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8 B2B Online Marketing Ideas You Can't Afford to Ignore



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INTRODUCTION

It's time to embrace online marketing for revenue opportunity.

For generations, distributors and manufacturers relied heavily on face-to-face selling as the primary driver for new business growth. While the role of the salesperson is still critical, your old tactics are no longer enough to compete in this rapidly evolving marketplace.

The changing face and needs of your customers, combined with the rise of online and mobile technologies in the workplace, have rendered your old tactics inadequate. If you're still relying on marketing strategies from past decades, your company's success may be in question for the next decade. It's time to step up and take action. But what should you do?

To ensure your company's success, you must continually evaluate and evolve how you do business to grow revenue and profits. Online marketing represents a tremendous opportunity for growth for your company, because more business is conducted online now than ever before.

Here are eight B2B online marketing ideas you need to embrace to be successful.



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THINK OF MARKETING AS AN INVESTMENT, NOT AN EXPENSE

#1 - Think of Marketing as an Investment, Not an Expense

If you think of marketing merely as an expense, chances are you're doing it wrong. Instead, try thinking of marketing as an investment that produces measurable return in the form of qualified leads and bankable sales.

Just as you would carefully review the return on investment for stocks, bonds, and mutual funds in your retirement portfolio, you need to carefully evaluate the return on investment in your company's marketing portfolio.

So, what type of return on investment should your marketing produce? Well, it can produce a measurable return in four ways. Your marketing should:

1. **Attract prospects, or new customers.** Attracting new customers is where most companies spend the majority of their dollars and time. This is unfortunate, because it can be the most challenging and expensive result to achieve.
2. **Help customers spend more.** The simplest way to think about this is up-selling and cross-selling via your marketing.
3. **Encourage customers to come back more often and buy from you.** This is commonly referred to as nurturing, but it's measurable when it's done with defined, revenue-driven purposes.
4. **Help customers refer new business to you.** Think of it like word of mouth, but with a little help.

It is much easier to sell to existing customers than it is to get new ones, because you have already earned their trust and you have credibility. That's why a balanced investment approach is necessary in marketing, too.

IGNORE YOUR WEBSITE AT YOUR OWN PERIL

#2 – Ignore your Website at your Own Peril

You've put it off long enough; it's time to get serious about your Website.

As the endorsed online marketing consultant for a variety of industrial and B2B trade associations, I review hundreds of distribution Websites each year. Unfortunately, the vast majority of them are just awful. While you may have been able to get away with this in the past, you will not get away with it going forward.

If you use Google on a daily basis to research products and companies, don't you think your customers do too? What do you want them to find? Make it a priority to turn your Website into a customer-focused sales machine.

Your Website should:

- **Speak directly to each member of your target audience.** Identify your most profitable customers and address to their unique needs and motivations.
- **Provide content and features that address your customers' needs.** Your customers are not visiting your Website to kill time. Anticipate their needs and provide the solutions they are seeking. And do it quickly.
- **Educate and build trust.** Your Website cannot just sell – it must also educate. Serve as a vital resource by offering educational content that helps your customers be more effective.
- **Help visitors take action easily.** Your Website can not take a passive approach towards generating leads and sales. Offer a variety of well-placed calls to action to convert anonymous visitors into named leads.
- **Make it easy for customers to do business with you.** Your Website should serve as the hub of all your marketing activities, providing customers and prospects with an interactive and dynamic way to do business with you.

THERE ARE RICHES IN NICHES

#3 – There are Riches in Niches

There is a paradox in marketing you need to embrace:

The smaller your target market, the bigger your opportunity.

This may seem counter-intuitive, because you may think marketing your business to the widest possible audience will get you the most opportunity. But it's true!

Trying to be all things to all people is a fast track to failure.

If you say your target customer is “everyone” – the reality is you are targeting no one. Or, to put it another way, when you try to be all things to all people, no one will remember you. You need to become a niche marketer.

There are a number of significant benefits of focusing on a niche.

- a) **You have fewer competitors** because fewer companies focus on your specialized target market.
- b) **You become a specialist**, and everyone wants to work with a specialist.
- c) **Your position in the market becomes stronger**, which causes your reputation to spread rapidly throughout your target market.
- d) **Your marketing is more effective and less expensive**. Since you know exactly who your ideal customer is and where to market to reach them, you can spend less time and money getting your message out.

My own company is living proof of this concept. If you'd like to know how, ask me. I'd be happy to share my experience.

