

TOP 10 MARKETING TIPS YOU NEED FOR 2017

Strategic marketing is evolving because of technology, innovation and globalization. In 2017, successful marketers will use what they know, integrate their industry expertise and adapt to these new changes.

1. Market research and analysis

Market research and analysis are critical to understanding your customers, value propositions, positioning and for gaining insights in B2B and B2C markets. Start with research to arm yourself with the ability to make strategic decisions on markets, products, pricing, user-experience design and creative approaches to branding. Because of web technology and globalization, foreign markets have now become accessible for even the smallest firms. Entering foreign markets requires you to understand a country's language, customs, demographics,

industry competitors, and unique opportunities, challenges and risks.

Pinar Yildirim, Assistant Professor of Marketing at The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania said, "...the future of marketing research will be hugely driven by Big Data and analytics, and this is an exciting direction. Two things are new. First, there are many new and unusual data sources (social networks, mobile data, path data, eye tracking, etc.). Second, we now have a greater ability to connect these high numbers of data sources."



2. Web or online strategy

Web or online strategy is critical because most customers will research, investigate, consider and even buy from your firm online. Understand the benefits of the major content management systems (CMS) like WordPress, Joomla, Magento or Drupal. Or if you decide to build your own site from scratch, how will you plan the extensibility of your website for the next 3, 5 or 10 years? Ensure that your SEO efforts, Google AdWords and Analytics code, shopping cart, landing pages, links are accurately and well-integrated. Last strategic SEO, rather than

tactical SEO will be what works. That said, you can use programs like Monitorbacklinks.com to keep track of, recognise and disavow low quality links so you don't get penalized. According to Rand Fishkin, at Moz, Google's new algorithms will catch up to real-world public relations, branding and marketing efforts, and penalize approaches that historically try to trick the system: so, focus on building a strong brand. And, blog: a HubSpot report indicated that B2B companies that blog generated 67% more leads than those that do not blog.



3. Social marketing

Social marketing evolves to be more powerful in driving customers through the sales funnel—from creating awareness, and virally engaging with customers and non-customers of your product alike. Everyone has or forms an opinion about your product or service with a few conversations. Use applications like Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Hootsuite, Sysomos to engage, analyze and measure social media performance and return on investment (ROI). All

major social media platforms have great advertising platforms with analytics built in. New programs like AdEspresso provide automated design and massive multivariate testing of Facebook ads. Once prospects or customers are engaged, switch from social to email for better conversion rates (sales or actions) like driving your prospects to visit or call. Use #hashtags and strong calls to action. Going viral globally is both an opportunity and a risk. Plan accordingly.

4. Marketing automation and email marketing

Marketing automation and email marketing have revolutionized both the B2B and B2C sales funnel. With fine-detail analysis and programming with applications like Eloqua, Marketo and Pardot, you can intelligently drive prospects towards being loyal customers with advanced email drip and lead nurture campaigns, lead scoring, rules-based alerts and analytics. New applications like Hotjar, Unbounce and UserTesting.com provide conversion

tools to optimize your online user experience. Use mail-tester.com (like SpamAssassin) to verify your email campaigns won't get you into trouble. Social media is great for gaining awareness and engagement but a poor vehicle for conversions to sales. Email should be used to drive conversions. According to Yesmail, more than 25% of email driven purchases were completed via mobile devices in the 2nd quarter of 2015.



5. Branding and UX Design

Branding and UX Design are both creative and strategic. Ensure that your branding effort is in line with your market research in terms of message, demographics and positioning. You want total alignment of your visual and logical messages, arguments and brand metaphors. Ensure your brand colors, logo and theme all harmonize, resonate and don't conflict with your product or firm's positioning (and product price points). Achieve a consistency with your brand identity,

packaging, website, sales collateral, invoices and forms, signage, advertising, videos and internal and external communications. Create a powerful brand personality with a strong communications platform and voice. David Aaker, Vice Chairman of Prophet, developed three personality models to help guide marketers in developing powerful brands: the self-expression model, the relationship basis model, and the functional benefit representation model.

