



TRENDS
THAT WILL
DRIVE
SAVVY
B2B
CONTENT
MARKETING
IN 2019

For tech B2B marketers, the rules of the game have changed. The B2B purchasing process has evolved and content has taken on a very important role in sales engagement. There is plenty of information out there on the importance of content marketing – CMI's digital content marketing stats show that 72% of marketers say content marketing increases engagement. The research is in and content marketing is pivotal to any marketing strategy.

Content marketing, especially in the B2B arena, is fast evolving with new trends and uses of emerging technologies every year. We have collated seven trends – along with ways to implement them – that we believe will continue to develop in 2019.



Personalisation

Over the past 12 months, personalisation has emerged as the most significant trend in content marketing. Trend, in the original sense of the word – the general course or prevailing tendency – not something that is in style at the moment. Personalisation is here to stay and it is in every company's best interest to begin expanding on their personalisation strategy or develop one if they haven't yet.



Account-based marketing (ABM) has grown in popularity and usage over the past several years. It is essentially a form of personalised marketing where an organisation takes an individual customer account – a company not an individual person – and treats it like its very own market. They then proceed to create a very targeted message for that company once significant research has been done as to the particular needs of that organisation.

ABM is very relevant when you consider that 78% of consumers say that **personally-relevant content** is a determining factor in their purchasing decision. There has been a move towards more pointed and intimate conversations between businesses and their customers. This is especially important in the B2B arena because sales frequently have high potential values and a correspondingly long cycle.

Developing a way to speak directly to your clients can come in a myriad of forms, some simple and some requiring deep research and the use of software. Surveys and questionnaires are a good way to gain insight on an individual basis. Use this information to build out your CRM. Then you can develop personas for

Penny Gillespie
Research Director at
Gartner

the types of professionals that are purchasing what your business is offering. Next, you'll want to implement some sort of personalisation software such as **Magento** or **Monetate**. And finally, integrate marketing automation software with your CRM. Once you have a good feel for your target audience, you'll want to keep an eye on their purchasing journey and offer them assistance along the way.

The foundation on which personalisation should be incorporated for business buyers is efficiency and effectiveness because business buyers are typically working under pressure and with deadlines. Personalisation would then be developed based on available customer preference settings in the digital commerce platforms, creating or identifying merchandise affiliation, and incorporating behaviour-based learning from other customers along with specific customer knowledge and information.

An amazing, though risky example of personalised marketing, comes from **GumGum**: an artificial intelligence company, who wanted to get the attention of T-mobile. Through research, they found that CEO John Legere was very active on social media and gleaned from Twitter that he was a huge Batman fan.

GumGum wanted to show T-mobile how valuable their computer vision technology could be. They decided to avoid the channel of typical outbound email and go down a more personalised path. They put together a creative team of editors, writers and illustrators to create a comic book called **T-Man and Gums**. When it was complete, they shipped 100 copies to T-Mobile and its agencies of record. Within hours, Legere reached out on **Twitter to praise the work**. And within a few days, a meeting was set.



Engage with sales teams to spot any opportunities for personalised selling pilot projects.

More collaboration between brands



Co-marketing – also known as cross-promotion – is partnering with another company that isn't your competitor, but targets a similar audience, then creating a promotion that benefits both companies.

There are three main benefits to co-marketing for the brands involved:

Establishing credibility

By partnering with another respected brand, credibility is enhanced because both companies are backing each other in the market.

Extending reach

Reach is extended because your business has been opened up to a whole new database of potential customers.

Increasing marketing budgets

Each participating company's spending allowance increases by joining budgets, as you will both promote the new venture.

If done well, it's a win-win situation for both participants. Below are two examples of how companies can work together towards a common goal.



Dell and Intel

In this partnership, advertising support is provided to Dell by Intel, in that they pay a part of advertising costs for any advertisement that prominently displays the “Intel Inside” logo, provided the advertisement does not contain any reference to a competitor.

Uber and Spotify

In order to differentiate both brands from their competition, these companies created a unique experience for their customers. Spotify members using Uber were able to set up a special playlist timed to start just as their Uber ride began, giving them a ride experience no one else could match.



Analyse whether ingredient or composite co-branding is right for your particular business. Will you benefit most by partnering with a company that currently supplies materials you use to produce your product or service, or would it be better to partner with a distinct brand to create a new offering neither company could provide alone?

Influencer collaboration



An influencer is someone who has the power to influence the perception of others or get them to engage in a different way than they usually do, not just someone with a large following.

