

MarTech Trend Watch

Where B2B marketers should concentrate their technology budgets in 2016 for the best ROI

For many B2B marketing organizations, tech is the biggest budget line item for 2016. Where should your company be investing marketing technology dollars to get the biggest ROI? Industry experts agree that managing the customer journey through *all* touchpoints is a key area B2B marketers should focus on.

“B2B marketers are waking up to the importance of putting the pieces together to create a better customer experience, both before and after the sale,” says Steve Krause, group vice president, product management, Oracle Marketing Cloud. “We all know we can do better. The industry is shifting and there’s a trend of integration.”

In the past, B2B companies have made very rational decisions about individual tech purchases such as marketing automation or content marketing systems. But now the question is whether those disparate solutions make sense together. “Can they talk to each other?” says Krause. “This could mean the industry is maturing and [the application of] marketing clouds will accelerate—people are looking for a foreman on their marketing technology jobsite.”

In the early stages of their buying journey, customers want control of the touchpoints. “That means B2B

marketers need to provide a digital version of the experience that sales reps would have given customers back in the day,” notes Scott Brinker, co-founder and CTO, iovation interactive and editor of ChiefMarTec.com. “There’s a shift from sales to marketing touchpoints and marketers need to create the right communications—they might not be ready for a 60 page ebook, but there’s other ways to engage, like creating tools such as calculators for your audience.”

“Understand the journey that the customer would want to take, and the experience that *you* want to make it useful to them,” adds Bob Egner, vice president of product management for EPiServer. “Then know your specific tech needs — you can’t do everything at once, so consider technology that can be extended to scale. Create a cohesive journey—that’s

where marketing cloud integration points can become more important.”

“More than ever before, we’re seeing a convergence of marketing technologies,” agrees Brandon Hartness, marketing cloud evangelist, Adobe Systems. “The challenge is to integrate legacy systems and multiple sources of data. [Many companies] still have data in silos and don’t have a single view of the customer.”



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WHAT TO DO FIRST

PRIORITIZING TECH INVESTMENTS & IMPLEMENTATIONS

Shiny new tools are staring us in the face with the promise of changing our world. Where should you focus your resources in 2016?

1. Balance Outbound with Inbound Investments

It's no secret marketers have invested heavily in the development of inbound tactics to improve their ability to generate prospects and acquire new customers, such as creating a steady stream of content that is relevant, inspirational and educational. Marketers should continue to invest in new ways to optimize inbound processes and help drive revenue through their own website. However, marketers often miss an important growth driver by underutilizing outbound tactics—such as content marketing syndication, cost per acquisition programs and events—that allow you to reach your best prospects beyond your website where they research and consume information.

It simply isn't enough to solely rely on inbound efforts anymore. With today's advancement in technology and data, outbound marketing programs are able to target more precisely with personalized, relevant messaging. One of the best ways to capitalize on outbound is account based marketing (ABM). By partnering with your sales colleagues and focusing on prospect personas within an identified set of companies that fit your profile, you can invest in a more efficient way and engage prospects in a more personalized fashion. Buying new or upgrading ABM, data and personalization technologies are smart to include in your 2016 evaluation list.

2. Eliminate Manual Marketing Processes with Automation

Marketers understand that in order to find true success they need to be customer-obsessed, spending their time on creating, delivering and optimizing targeted, personalized campaigns that meet specific business goals. While many functions within marketing are automated and optimized, many areas are woefully manual and outdated.

This analysis starts with identifying where your team is spending countless hours on manual tasks, such as sorting through reams of data trying to connect the dots and create reports or, scrubbing program and lead data in spreadsheets from disparate systems



and programs. This manual effort wastes precious resources, increases your odds of human errors, and it diverts time that could be applied to more strategic efforts. Rock star marketers aren't motivated by doing tedious tasks that produce low business value. In today's tech- and data-driven marketing landscape, this is a "pay me now" or "pay me later" scenario as marketing bosses will be constantly recruiting to replace top talent who leave as they expect to use software and tools to automate low-value tasks and spend their time on strategic, move the business needle efforts.

