

# Why B2B Marketers Must Offer Customers a B2C Experience

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**Digital** has raised the bar for everyone in B2B **marketing**. Today, the same people who bank online, book travel on their smartphone, and shop from their digital tablet are also B2B buyers. So when they look for a product or service in your category, these people bring incredibly high consumer expectations with them.

Consider the results of a recent survey about purchasing a data-management platform, a B2B product applicable to every type of business in the age of Big Data. Two-thirds of buyers cited reputation as the primary factor in choosing a vendor, according to Forrester. But over the previous decade, haven't we become accustomed to gauging the value of a product or service based on the brand's online presence and customer experience?

Of course, we have. **Digital** has reset our expectations.

So, how can B2B marketers meet those increasingly sophisticated expectations?

## Know your website is being judged

Marketers have been evangelizing about the need for a website for decades. Though that message has gotten through, it's important to highlight that the underlying reason for a website is discoverability.

To be discoverable, you must address the information that prospective buyers need on their journey. Your website should be a one-stop-shop for anyone interested in the product or services you sell. But it's not enough to be comprehensive.

- A B2B website must be as compelling as any B2C website.
- Unfortunately, most B2B websites are somewhat lacking in quality. Some common problems are...
- A static Web 1.0 design
- Out-of-date material
- Broken links
- Limited mobile capabilities (Most B2B marketers waited until 2016 to optimize for mobile,

and some are still waiting to do so.)

- Poor navigation
- A shortage of rich content

A solution is to find relevant B2C websites that can serve as comparison points. What attributes make those websites great? How would you rate your site's performance in those specific categories?

Obviously, the content won't be as appealing as what draws you to your favorite consumer website, but the experience should be just as compelling. B2C websites view quality as a driver of discoverability. B2B marketers need to think about their websites in the same way.

### **Great content is the key to content marketing**

Content **marketing** can take numerous forms, but it always has the same objective—to help the buyer through their journey. By educating the customer with relevant content, you build **brand** recognition and equity.

Relevance is only the minimum threshold for content. The best content **marketing** should be as useful as it is compelling.

B2B marketers dedicate about 28% of their budget to content **marketing**, according to the most recent survey from The Content **Marketing** Institute and MarketingProfs. But according to the same survey, the "most effective/sophisticated" B2B marketers allocate nearly half of their budget to content **marketing**.

Why is it that the most effective B2B marketers dedicate more of their budgets to content?

In a nutshell, it's about quality. The content has to be compelling, or it won't help the buyer engage, learn about, and choose your **brand**. You have to be able to say, "I would click on this."

If you wouldn't click, whatever information is on the other side of that link will go undiscovered.

For example, your infographic can't just teach; it also has to look compelling enough that your audience wants to study it, take its lessons to heart, and pass that wisdom on via **social** media. The video of a conference presentation can't feature low-quality footage, crummy audio and great information; it must be something the buyer wants to watch and learn from.

Media professionals have a phrase for this: production value. And quality doesn't have to break the bank. Survey your team to see which production skills you have in-house. Engage online job boards to hire freelance artists, designers, and videographers. And when you evaluate creative, put on your consumer hat.

### **Research and decision-making tools move buyers down funnel toward purchase**

Who among us hasn't killed time on BuzzFeed taking a quiz to find out which television

character we're most similar to? Those quizzes are purely for entertainment value, but their appeal speaks to the larger power of interactive online tools.

For example, financial services sites can offer tools geared toward asking you questions that can then be turned into financial advice. Likewise, car and travel sites can help you figure out what to drive and where to go on vacation.

Unfortunately, those kind of research and decision-making tools are largely absent from B2B websites. But you don't have to think too hard to see how a manufacturer might use a quiz to help a customer figure out which product is right for them. You can get a lot of brand mileage out of creating a tool that meets a specific industry need.

The real win comes when you think about utility as an experience, not just a result. Consider mortgage calculators. They all do about the same thing, but in a crowded field, the mortgage calculators that deliver the best consumer experience win the most attention.

### **Quick and easy support builds customer loyalty**

In today's **digital** world, we expect help almost as soon as we ask for it. Likewise, our customers bring this expectation with them from the B2C world to the B2B space. In the same way that a website is essential for B2C and B2B **brands** alike, so is a **social** media presence.

The key for B2B isn't to mimic B2C support, however. The goal is to offer the same level of communication and transparency. Tell customers when a phone call will reach a live person. Set a policy of responding to emails within 24 hours and stick to it. Use online forums to address common issues.

### **Consumers want to know who vouches for your brand**

Today, we've blurred the lines between digital and real life, and more importantly, our world has become much more transparent. On **LinkedIn**, our professional network holds us accountable for the veracity of our resume. On **Facebook**, our friends validate our identities. And in business, dissatisfied customers often turn to **Twitter** or **Yelp**.

What those trends should tell you is that the **brand** is paramount.

Historically, B2B marketers have been skeptical of **branding**. But in a crowded marketplace where the competition is a click away, identity and name recognition can make the difference between a site visit and more significant action like an inbound call. Endorsements and references validate a B2B brand in much the same way that a mutual friend on **Facebook** validates a third party.

Like everything you do to raise your B2B **brand** to meet B2C expectations, endorsements and references are about planting subtle and effective clues in your customers' mind. B2Bs don't announce, "We're raising the bar," but when they do elevate their game, customers notice.

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