larger, the sales process is longer and the market size is smaller. This makes the marketing approach more niche oriented, refined and focused. At the end of the day, it's a tough fight for each and every customer.

## Buying decisions are based on business value

The business buyer is often educated and very focused on their company's needs. Their purpose is to buy products/services to help their company stay profitable, competitive and successful. B2B marketing reflects these requirements by generating materials to a sophisticated audience. Quantitative analysis and ROI are always essential in the B2B world.

## There are (most likely) multiple decision makers

Whether you're appealing to the technical buyer, the economic buyer or the end user buyer, it's always a challenge to educate all buying centres about your products and address their specific pain points. This is why a diversity of educational and awareness-building marketing activities are crucial in the business environment.

The number of people involved in B2B solutions purchases has climbed from an average of 5.4 two years ago to 6.8.<sup>10</sup>

## The sales cycles are long

Ideally, you want every customer to buy from you on your first interaction, but it rarely happens. The B2B sales process is consultative and not a simple transaction that can be completed quickly. It's a long progression that can include submitting RFPs, doing demos, offering free trials over a period of time and hosting lunches to convince prospects to finally buy. A complex and well-structured lead nurturing program is also necessary to stay in tune with your customer base along the way.

## Buying is relationship driven

B2B purchases are motivated by business goals and budgets, and, to a large extent, the vendor relationship. Emotions become a driver, along with trust that a particular vendor and its products are best suited to help the business reach its goals.

## Building brand equity matters

B2B marketers need to appeal to their niche by demonstrating integrity and performance. There is no fast way to get there, but once you've built and earned good brand equity, you will retain customer mindshare for a long time.

## Details are important

Given multiple decision makers and the relative complexity of a sales cycle, it is important to prove your credibility in any possible way and not give prospective customers any reason to question your professionalism.

As you can see, B2B is less about being creative and more about business strategy. Sales generation is the absolute bottom line, and it's a long, drawn out process. B2B marketers must adjust to the fact that their target market consists of multiple decision makers, rather than a single ideal persona. Building awareness and increasing loyalty among customers is a big part of the job. But more importantly, strategic B2B marketing is all about generating leads and, through ongoing involvement in sales support, revenue. A great B2B marketer understands their company's financial flow and makes investment decisions based on which types of channels and tactics best fulfill their business objectives – driving home ROI.

B2B and B2C marketing have always been different. When you have different buyer types and buying processes, it's important to take a different approach to marketing. But this doesn't mean there isn't an opportunity for B2B marketers to learn from B2C. Here are 10 B2C tactics B2B marketers should not just borrow, but steal.



## 10 Tactics B2B marketers should steal from B2C:

1

### Provide product and pricing information.

Some B2B companies have limited information on their websites in order to encourage buyers to contact their sales reps and set up a meeting or demonstration. The companies also don't want buyers to get sticker shock without first understanding the value of their product or service.

B2B marketers shouldn't be afraid to provide as much product information as they can on their website and in marketing collateral. The buying process has changed; 67% of the buyer's journey is now done digitally, before they even want to talk to a sales person.<sup>1</sup> So, it's important to provide prospective customers with all the information they want or need.

Consider the new generation of workers and employees. Millennials are slowly, but surely, taking over decision-making roles in B2B companies. These are people who are used to pulling out their smartphones and looking up pictures, specs and reviews of anything they want to use or buy, from restaurants to enterprise resource planning software. B2B companies should embrace this trend and provide detailed spec sheets, features and benefits lists, photos, videos, ratings, reviews and pricing structures. This information will not deter potential buyers; it will encourage high-quality sales leads (who are ready to buy to filter through your door. And by allowing customers to determine if product price and functionality suit them, you are generating better-qualified prospects. You're basically ensuring that your prospective customers both understand your solution and have the budget for it.

## 2

### Use customer reviews and testimonials.

As in the B2C market, B2B customers look to their peers for reviews and recommendations. Help customers feel confident in their buying decisions by offering reviews, testimonials and case studies to illustrate challenges customers have faced, how your product or service has addressed these challenges and the results achieved. Nearly all (97%) of B2B buyers say that user generated content, like reviews and testimonials, is more credible than other types of content.<sup>2</sup>

And, once again, remember that Millennials, who will make up 75% of the workforce by 2025,<sup>3</sup> have grown up with constant dialogue on social media and instant information at their fingertips. They expect their work life to have the same openness and transparency. Organizations seeking to engage customers have no choice but to adapt to the needs and expectations of this generation.



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## 3

### Simplify the buying process.

B2B companies can increase sales by making the buying process as easy as possible. Think of iTunes, Amazon and eBay – they make purchasing as easy as clicking a single button. Can your business do this? Even if you can't implement one-click buying, you can apply the philosophy of making it as simple as possible for customers to buy.