ABANDON 'MEGAPHONE MARKETING' & EMBRACE 'MAGNET MARKETING'

#4 – Abandon 'Megaphone Marketing' & Embrace 'Magnet Marketing'

Successful B2B companies are realizing that megaphone marketing tactics don't work.

What is Megaphone Marketing?

Megaphone marketing is shouting at many with the hopes of attracting a few. Examples of megaphone tactics include:

- print advertising (including yellow page advertising/directory advertising)
- untargeted banner advertising
- cold calls/mass email blasts

They no longer work because of a fundamental shift in customer behavior. Customers don't want to be interrupted, and megaphone marketing is an interruption. Customers want to be in control of the information they receive. So, what should you do?

Why Magnet Marketing Works Better

Magnet marketing overcomes the problems of megaphone marketing by putting the customer in control. It helps you get found by customers at the very moment they have a need for your products and services.

It also allows you to earn trust by providing customers with information they value to attract them to your Website to do business. Examples include:

- content marketing
- search engine optimization (including pay-per-click advertising)
- social media marketing

Not only do magnet marketing tactics generate more leads and sales, but they are also less expensive. According to research, companies that focus on **magnet marketing tactics have a 62% lower cost-per-lead** than companies that focus on megaphone marketing tactics.

CONTENT MARKETING IS THE NEW ADVERTISING

#5 – Content Marketing is the New Advertising

We just talked about how megaphone marketing tactics like print advertising don't work anymore, while magnet tactics like content marketing do. Let's dig deeper.

Search engines, blogs, social networking sites and other online platforms give you a tremendous opportunity to engage directly with customers. Content is the gateway to getting your business there in a way that will get customer attention.

Spend less time focusing on traditional advertising, and more time creating great content that educates. People don't choose to do business with you just because you offer the right products at the right price. They choose you because you and your team have valuable, specialized knowledge about the applications of your products and services. Lead with that specialized knowledge in your marketing by writing:

- **Blog Posts:** Insightful and timely short-form Web content that highlights important news, observations, tips, and other useful content.
- **'How To' Articles:** Educational pieces that demonstrate a best practice or little-known insight to showcase your expertise.
- **Whitepapers:** Topical, educational reports or guides oriented toward a particular industry challenge, opportunity, or best practice.
- **Videos:** Visual demonstrations of a product, best practice, etc. that allow customers to see your company behind the scenes.
- **Testimonials and Case Studies:** Poignant examples of words and great experiences of current customers to demonstrate value to prospective customers.
- **Webinars:** Educational seminars conducted over the Web that participants can easily view from their desk - either live or on-demand.

By marketing your knowledge instead of just marketing yourself, you will create a unique differentiation in the marketplace.

EMBRACE THE MOBILE MARKETING REVOLUTION

#6 – Embrace the Mobile Marketing Revolution

Look at people in an elevator, at an airport, or in a boring meeting. Chances are, they are staring down at and poking a rectangular device. In 2010, a Forbes study found that 82 percent of business executives use smartphones. That number is most likely approaching 100 percent by now. And in 2014, mobile devices passed desktop computers as the most common way people access the Web.

If your Website is not mobile friendly yet, it's a liability that won't have staying power.

My clients have seen their mobile web traffic multiply in just the past few years. Some have seen it double; others have seen it triple or quadruple.

Google also ranks sites with mobile-optimized Websites higher in mobile search results than non-optimized Websites. Their reasoning is that mobile-friendly Websites are more useful for mobile searchers, and therefore deserve a higher place in the search engine.

The time to sit back and see how mobile usage develops is over. Here are some ways to capitalize on this trend:

- Responsive websites are the standard—sites that resize themselves according to the device on which people view it. However, mobile site versions are still an option. You can build a custom mobile Website yourself or take advantage of innovative services like DudaMobile to create a mobile version of your Website in minutes.
- Include more video content on your Website, because it's easier to view than text. Make sure phone numbers are clickable on mobile screens.
- If your business has some function or service that would be enhanced by it, create an app to help your customers and salespeople be more effective.

Whatever your strategy, think big about small screens.

YOU HAVE AN ONLINE BRAND (WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT)

#7 – You Have an Online Brand (Whether You Like It or Not)

Most industrial companies give very little thought to branding. They view a brand as “pie in the sky” or something intangible that doesn’t have any hard consequences.

What is a brand, anyway? Is it a logo? Is it a tagline? Is it an advertising campaign? I think Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon, put it best when he said, “Your brand is what people say about you when you’re not in the room.” In the online world, there is no hiding your brand. And trust me, people are talking.

