

Strategies on implementing **B2B** marketing through social media



B2B marketing is more complex because, unlike **B2C** which is focused on convincing one person to buy a product or service, you need to convince multiple people who need to agree to purchase your product or service and those people have different concerns which need to be addressed during the sales cycle.

Sales cycles run in several months with different stakeholders participating at different points in the process. Unlike B2C marketing, B2B marketers do not have the gratification of generating immediate sales from a great campaign.

Companies need to realize that they do not control their brands anymore due to social media the market does, based on what people say about a brand on and offline.

Smart companies spend their time listening to the conversations customers are having with each other, this is what social media is all about. The old way of doing social media was for companies to push out content through blogs, Twitter or Facebook, without engaging with customers.

Customer engagement is very important. You need to follow all the rules to be a success in your social media program but rather focusing on a few rules, perfecting your techniques, and repeating, will launch you ahead of your competitors at a corporate and individual level.

93% of B2B buyers start their search for a product or service on a search engine, not your company website. Correct use of social media gives you the opportunity to show up in their search results and to show up higher than in the past because search engines favour fresh content that social media provides. A 2009 study on trust shows that 90% of people trust recommendations from known people and only 70% trust brand websites.



Social Media Marketing (SMM)

Social media gives you a chance to be that known person and increase the trust of your brand. The number one benefit of social media marketing is generating more business exposure,(85%) of marketing followed by increasing traffic (69%) and providing marketplace insight (65%).

58% of marketers indicated generating leads and developing legal fans are benefits of social media. Those investing a minimum of 6 hours per week on social media marketing saw improvements in search engine rankings.

Social media marketing is very important in B2B marketing. In B2B marketing you are selling to people, you are selling to multiple people in very different roles. When selling a product or service in a B2B environment different departments of the organization are going to have different needs regarding your offer.



Sales cycles

Since the people you are selling to (B2B) are in different roles in their respective sales cycles they are going to need information depending on their role and where they currently are in their sales cycle as per their department.

First, you need to convince them why their current solution has problems and quantify the business impact. Then you can show them a better alternative ideally in the form of happy customers using your solution.(success stories, positive statements on social sites, or case studies)

Business cases or financial justifications will be used with management first then to convince the CFO or finance manager. Another difference between B2B and consumer marketing is the size of your target market. LinkedIn is generally used for B2B marketing but mainly not so much for B2C.

What's common between B2B and B2C is that you still need to create and frequently update compelling content, focusing on engagement and interacting directly with your audience. The main difference in B2B is that you must think about the overall sales cycle, who is involved and how to address each individual's needs with the right information at the right time.



Social media marketing (SMM) campaigns

A common mistake novice marketers make in social media marketing is starting with a channel rather than the target audience. It is much easier to create a Facebook page than to build a comprehensive social media strategy.

They are two reasons why you must start with your audience:

1. First, you need to know where your target audience meets. Survey your customers directly and listen to them on social media channels to find out where they go to get information. (If you pick facebook for your B2B efforts you may be disappointed)
2. You must understand the needs of your audience to be able to communicate with them effectively. You need to focus your energy on solving a problem the buyer cares about (not you). A CIO cares about different things than a network manager but if the network goes down the CIO will care.

Objectives: An objective needs to be quantifiable and timebound, for example, you could set the goal to use social media to recruit 100 registrations to a webinar by a certain date. Make sure you have the tools to measure your goals in this case the click-through from the social media channel through to the actual registration.

Strategy: How you will achieve your objectives is your strategy. Increase the number of people (clients) you talk to directly. Once you build a plan don't forget to publicize and repeat it.

Tactics / Tools: Those are the specific social media channels you will use to execute on your strategy. To grow your online community:

1. Find questions on LinkedIn groups about your products.
2. Ask if you can repost them to your community.
3. Post the community URL on the LinkedIn group (to lead people there)
4. When answered, repost the community URL on the LinkedIn group (now demonstrating that the community is a good place to get answers).



Listening to customers

Listen to people talking to you. One-third of user surveys said that they were contacted by the company after making a complaint on Twitter (83% said they

loved hearing from the company). Listen to loyal customers or advocates, listen to product enhancement ideas from clients, also listen to dissatisfied customers.

Listen to the market

Listen to what the mainstream media report on your company, competitors and industry. Listen to blog posts on topics in your industry. Listen to LinkedIn groups where you expect to share ideas. You want to make sure that your point of view is represented fairly. Listening to people who need help in your area of expertise is a great way to network and find prospects. Listen to what key analysts and influencers in your industry are saying.