How can B2Bs create a user-friendly buying process? Provide a buyer's manual that includes feature comparisons and evaluation templates that move customers from the research phase to the buying phase. Simplify pricing and product options by making it obvious which options different types of customers need, so their decision to buy becomes easy.



4

## Give something away.

Build buzz, and at the same time, grow credibility by offering something for free. Consider free trials or free consulting to encourage prospects to try out your product or service. Use contests and giveaways to create experiences customers can't get anywhere else. Or offer rewards to encourage customers to purchase more or more often.

Unlike with B2C, I'm not suggesting you give a free set of steak knives with every industrial equipment installation or software implementation. But do give something a business will value, like free premium care or customization, as a way to set your product apart from the others on the market.

5

## Provide content in smaller segments.

The way we consume content has changed. Customers are looking for quick hits of information. Use videos, infographics, top 10 lists, fun facts, blogs and FAQs to provide content to your customers in smaller and easier to digest segments. There is still a place for more learned thought leadership like white papers and eBooks, and many businesspeople still prefer them. But mix it up with information bursts to ensure you're reaching the widest possible audience.

6

## Engage and be relatable.

Focusing on the benefits of your product rather than just the functionality will allow you to connect with customers on a human level. Find a balance between being relatable and being professional. Where appropriate, use industry humour your customers can identify with. Above all, engage and inform customers with relevant information that provides genuine value.

Increasing transparency will also help you be more relatable. How can B2B companies achieve this? For starters, you can show some "behind-the-scenes" photos of your business. Show your customers that, yes, these are real people working on your products. You can also leverage social media to reach out to prospects and customers and establish a more personal connection with them.

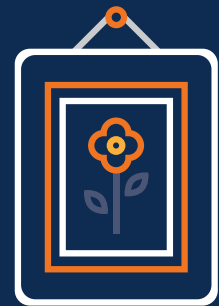
## 7

### Get Visual.

Human beings are incredible at remembering pictures. Hear a piece of information and three days later you'll remember 10% of it. Add a picture and you'll remember 65% of it.<sup>4</sup> One thing many B2C brands are doing well on social media is using a lot of beautiful visuals. But B2B marketers are coming around. In fact, 51% of B2B marketers prioritized creating visual content assets in 2016.<sup>5</sup>

It's often difficult, however, to market visually when you're working with products that many people don't consider sexy or exciting (as is the case with many B2B companies). But, there are many ways you can do it, even if you have only one or two products. For example, you can showcase the different ways your products can be used. Or you can show the people who use or make them as they go about their day. Think creatively and the possibilities are endless.

10% of heard information is still remembered 3 days later. That number increases to 65% if you add a picture.<sup>4</sup>



## 8

### Embrace Video.

B2C marketers already rely on video to reach their customers. Overall, 73% of businesses report positive ROI from using video.<sup>6</sup> Cisco projects that global internet traffic from videos will make up 82% of all Internet traffic by 2021.<sup>7</sup> Embed short videos on your home page, in blogs, in social media posts and in emails. Ensure your videos have both a place to live and a method of distribution. Whether it's a company overview video or product tutorial, videos provide potential and current customers with an easy and engaging way to learn more about what your company has to offer.

Global internet traffic from videos will make up 82% of all internet traffic by 2021.<sup>7</sup>





## 9

# Use social media (but stay true to who you are).

Go ahead and use social media. LinkedIn can be your best friend when it comes to establishing your company as a thought leader and positioning your brand. Use it to promote your educational content like webinars, eBooks and white papers. Publish your links as much as possible and direct interested leads toward contact form fills so that you can reach out to them later.

Use platforms like Facebook and Instagram to help showcase your organization's culture. Posts featuring the office dog, your slo-pitch team, community events or chats around the espresso machine can go a long way to showing who you are as a company. There are also lots of B2C tactics on Twitter, like polls and #FollowFriday (where you tweet the names of users you think others would like to follow), that can be used to build followers and expand your reach. But remember to stay true to your brand personality.

Social media is no longer just about posting product videos and content, it's also about solving customer problems, answering questions and joining the dialogue. With live streaming being offered on most platforms, you can even feature live Q & A sessions, customer interviews and/or product demos. It's up to you.

More than 84% of B2B marketers in the U.S. said they use social media marketing to acquire customers.<sup>8</sup> Amplify your organic social media efforts with targeted ads across platforms. Advertising on Facebook and Instagram has already proven successful for B2C, but B2B has an advantage; the dollar value they place on new customers is much higher. Consider a B2B enterprise software brand that values every new customer at \$200,000 vs a retail brand that values new customers at just \$20 dollars. B2B marketers can afford to spend-to-win on that Facebook bidding auction and Newsfeed placement to acquire incremental business. And Facebook's advertising can reach specific seniority levels, job titles, company sizes, right down to specific companies, as well as your own CRM list, so it's highly targeted.