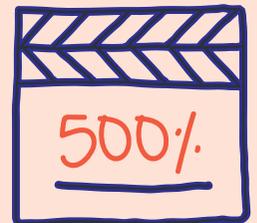
Influencer marketing is much more effective than traditional marketing because by using influencers, your message is crossing audiences who have chosen to receive content from these influencers. With traditional marketing, you are putting your message out there to people who may not be receptive to it.

While the use of influencers is not new, the practice has been used predominantly in the B2C space. This is possibly because B2B brands have a diverse set of customers across various industries, so finding an influencer who has substantial influence across a diverse group has historically been a challenge.



It's important that you look for influencers who are highly relevant to your brand. And your brand should offer some kind of value to these influencers in order to win them over.

An example of influencer collaboration was carried out by Video Fruit using Guest Blogging. Bryan Harris, founder of marketing consultancy Video Fruit, was published as a guest blogger on the Okdork blog. On the day the post was published, the results for Video Fruit were astronomical and the site saw an increase in page views of 500%.



Video – if an infographic speaks a thousand words...

B2B buying behaviour is changing rapidly. One reason for this is the increase in younger employees with decision making power. This group of people grew up with YouTube, Instagram and Facebook videos and that is changing the buying dynamic. They expect high-quality video content when they search for your company.



Research from Google has indicated that **70%** of B2B buyers and researchers are watching videos throughout the buying journey.





Videos can describe your service, provide in-depth tutorials or put a voice to your business through client testimonials. Just because you operate in the B2B space, doesn't mean that your videos should be dry and technical. While someone might not have the time to go through your product datasheet, more people will have the time to watch an entertaining, engaging two to three-minute video about a solution that might be of value to them.

Cisco, one of the world's largest networking companies, made a video that highlights how a hacker completes a ransomware attack. The video itself is informative, but what makes it effective is the narrative they created which follows a hacker performing a successful ransomware attack. They created an aura of vulnerability that made their audience feel that they needed protection. They posted the video with the following tag line: See how an effective ransomware attack comes together. This is why today's enterprises require effective security.

▶ Watch the video [HERE](#)



If you think video is too big to tackle, consider outsourcing production to a company that specialises in this, or start small. There is great software available to create short message videos yourself.

Make the most of audio communications

When talking about video marketing, audio communications must also be addressed. And there are two key areas to address: podcasting and voice search.

Podcasts

There has been a growth in popularity of podcast listening in the B2B segment. IdeaCast from Harvard Business Review and Content Champion from Content Marketing Institute have been long-running marketing podcasts that have gained a lot of traction in the space. But it's not only these: here is a [list](#) of some great podcasts every B2B marketer should check out in 2019.

According to the latest [Podcast Consumer report](#) by Edison Research, the percentage of people listening to podcasts on an ongoing basis is on the rise. The costs associated with creating audio versus video content are much friendlier to those who want to add multimedia to their content strategy.



Identify the correct type of content for your particular business. A few ideas to get you thinking: Conduct interviews with experts inside your company, or create an interview based on interesting new technology you're working on.



Voice search



Another exciting audio trend to keep in mind is voice search.



According to Google, **50%** of searches will be conducted using voice search by 2020.

Alexa and other voice-activated assistants are changing people's behaviours, and with voice search, there is only one winner in search results. When using voice assistants, people tend to ask for what they are looking for in full sentences, rather than searching with short or even long tail keywords. This will have an impact on how you structure and develop your content. The industry is still in its infancy but evolving rapidly, so it's time to start talking to your SEO team to understand how you can develop your content for voice search compatibility.



People using voice search don't speak to their devices asking for marketing messages they are asking for specific answers - if your site isn't built to answer questions, build that into your blog posts.

Omnichannel communications - create a seamless customer journey

Omnichannel refers to creating a seamless experience for customers across all digital and physical communication channels. Your company needs to have mobile marketing, social media campaigns, and a well-designed website that all work together. If these channels don't tie in, it's not omnichannel, it's multichannel.



Today's B2B buyers are demanding more B2C type functionalities such as customer connectivity and options that provide value. Their customer journey and buying processes require a lot of information and discussion between experts, sales reps and buyers.



There are several companies offering great Omnichannel options today. Do some research and find a suitable partner to implement this strategy for your company.

Today, your customers may take much longer than they did in the past to purchase your goods or services, in part due to increased access to information. Since the buying process is lengthened through research, there are several points at which you can lose a sale. By providing seamless information all the way through the purchasing process, there is a better chance of keeping customers on the buying journey.