3. Focus on Data Integrity and Speed

Data—customer, performance and market—is the lifeblood of any marketing department. Today, it is estimated that 40% of all prospect data is inaccurate. It is essential marketers have clean, accurate data that they can act on quickly to generate leads, nurture prospects, and build loyalty with current customers. One of the most valuable lessons we have learned is that it's best to take care of data cleansing and validation before it hits your systems while in data capture or data import, for example. Here are data integrity "must haves" in 2016:

- **Data de-duplication:** Not only do marketers, sales and service pros have to guess about which information to use, your prospect may receive duplicate or invalid communications and offers. Not good. And, when it comes to lead acquisition, especially when you are running cost per lead programs, you do not want to pay for leads/data that are already in your system. Data management solutions can help here.
- **Data appending:** Today's buyers expect you to have basic contact information and their preferences. One of the best ways to make sure you don't pester customers is to use data services and tools to regularly append and update their information (including progressive profiling and data matching). This keeps data up to date and, accordingly, may provide multiple avenues to engage with the customer, on their terms.
- **Predictive Data:** New tools coming on the market now enable statistical techniques based on modeling, machine learning, and data mining that analyze current and historical facts to make predictions about future outcomes. Predictive data includes important info, for example, such as who is most likely to buy to or to churn as a customer. Models also capture relationships among many factors to assess risk and identify opportunities with a particular set of conditions to guide smarter decision making. Predictive is on many progressive marketers 2016 priority short lists. — Scott Vaughan, CMO, Integrate

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"Marketers need to really understand that all the lines of communication are blurring—what might have been thought of as just a sales or customer service interaction in the past is also a marketing

interaction," says Gordon Evans, vice president of product marketing, Salesforce.com. "You need to have a broad view of that and think about all the touchpoints."

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THE ADVERTISING/MARKETING CONVERGENCE

There's been an obvious convergence between marketing technology and advertising technology, and B2B marketers need to figure out what this means to their efforts, says Krause.

"There's a lot of uncertainty and questions," he says. "How do the details work? How do I combine my advertising with marketing automation? How do I reach someone with both email and advertising? How do I find someone on an ad network if I have their

email address? We need to sync IDs, and marketers are getting more savvy about making this happen."

"Data is the key to everything," notes Evans. "It allows us to deliver more relevance and context. Marketers should think about leveraging their ad strategy based on their database."

There are numerous opportunities to continually integrate more data into all aspects of your advertising and marketing efforts, he says, both before and after the sale. Onboarding is a key time for B2B marketers to optimize their data in digital platforms.

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DIGITAL CHECK-UP

MEDHOST USES CLOUD AND CMS TECH TO POWER ONLINE HEALTHCARE MARKETING PORTALS

The ability to access healthcare information online has changed how hospitals need to market their services. Electronic health record software and portal provider Medhost is using a digital marketing strategy centering on B2B and B2C portals to connect with healthcare facilities.

There's a lot of competition in the electronic records space, so differentiation is a big challenge, says Tom Mitchell, vice president of marketing for Nashville-based Medhost. "Hospitals are mandated by the government to have electronic records and need certain functionality. All electronic healthcare vendors have to offer the same type of technology, so it's important to be found by executives searching for options."

Medhost provides services to over 1,000 community hospitals with 50 to 200 beds. When Medhost wanted to launch the YourCareEverywhere system to help hospitals build digital health and wellness portals, they needed a robust CMS to host different tools for customers. The portals needed to be built around how the customer would interact with the site and help engage the patient with the facility so they would be inclined to come back again.

"The birth of the healthcare consumer is the impetus for a lot of what we have done," says Daniel Hart, executive vice president for YourCareEverywhere. "We hear a lot about hospitals having to operate more like retailers and traditional consumer businesses."

Medhost operates YourCareUniverse.com as a business hub to offer hospitals tools to market to patients. Both on the B2B and B2C side, Medhost wanted to manage analytics and traffic patterns. Adobe Marketing Cloud powers both sites.

"On the B2B side, it isn't so much about getting a high number of visitors but getting the *right* visitors," says Mitchell.

"There's a finite number of hospitals, so we need to understand the metrics and hone our digital strategies. SEM and integration with our marketing automation engine will help us get conversions—most of our inbound leads are digital, so a high performing website is essential.

The majority of those leads come in via organic search, so a strong SEM strategy is essential. Mitchell says he focuses not just on keywords but factors like eliminating duplicate URLs to see a jump in SEO scores.