6. Public relations and experiential events

Public Relations and Experiential Events are effective for B2B and B2C sales, external and channel development (partners, suppliers, alliances, resellers, OEMs), targeted or mass communications to the public or specific customers, investors and the community. Use experiential events to engage with your audience and tell compelling, rich stories that resonate and are memorable. Pitch media on newsworthy and interesting story angles, and plan an annual calendar of content, and press releases that thematically tell a complete story (who, what, when, where, why) about your firm, products and

services. Have a media-trained spokesperson for your organization, armed with a printed or electronic press kit (EPK) with a company fact sheet, FAQs, executive bios and photos ready for publishing. Oftentimes, events are coupled with media relations activities because live announcements have an excitement and showmanship built-in (for broadcast) at a convention, conference or hotel with press and media relations present. Wow your audiences (analysts, press, customers) here to reach and amplify your bullhorn locally, nationally and globally.



7. Sales, channel marketing, and loyalty (evangelism)

Sales, channel marketing, and loyalty (evangelism) is the top priority for marketers in B2C organizations. Because of the lack of data (industrial or business buyers, compared with consumers) marketers are unable to rely with statistical confidence on research data to make decisions. Business customer surveys, messaging, pain points and reliance on sales to gather that information can pose risks (accuracy, validity, interpretation). Marketing must consider the full buying team (finance, president, operations, and other decision makers and influencers) in a group buying decision and ensure that the website, collateral and other touchpoints addresses all buyer requirements and points of resistance encountered by your VP Sales. Ensure that you have a strong sales leader, the team is properly incentivized, rewarded and recognized (in internal communications and corporate events) for their performance. Using

CRM technology (like Salesforce.com, Pardot, Microsoft Dynamics, SugarCRM, and Marketo) helps with sales and channel management. Deploy ingredient branding and co-op advertising programs to incentivize channel partners. Enhance loyalty through service dedication, going beyond the call of duty, implementing [NetPromoter 2.0](#) (How likely would you recommend question) and implementing a loyalty program—[Hubspot](#) identifies a few: VIP benefits, Rewards, Points, Tier system, Values-based non-monetary program, and a Partners program. And if you don't want to run your own loyalty program, pay for inclusion into AirMiles. Apple customers and partners became evangelists of the company. This culture was promoted from within Apple (Evangelists) and its loyalist underdog culture helped save it from near oblivion in the late 90s to its current \$634 billion valuation today.

