



WHY ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL IN Marketing

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et's face it: We all want easy answers. This is especially true in the complex (and ever-changing) world of B2B (business-to-business) marketing. We crave that quick template we can use for a great marketing plan. We want that one "magic" tactic that will bring us new leads (tomorrow, if possible). We hear the only strategy that works is inbound, so we rush to implement our inbound plan before we fall behind. And we want to know what works for other technology marketers.

Unfortunately, this won't always lead to your best prospects.

Why? Simply put, one size doesn't fit all in marketing. What works for a competitor may not work for you. Even with a direct competitor, there are significant differences to consider:

- » **Every business has different resources** – Whether it's your budget, the number of people on your marketing team, or even their skillset, different resources mean different approaches in how you go to market. Even when you are looking at Partners similar to you in terms of size and focus, your sales plan and goals will likely be very different. A company with a strong inside sales team will have a go-to-market approach to take advantage of that resource. It works for them, but unless you are looking to make a big shift in your organizational structure, it may not work for you.

EXAMPLE: One of our clients had tremendous success with inbound marketing, and most of it was through organic search. They happened to have an internal resource with strong writing skills and a passion for their industry who cranked out e-books, white papers, case studies, and blogs like a machine. Taking that approach to SEO might be a mistake for you because replicating that content machine would be incredibly costly. Of course, that doesn't mean content and inbound aren't good tactics for you; just don't expect the same results unless you are making those same investments.

- » **Who (and where) you are targeting matters a lot** – And that's not only the industry, but also the size of that marketplace and even how long you have been marketing to them. Niche markets will benefit from a very different approach than targeting CFOs in distribution. Marketing in New York IS different from marketing in Montana. Unlike a mature market where you have a solid list of customers and proof points behind you, new markets will require a different set of tactics. I give these examples because this is the place where many Partners fail when adopting a competitor's tactics.

EXAMPLE: Another of our clients weighted their marketing much more toward outbound, mostly through emails. Additionally, they had great success with in-person events. But, they also



had a database of more than 9,000 names who they had been marketing to for two years and a defined geography where networking through local groups was a big part of day-to-day business. Their success with events would be difficult to replicate in a major metro area, and their email success rate would be impossible to achieve with a purchased list.

Okay, you get there are differences between companies, but what about the tactics themselves? Surely there are tactics every marketer needs to use? Yes, to some extent. No B2B marketer will be successful without a strong online presence, quality content, and the right vehicle to get that content into their prospects' hands.

The mistake too many marketers make is not looking at HOW to deploy those tactics or what weighting you should give them in your marketing plan. For each tactic you consider, try to answer these questions:

- » Have we used it?
- » How have we used it?
- » What were our results?
- » How did we weight them within our marketing?
- » If we haven't used it, would it fit into our marketing plan?

Given this, let's look at some common, important, and newer tactics to see how they may or may not work for you.

- » **Your Online Presence** – Depending on your market, organic search tactics won't always be enough to help you build a robust pipeline. Let's go back to that niche market. Depending on the size of the market, you might struggle to find search terms that are getting enough traction to bring you the number of leads you need. Maybe it's a market where there is a proprietary system, and you need to focus on competitive searches (and creating competitive content), OR maybe it's a market that is simply so niche a better strategy is to go to THEM rather than hoping they will find you.

TIP: Working with an SEO company to do a comprehensive keyword analysis can help you determine how effective SEO is going to be in your marketing plan. It doesn't mean you won't invest, but you may not invest the way someone in a broad industry such as food distribution might. In fact, you could decide it's more valuable to put your dollars into very targeted online advertising or a social media advertising platform that allows for deeper targeting, like LinkedIn.

- » **Content** – We ALL need valuable content to attract and convert customers. There is simply no way around it. What is different from company to company is how much content and what type of content you will need. It's unlikely you've attended any recent inbound or content marketing training that didn't talk about the importance of blogs. And for most companies, that's probably true. But even in the case of something we accept as the "rule," there might be exceptions.

TIP: If you decided you will have limited success with organic SEO strategies, then blogging frequently may not be critical to your success. It doesn't mean you won't maintain a blog, but perhaps you should spend more of your content resources creating valuable thought leadership pieces that will lead to downloads and clicks. Or, if you have multiple targets and some do well with organic search, your blogs should be heavily focused on those target markets.

- » **Third-party Marketing** – Working with organizations already targeting your industry (such as associations or publications) is a great approach. In some cases, when entering a new market, it might be your single best option – giving you credibility and access you couldn't quickly replicate with any other marketing tactics. The same could be true with smaller or more niche markets. On the other hand, if you're focusing on a broad industry (such as distribution), you don't want to get lost in a slew of sponsors and messages from others targeting the industry. The benefits these associations offer should also be considered.

EXAMPLE: I worked with a sales team that insisted we had to join a few big local business associations. After a year of debate, we made the investment. The end result? Nothing. Because the "value" those particular associations provided was regular networking sessions in the evening, when our sales team was unable to attend.

» **Account-Based Marketing (ABM)** – The newest buzzword in marketing is actually a strategy that has been around for years. Originally intended as a way to sell (and cross-sell) into the many different titles and departments in enterprise companies, elements of ABM are now being used to target companies in the SMB space as well. We are including it because there will likely be marketers adopting this strategy, and a lot of others asking if it will work for them. ABM requires a strong database of targeted prospects, the ability and resources to create and customize messages just for them, and a strong sales team to do the one-to-one follow-up.

***TIP:** While ABM is the hot topic in marketing right now, do not get distracted by the latest “bright shiny object.” Educate yourself on the newest tactics, of course, but take time to really vet them and consider how well they will work for YOU.*

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- » For any marketing tactic, don't think in absolutes. It's not simply a question of will it or won't it work. Think through how much weight it deserves in your plan, how and where you will implement it, and how you will measure success.
- » Be critical when looking at what works for others. Dig deep enough to understand the investment it took them to get there and be honest enough about whether you will really be able to make that same investment.
- » And the biggest takeaway? There is no magic marketing bullet, and a one-size-fits-all approach might be easier, but it could hurt you more than it will help. 🌀

Need assistance finding the best marketing tactics for your business? Barbara Pfeiffer and the team at The Partner Marketing Group can get your marketing moving in the right direction. Check out marketing solutions and programs designed just for technology Partners and ISVs at www.thepartnermarketinggroup.com. Please contact Barbara at Barbara@thepartnermarketinggroup.com with any questions.



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