Social media has the power to influence prospective buyers both on the clock and off. Remember, the B2B path to purchase is long and complex, and there are likely many different personas involved in the actual decision making, so use everything you can to build awareness and positively influence the decision along the way.



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# 10

## Upcycle your content to reach more customers.

If your B2B marketing strategy utilizes content marketing and you've been disciplined about regularly writing blogs, articles or other types of content, you should have amassed quite an archive of old pieces with many hidden gems inside. Take a page from B2C marketers and rework and reuse that content in different ways and on different platforms. Turn an article into two blogs. Create ten tweets from a 'Top 10 List' article. Build an infographic from the stats in a white paper, it's called upcycling content. This approach lets you renew interest in a successful piece of content marketing, while respecting the different ways people want to digest information.

Upcycling also helps you reach new markets or customer personas. Business strategies evolve over time, and it could be that you're now tasked with approaching a new market or launching a new product. Dig into your archives and reuse appropriate pieces to help you support this new strategy. There's no question that it's easier to edit than to create new. Less time means more resources available for other initiatives.

Upcycling content is also a great way to boost your SEO. Every effective B2B marketing strategy has SEO as a key tactic. Why? B2B researchers do 12 searches on average before even engaging on a specific brand's site.<sup>9</sup> When you're selecting content, and if your technology is searchable, look for the keywords you are using in your content strategy. Start there. Using the content with some new copy is a great way to get more mileage out of pieces already written, while giving your SEO a healthy boost.

Remember that your content needs to be viewed several times before it makes an impact, so upcycling has scientific merit. But less is more. Make sure you have a theme or a good reason to reuse your content. A scattershot approach won't be successful, and you won't see the SEO benefits that you were expecting.

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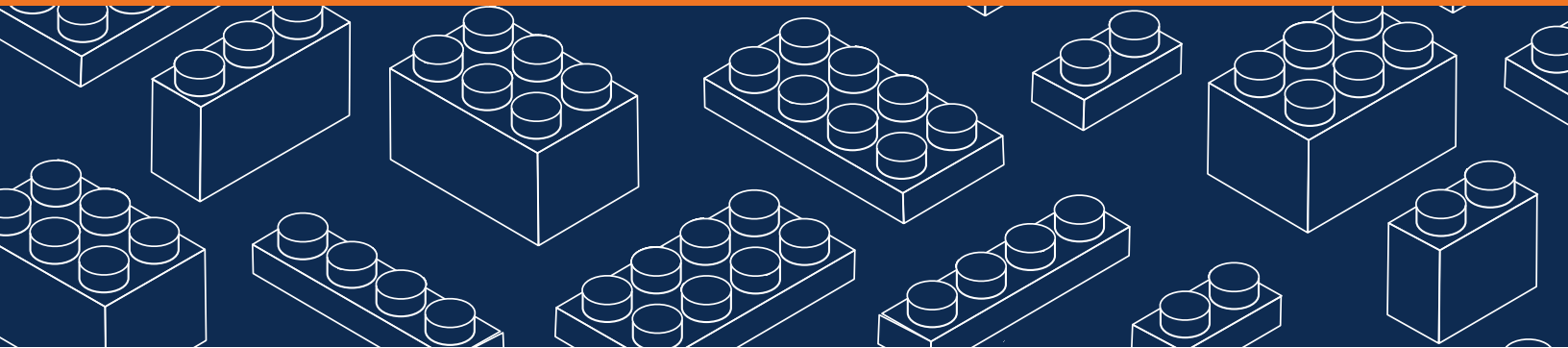
## Summary

As B2B marketers, we're often tasked with making less than glamorous products exciting and memorable. We need to engage and educate our audiences with the goal of constantly fuelling the funnel with leads. This can be difficult for even the best marketers. However, by stealing a few secrets from the B2C folks you can accomplish your goals.

In many ways, marketing is marketing, but remember that not all tactics will cross over. Use the above B2C tactics to build awareness, grow your brand, engage with prospects, shorten sales cycles and drive quality leads. For more B2B marketing tips and best practices, contact us.

Learn how over 250 B2B companies  
have increased leads by 30-100%

LET'S CHAT



## About Us



The Mezzanine Group works with B2B companies every day and we know which tactics are needed to match different strategies and goals. Collectively, we have experience in every type of B2B marketing tactic and strategy, the experience of helping over 250 companies, and decades of knowledge. We lead the pack in strategy because we're experts at hands-on implementation.