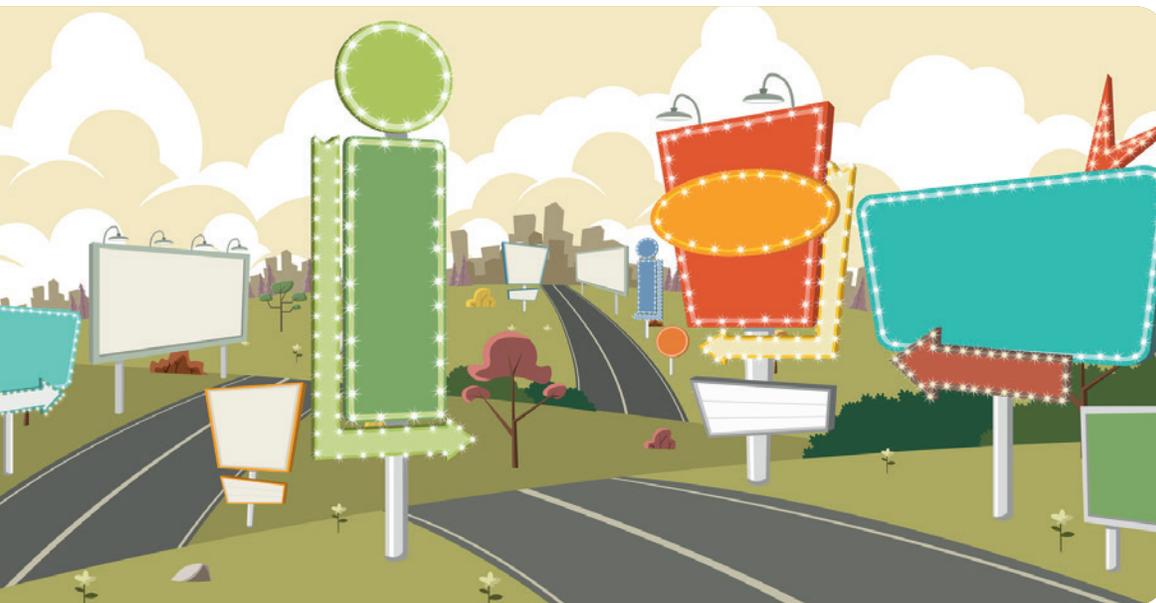


8. Advertising and promotions

Advertising and promotions: print and online (PPC) advertising, direct response, video, events, media planning, TV, radio and outdoor require either an in-house or external creative talent (designer, copywriter, developer) to execute well. Certainly test all creative before implementing to validate response rates to ensure creative is on brand, on message, memorable and resonates with your audience. Always develop KPIs and metrics in creative and ad performance to justify media spending and to spot sales trends.

The newest thing to come down the pipe is programmatic advertising. It's new and will change

how advertising (online, TV) is brokered, managed and sold and purchased. Essentially, its software that will allow real-time bidding for ad inventory based on big data insights (demographics, intention, behaviour) that reduces insertion orders and change orders, is platform-agnostic and optimizes ad spending. It helps sell ad inventory for publishers and ad networks. But, it's more. Programmatic advertising uses data and technology can improve the advertising effectiveness. The lion's share of inventory is remnant or network inventory, but this is changing to premium ad space too.



9. Product design, product marketing

Product design and product marketing are critical in your marketing toolkit. One of the “four Ps” designing your product or service well, innovating and packaging or bundling your product will hopefully provide a strategic competitive advantage. Unless you are marketing wheat or iron ore, your product or service is likely differentiable. Identify the most salient value proposition and business or customer “drivers” –why a customer wants

to buy your product and validate with research. Gain feedback and improve the product iteratively through innovation and a continuous improvement process. Ideation and brainstorm sessions, killing “sacred cows,” may help you innovate. The Internet has destroyed postal services. Mobile phones have destroyed the photofinishing and photographic film markets altogether. If you don’t do it, someone else will.



10. Pricing

Work with your CFO or VP Finance to determine the right prices for your products and services. This is a complex and iterative process where some firms will deploy technology to make minute-by-minute changes based on inventory and demand. The reason is that pricing affects your strategic positioning and brand image. Understand price elasticity, a consumer or buyer's willingness to pay (WTP),

market skimming, cost-plus, marginal cost, market penetration, psychological and other approaches to pricing depending on your situation. Understand channel effects on pricing strategy (online, retail, reseller, direct), mark-ups per channel and avoid channel price conflicts. A new revenue model called "Freemium" has become popular especially with technology and software (SaaS) firms.

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Al Leong is a strategy and marketing consultant with 24 years experience in technology, life sciences, entertainment, education and industrial manufacturing. He has worked for agencies and clients including Adobe, Apple, IBM, Motorola, HP, Disney, Sony, Siemens, IDC/IDG Canada, Microsoft, Ogilvy & Mather/Direct, SMG, 3Com/Palm, the US Department of Defense, Buena Vista Pictures, Fox Home Entertainment, Becton Dickenson, and the BC Government. He is a former Director Interactive with AMA Toronto and Vision Conference Director with BC AMA. He earned an MBA from the University of Toronto in Global Management, Management Consulting and Innovation, and a B.Commerce in Marketing from the University of British Columbia.