According to a study by Deloitte, over 70% of people use Google to find information online every day. Do not be mistaken: *people are Googling you*.

Go ahead, Google your company name. What do you see? Are you happy? What customers find when they search can have serious consequences for your business.

It’s not just your own Website or content that customers can find. Word-of-mouth is not what it used to be. Now, thanks to the infinite power of the Web, customers can share their rants and raves instantly with a worldwide audience. Aggregators and other sources can publish whatever they want if it’s legal (and sometimes even if it isn’t). As a result, you have an online brand whether you like it or not.

In such a connected world, your online image is everything. And if your online image is poor or tarnished, it can have a huge impact on your business in multiple areas – not just marketing. It can harm your:

- Lead generation and sales process
- Customer and employee recruiting/retention
- Even your business financing (banks can Google too)

Pay attention to your online brand and take proactive efforts to manage it.

MAKE MARKETING ACCOUNTABLE FOR REVENUE AND PROFITS

#8 – Make Marketing Accountable for Revenue and Profit

How will you know if your online marketing program is a success? Gone are the days when a marketer can rely on subjective measures, gut feel or esoteric statistics like ‘hits.’ Marketing needs to be accountable for revenue and profits so you can easily identify the activities that are working and not working. To be successful with online marketing, you need to accurately measure the bottom-line impact on your business.

With the right tools and strategies, that isn’t as hard as it might seem. With good data, you can make better marketing decisions and measure your online marketing success.

Since your Website is the hub of your online marketing efforts, it’s also the most crucial part of your ROI measurement efforts. The good news is that there are free Web Analytics solutions that make this easy.

Online Marketing Analytics = Accountability for ROI

Google Analytics does a fantastic job of helping you measure how well your Website is working towards achieving your business goals. It’s free reports will show you how people found your site, what content they looked at and what calls to action enticed them to reach out. This provides you with vital information on the current success of your Website and provides ideas for how you can improve your results in the future. Make sure you have it installed and configured properly as a first step.

Once you get a taste of marketing measurement, you will be hooked. Soon you will want to measure results for all of your marketing, including inbound phone calls, and on-and offline efforts. Marketing analytics tools will provide you with the solution. Leveraging trackable campaign IDs and unique toll-free numbers, you can track the results of every penny you spend. Finally, you’ll really know what marketing ROI looks like. That’s the key to accountability.

NEXT STEPS

Do something!

Becoming proficient in online marketing is neither a fad nor changing for change's sake. It's truly a vital skill as business culture and practices keep abreast of technology and human habits and preferences.

I didn't write this book to embarrass you or make you feel bad about what you don't know. I wrote it to share the awesome potential of B2B online marketing and provide you with some core ideas to embrace for success.

Now, go out there and make me proud!

A great next step will be to [setup a free consultation with me](#), Bob DeStefano, to discuss your B2B online marketing strategy.

I guarantee I'll provide you with tips and ideas you can use immediately to boost your results.

Call me at **(877) 786-3249 x234** or click the link below to schedule your consultation.

[**SCHEDULE CONSULTATION**](#)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bob DeStefano, B2B Online Marketing Strategist & Speaker

Bob DeStefano is an internet marketing pioneer with over 20 years of experience helping B2B companies leverage online marketing to produce bottom-line results.

Through his speaking, writing and consulting, Bob makes online marketing understandable and empowers business leaders with actionable tips and strategies they can put to work immediately to:

- Increase sales & profits
- Generate new business leads
- Strengthen relationships with customers
- Boost marketing results on a limited budget
- Measure marketing ROI



Bob's online marketing career began during the birth of online marketing in the early 1990's serving as a strategic planner for Dean Witter, Discover & Co. At Dean Witter, Bob spearheaded the creation of the company's first Dean Witter and Discover Card Websites.

As president of [SVM E-Marketing Solutions](#), a leading B2B online marketing agency, Bob has worked with a wide variety of companies, from Fortune 500 companies to small family-owned businesses, to help them leverage online marketing to produce bottom-line results.

Bob is the author of [Old Dog, New Clicks: Online Industrial and B2B Marketing Know-How for the 21st Century](#), a step-by-step plan to transform your marketing practices from past decades to ensure your company's success for the next decade. In addition, Bob is a regular contributor to a variety of publications, including Modern Distribution Management, Contractor Supply and MarketingProfs, on the subject of actionable online marketing strategies.

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