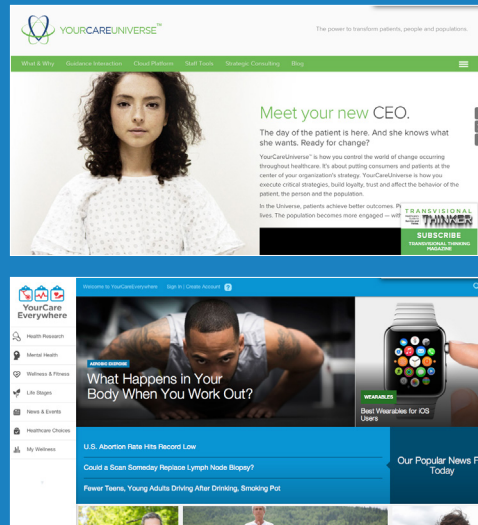
Once a hospital has engaged with Medhost to create a YourCareEverywhere portal, creating the perfect digital experience so patients will actually use the site is essential, says Hart. Content models differ for different facilities and a managing editor helps out with production, to help hospitals consider the same metrics that a media content site would look at to gauge success.

Mitchell says the goal of YourCareUniverse.com is to tell the story of the new reality of how consumers are shopping for healthcare. "The site is built for education awareness, to create thought leadership and engagement through content like video."

The initial iteration of the site was to drive awareness, branding and education. As it evolves, the focus will shift to driving demand, with more forms and content designed to drive conversion. An inside sales team is tracking and following up on leads. Adobe Cloud will help Medhost track and personalize follow-up on leads.

Patient experiences on the YourCareEverywhere sites are driven by preferences chosen by the user. Depending on what they self-select they will receive different information on the home page from your care facility.

"We're trying to create a hub for our hospital customers and their community that aggregates key elements to create a full online healthcare experience, incorporating health records and content," says Hart. "The key is to build a responsive website." —BNV



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“That’s a magical time—customers have made the purchase and now you need to get them to actually adopt and use your product.”

Offering tips and tricks—via automated email and other channels—can move new customers through a series of tasks and get them involved with the product, says Evans. “There are all kinds of things you can do to make your product more useful and reduce calls to your helpdesk or internal call center.”

Marketing organizations need to get a handle on all the different facets of their technology strategy. Egner says he talked to one CMO recently about cross channel experiences in his organization. One group internally works on web, while another focuses on email—and they’re battling among themselves about money.

“It’s a solvable problem, and sometimes it’s not even about the technology,” he says. “It’s about focusing on the customer’s needs. If someone received an email and then followed it to your website, you need to know [their path]. Are they using email, mobile, web? It’s not difficult to generate so much data that it becomes overwhelming.”

B2B WORLD PROBLEMS

B2B marketers don’t typically need the same scale as their B2C counterparts, but they do require a greater degree of workflow and ways to connect with the humans in the B2B decision-making process, notes Oracle’s Krause.

Account based marketing is a natural evolution of this, he says. “You can start out by talking about leads and then look at patterns. In some ways, it becomes something that is more actionable.”

In the past, account based marketing has almost lived in a parallel universe to marketing automation, focusing more on retargeting than nurturing, says David Raab, principal, Raab Associates. “Now they’re coming closer together and companies are tying things together to understand who their best customers are.”

Content marketing is an essential way to reach those best—and potentially best new—customers. Of course, many B2B organizations have a lot of legacy content lying around that was created without a sense of marketing purpose, notes Krause.

“Companies need to look at their buyer personas and identify what they need to do to start or keep the conversation going during different engagement stages,” he says. “Marketers should create a content supply chain so they know the right thing to show someone at the right stage.”

Technology to formalize management of content in multiple media formats is a key need in the B2B space, says Raab. “If you’re going to create cross channel experiences, the content itself has to be available in different formats.”

THE SOCIAL CONNECTION

A major channel to distribute all that content is social media. Some B2B verticals—like high tech—adapted quicker to social than others. “But over time, B2B companies are seeing that social is applicable to them,” says Krause, noting that publishing and listening tools are making the experience more manageable for marketers.

Still, many B2B marketers are struggling to discover ways to see true value from their social media investments, says Raab, noting that video personalized to different segments can be an effective way for marketers to target socially.

Of course, getting C-suite buy-in can still be a challenge when it comes to social investments. “Marketers need to put it in terms that make sense for their organization if they want to go to the next level,” says Egner. “In B2B many people are still not clear on the real value of social media. People aren’t using social to buy machine tool supplies. You need to know how you want to use social based on your followers’ identities and interest levels.” !



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