



DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

How to Stop Selling B2B Tech Widgets and Start Selling Unique Solutions to Problems

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If you're a B2B technology marketer, you probably have a little crush on your products. Of course, it's not a job requirement to believe in the technology you market. But if you're not enthused about your solutions, it would be tough to convince a customer about their value. Plus, your job would be a slog.

The problem is, this little love affair can lead to navel-gazing—and irrelevant content.



Artificial intelligence. Machine learning. Blockchain. Overflowing with buzzwords, B2B tech marketing content is far too often focused on the technical features and capabilities of the products. Don't get me wrong—decision-makers and internal influencers, particularly technical buyers, do want to know about the functional aspects. Ultimately, they care less about all your bells and whistles and more about solving their pain points.

Your content needs to stop trying to sell widgets and instead sell outcomes and solutions to problems. Here are some ideas for how to achieve this.

DELIVERING TRUE VALUE

Most successful marketers attribute the success of their content strategy to the value it provides. That's according to two separate surveys by the Content Marketing Institute (CMI) and MarketingProfs—one surveying [technology marketers](#) and the other polling [B2B marketers](#).

However, what you perceive as value may be different from how buyers see it. The biggest B2B content marketing mistake is “the classic features versus the benefits debate,” says B2B technology writer and content strategist [Jennifer Roland Cadiente](#) who written for brands such as Samsung Business and Hewlett Packard Enterprise.

“Technology creators often use the features as their benchmarks to ensure that the product will do what it needs to do, which is critical in production and testing,” she explains. “But when you've moved out of production and into marketing, you need to go deeper to explain how those cool new features will translate into the benefits the user will experience.”

Every piece of content should tie back to the customers' goals. For example, are you launching new product features? Then resist the urge to wax poetic about the “innovation” that went into developing them and how you've answered the market's challenges. Your audience doesn't need this “look at us” introspection. Instead, connect the dots between those features and the customers' desired outcomes.

In other words, your content should answer one fundamental question for your customers or prospects every time: What's in it for them? How does your tech solve their specific problem or need?

CREATING RELATABLE MESSAGING

Content marketing has been a crowded field for some time, but the shift to more digital marketing due to the pandemic gave new meaning to the content deluge. So



it's no wonder that 51 percent of the marketers in the CMI/MarketingProfs' B2B survey said it's become "increasingly difficult to capture audiences' attention" in the past year.

The overabundance of content has made the B2B decision-makers' job harder. But they don't just have to wade through more—they're also getting less value overall. For example, when it comes to thought leadership, 71 percent of decision-makers [surveyed last year by Edelman](#) said that less than half of the content they consumed provided valuable insights.

Part of the problem is that you're trying to do too much with your campaign—like reaching two or more different sets of audiences. Lack of clarity about the audience is one of the biggest mistakes B2B tech companies make, says [Word Wow Studio's](#) Cynthia Kenworthy, a B2B technology writer whose clients have included brands like Smartsheet and Oracle Netsuite.

"The interests of a C-suite executive are very different from an IT decision-maker or a developer," she says. "It's very difficult to speak credibly to multiple distinct audiences at once."

She sees many brands focusing their content on what they want to say rather than what the audience wants to know. "To command the attention of the customer or prospect, every dimension of the content needs to be relevant—the technical detail, terminology, use cases, business outcomes, etc.," she says. "Start by articulating the specific customer persona the content will target and their priorities."

And remember that B2B buyers are humans. Even though your technology targets an enterprise or another entity, it's easy to forget that it's people you have to convince. The most important ingredient for tech marketing is humanity, Cadiente notes.

"Technology has advanced our ability to perform many tasks, but it's not the end in and of itself," she says. "To really communicate the power of technology, we need to look at the effects it has on humans—how it makes our jobs easier, allows us to get more done in a day, or lets us focus on the things we love."

Take a page from fictional advertising genius Don Draper of "Mad Men." During one of his many mic-dropping customer pitches, Draper said: "Advertising is based on one thing: happiness. What is happiness? Happiness is the smell of a new car. It's freedom from fear. It's a billboard on the side of the road that screams reassurance that whatever you are doing is OK. You are OK."



Draper was explaining to Lucky Strikes executives how to differentiate their cigarettes from five other competitors. B2B marketing may not be based on happiness, but you need to distinguish yourself from a sea of competitors (chances are, a lot more than five). Among the most successful marketers, 78 percent already do it compared to only 32 percent among the least successful ones, according to the B2B marketing survey by CMI/MarketingProfs.

THE BOTTOM LINE?

Communicate the benefits of your solution to the customers and how it solves their problems—preferably in clear but unique ways.

Does that mean you shouldn't highlight all those features you've come to love in your products? Of course not. However, don't forget to connect the functional components to expected customer outcomes.

Learn how to relate to your customers' challenges, and you'll quickly understand how to convert any content from introspective to customer-centric. When you know you're no longer simply marketing technology—you're offering to deliver results.

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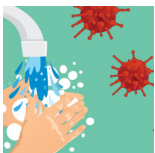


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