

How B2B marketers can innovate and lead

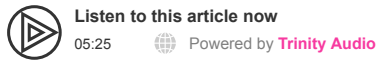
The best way will be to reuse and reposition the existing content in meaningful ways to different customer segments.

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B2B marketers use a wide variety of marketing tactics to drive leads and sales. These include e-mailers, social media, whitepapers, research findings, case studies and so on. However, in most cases these tend to be boringly technical and do not attract any social media interest. How can B2B marketers innovate and lead?



For instance, a social media tool like “Share This” action button added to a whitepaper can increase the perceived influence of the document. In a recent research involving B2B customers across the world, more than 85% of the respondents voted content types having the “Share This” button as more influential than the ones without it.

Interactive elements in marketing collateral will always increase the social media appeal. And this is a trend that is fast catching up. The perceived influence of any content having an interactive element is much more than one with none.

More than 75% respondents felt that having an audio embedded into a written document improves appeal to the content. If it is a video that is embedded, then more than 90% felt the influence is improved even better. The positive and very positive ratings for such interactive elements indicate the changing perspectives of the marketing fraternity. It is estimated that more than 60% of marketers will use embedded content this year either with audio or video. Even attractive layouts with charts, graphics and other tables will overall improve the importance of a whitepaper. This is because such visual representations can improve the understanding of the concept and facilitate easy reading.

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Marketers are under pressure to deliver spiced-up content as customers are driving these changes today. They are seeing such changes across the world and are ignoring companies that are not shown any innovation in this area. Most respondents still rate

whitepaper as the most influential form of collateral when it comes to considering a supplier for their companies. This has been so for the past so many years. Next come case studies, which more number of marketers seems to be using than whitepapers perhaps because whitepapers require more effort. Third and fourth important ones are web and audio casts. More and more customers desire increased types of materials and collaterals during the initial phase of purchase process.

Based on a recent study on purchasers' preferences for content, B2B marketers now need to action some makeover for driving sales in these times of downturn. Here are a few tips.

It is no more an option to add the "Share This" feature to all whitepapers and case studies; it has become the norm. As this feature improves the importance of the document significantly, it has become a standard feature today in the West already. The other feature marketers should consider now is adding three other social media buttons: LinkedIn, Facebook LIKE and Twitter TWEET buttons into all collaterals including e-mailers. Whitepapers and articles also should have the plug in to share in LinkedIn.

Try to include a video or audio content into the whitepaper or case study. This will have an added influence on your customer and encourage them to read through the same. It will be a good idea to have a customer speak on video about the success after using your solutions and use the same in the case study. Or you can just have a video case study instead of a written one. Perhaps you can have your CEO or technical expert talk about the improvement in productivity achievable with your new designs. When including a video into your case study or whitepaper, ensure that it is "light" as bandwidth issues in India may spoil your customers' viewing experience. Do not forget to capture the audience's attention in the first two seconds with an industry statistic or chat. Use a short video in the end to emphasise your solution success.

Another idea is to have a complete video "whitepaper". Video case study is somewhat common abroad. Whitepaper can also be done in Twitter or as a blog in influential sites relevant to your target audience. Most customers do notice innovation and creativity, and this would indeed influence buying decisions. Do not plan for any more Zoom webinars at this point of time!

You can also plan for video or audio advertisements now that many of the print media is available in online or as apps. While people go over a page with your ad, the video can start playing. IBM and others are using this feature effectively and many viewers loved this concept. A TV commercial in normal media!

It will not be an easy task to create fresh content all the time. The best way will be to reuse and reposition the existing content in meaningful ways to different customer segments. This can be creatively done with smaller doses of case snippets, and short videos, or using multiple channels with its unique benefits. For instance one can use a case study or a solution

via blogs. Or may be by creating several tweets about a whitepaper content.

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Last but not the least; ensure that you appreciate feedback from your audience by consciously adding comments forms in the end of every case study or whitepaper where appropriate. It is not just about adding comments and feedback forms but about actually reading them and taking action on the same. However, you will be surprised how very few companies actually follow this rule. Even a giant like IBM has been finding many leads falling through gaps in their gigantic organization.

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First Published on Oct 7, 2020 11:47 am

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