

Notes for the B to B marketer adjusting to new advertising

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Just as advertising is always about stimulating interest, the B to B marketer is challenged to creatively deliver relevancy within the context of a consistent brand strategy. To be effective, marketing messages must be tuned for extended purchasing cycles and a buying chain with an ostensibly 'just the facts, ma'am' mindset.

With buyers having instant, stealth access to every vendor's vitals, B to B advertising must adapt accordingly. First, there are more channels to weigh. Second, you are more likely to have more on your plate because, after all, Internet is synonymous with easy, ubiquitous, cheaper, better and faster. How hard can it be to decide, come up with the right 90 characters in a search ad, or compelling content before producing a tight banner ad?

It wasn't always this way.

Before we hung everything out online, business buyers had a more tedious task as dramatized in the now-classic McGraw-Hill ad. The buyer represented by the man-in-chair acquired his grumpy moniker sitting through endless sales calls and visits. He was tasked to manually sort fact from marketing fiction with due diligence from diverse resources as best he and/or his staff could. Adding to the exercise he then reported findings and recommendations to many more accountable colleagues just like him up and down the buying chain.

Trade advertising in print was the only media that made sense for reaching B to B decision makers. Advertising had many more square inches to accomplish a much bigger job to soften the B to B sale, addressing timeless concerns from beleaguered decision makers:

"I don't know you.
I don't know your company.
I don't know your company's product.
I don't know what your company stands for.
I don't know your company's customers.
I don't know your company's record.
I don't know your company reputation.

Now—what was it you wanted to sell me?"



B to B advertisers of old had it tough:

- Narrowing ad campaign choices typically involved less than a handful of vertical market trade magazines for each market.
- Marrying an optimum ad size, frequency, & positioning within the publications of choice with an appropriate marketing budget. Production and proofing was horrendous compared to digital.
- Balancing the right mix of trade advertising, trade press (PR, content articles), direct marketing, trade shows & events.
- Deciding how much to do themselves or entrust to outside vendors.

Old challenges are replaced by new ones.

On the plus side for your customers, B to B buyers today can pretty much learn everything they need to know about a you and your company within minutes. A marketer's sales staff is unlikely to be in the hot seat opposite a grumpy man in chair. He still wants to know, but he's at ease getting more information than you can control about you and your company. *Worse, you won't even know who, when, how, or even if you're being evaluated.*

B to B advertisers today must balance the incumbent advantages of better, faster, cheaper against many more more options:

- Online media choices have multiplied an order of magnitude. Print is not dead, but diminished, and its role is still evolving, i.e. especially internationally. Advertising that once had to directly or indirectly address all of the 'I don't know's' in a print ad is now reduced to a single value proposition in a click ad or banner campaign. Conversions that are a secondary action from an ad are now the measurement standard for ad campaigns. Gone are bingo card responses, with letters and phone calls not far behind.
- Determining an appropriate marketing budget is still a challenge, especially when weighing interactive, video, social, mobile and target market media choices. Rat holes abound.
- PR for awareness and articles for educating are now part of an overarching Content strategy.
- Direct marketing includes eMail, trade news, house lists and 3rd party distribution options with more stringent privacy and security issues.
- Unchanged: deciding how much to do themselves or entrust to outside vendors.

Like in yesteryear, tools alone do not make for effective campaigns. Outside B to B pros bring a focus and efficiency from implementing effective marketing tactics on a daily basis. Conversion metrics demand creative dramatization and integration like never before. The wrong 25 character headline and no custom landing page to close the sale can flush click dollars and ROI.

A meaningful value proposition and a campaign integrated with your other media properties is essential to avoid waste and maximize conversions. Sorting through the most cost-efficient media channels and developing the most appropriate creative for requires dedicated resources marketers must properly staff, or bring in a partner to accommodate.