This is a great infographic that describes some of the challenges and opportunities of the omnichannel experience.



Businesses that adopt omnichannel strategies achieve

91%

greater year-over-year customer retention rates

compared to businesses that don't, according to a survey conducted by Aspect Software

Building the B2B Omni-Channel Commerce Platform of the Future

Driven by consumer online buying experiences, business suppliers are racing to meet buyer demands, according to new research* from Accenture (NYSE: ACN) and hybris software, an SAP company.

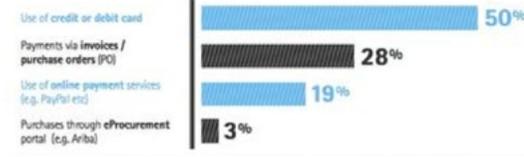
B2B Purchasers Expectations Raised by B2C Experiences



Top features or functions B2B Customers expect:



Additionally, nearly **7 out of 10 B2B buyers** prefer to use direct, instant online forms of payment, such as credit cards or payment systems, rather than purchase orders and invoices.



Future Omni-Channel Capabilities

B2B sellers are also looking beyond existing capabilities to the technologies that will drive the future of their businesses.



Omni-Channel Challenges

Most challenges B2B sellers face are related to organization and structure:

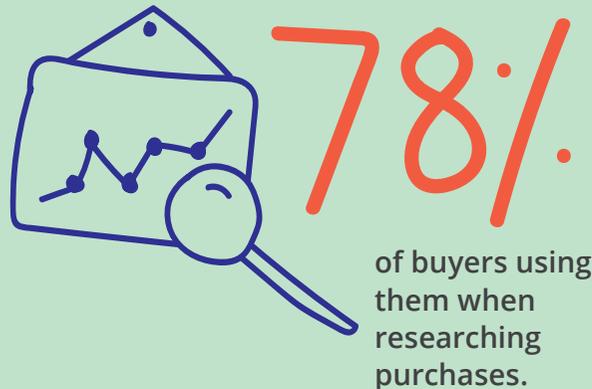


These challenges are similar to what companies such as B2C retailers face when trying to implement omni-channel capabilities, as Accenture and hybris found in another research focused on consumer businesses.

Case studies old dog new tricks

Case studies are one of the most valuable tools in a content marketer's arsenal

According to the **Demand Gen Report**, case studies convert at the highest rate of any content type, with



While they are not a new phenomenon, they are changing shape in a few key ways:

Shorter and more bite-sized content

Moving forward, the goal will be to develop a better way to present case studies. A lot of content is being condensed and tightened to be consumed more quickly, case studies are not exempt from this.

Offering HTML options

The majority of case studies are presented as PDF files rather than as HTML on web pages, this is because those that use them tend to like to download them. This is changing, in order to make it more convenient to share via social media, marketers are presenting case studies within web pages.

Presentation creation platforms

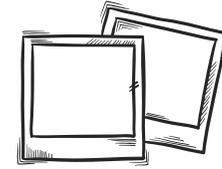
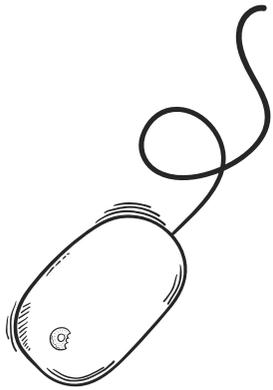
You can reformat typical, flat PDF's in LinkedIn's SlideShare platform to create a more dynamic presentation. You can take your ideas to the next level with sites like SnapApp, an interactive content creation platform. Through this site, you can develop your case studies to make them interactive. SnapApp also includes questions that gauge buyer interest and offer the opportunity to qualify leads.

Use of video

Another trend gaining serious momentum is video case studies. As this is a new frontier, there are just a few out there at the moment, but in conjunction with the increased numbers in video consumption, in general, it's a logical progression for this marketing tool as well.



Try experimenting with one of the above options to enhance your current content offering



Conclusion

Marketing in tech B2B is one of the most innovative and fast-moving fields in marketing today. The above are just a sampling of the trends we're seeing take hold for the new year - but each and every one of them provides a solid content marketing option for you to integrate into your current strategy. *If you want to talk about these ideas or other ideas you may have - get in touch and let's chat.*



Anu Ramani
Director, Isoline Communications

12 Bournemouth Road, London SW19 3AP

M: +44 7564 904 939

T: +44 20 3720 5628

E: anu@isolinecomms.com

W: www.isolinecomms.com