

B2B or B2C Marketing: Are the two any different?

With so many apps running around, it may be a wise idea to develop an appropriate app for your services or products as a campaign.

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Quite often you hear about B2B and B2C in media and in columns like this. I am sure all of us know what these are and what differences there are between them. Experts say Business-to-Business (B2B) and Business-to-Customers (B2C) need different types of approaches to marketing and management.

One is limited by number of clients and requiring complex selling processes while the other is very large number of customers and different approaches to segmentation. Intuitively both require different approaches to marketing, right?

However, it need not be very different in the sense that both B2B and B2C marketers can learn from each other in many different ways in these times of technology innovation and pandemic-driven disruption.

Quiz marketers in each about the challenges and marketing strategy of the other, and they try and convince you it is drastically different. But they have more in common than they think. The target audiences are different, but there are several lessons B2B marketers can learn from their B2C counterparts.

Online and offline marketing need not be different. Most B2B marketers do it differently today. This is not true of consumer marketers. They ensure that the brand positioning and selling proposition remain the same in both online and offline materials and media.

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In B2B too, buyers do not think of online and offline as separate. So why don't B2B marketers understand that?

Building brand is important for B2B too. Brand is everything in B2C. If you are selling soap or shampoo, the product formulation is more or less the same and it is the brand that makes all the difference. Generally we find that B2B companies focus more on product or service features rather than the brand.

While the impact of brand marketing is indirect, it is very critical for businesses to invest in it for the long-term shareholder value. According to studies, even smaller activities such as basic branding or a logo itself will boost the number of searches in the Internet for a particular brand or product. Come to think of it, business buyers are humans too. They too respond to what they see more often.



In most situations, B2B buyers have a choice but if they don't, they will try to reduce the dependency on a single supplier. Unlike their B2C counterparts, B2B folks have higher risk in their purchasing choices. As a result, many times business buyers will look to their safer bets: brands that are more visible and recognisable.

Social Media for B2B

Social media should be a strategic choice for B2B. When media planning and budgeting for marketing are done in B2B, the frequent question I hear is whether social media is of any relevance to B2B. I give this emphatic answer to them: It is definitely relevant for B2B. According to experts, business customers turn to social media for business relevant information and use multiple sources.

In the US, more than 75% of the business buyers use four or more social media channels. I have no relevant statistics for India but going by the evolution of internet and social media here, a sizeable number of people must be using at least one channel, if not more, here. B2B marketers need to focus on social media just as B2C does. All these great opportunities out there should be clearly understood from B2B perspective. Any best practice the so-called experts tom-tom in columns and seminars should be taken with a pinch of salt as the fast changing social media world makes all best practices very transient. My suggestion is to pick up a couple of those channels and get very good at those.

B2B marketers should become better at creative communication just like their B2C counterparts. Communication using personalised messages that are friendly and compelling can appeal to individuals whether he or she is the gatekeeper, decision maker or end user.

B2B marketers should start thinking out of the box for good creative ways to reach out to their business customers. This is something they should learn from B2C marketers. Why shouldn't B2B marketers engage in call-to-action kind of advertising, free gifts or contests? If you look at some airlines, they have started engaging in such formats for driving corporate sales.

The Research

B2C folks do a lot of research as compared to B2B counterparts. That should change for B2B. Other than huge companies, hardly any B2B companies do some quality research on customers. Deploying research and testing will help B2B companies succeed in communication. The idea is to pretest a communication for acceptance and success, and to increase the funnel size. And for B2B, the research is both complex and simple in that while the sample size is smaller the customisation requirements are higher.

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Measurement is everything. B2B should realise that even social media can be measured. When B2B buyers turn more and more to social media, it is critical to measure the effectiveness, and use that to help in their decision making process.

Lots of companies today use the social media and networking sites to shape and share the budgeting, solution criteria and RFP distribution. For instance, buyers are turning to webinars, whitepapers, and social media for resources.

Do not shy away from mobile technology. It is not meant for B2C alone, as 5G will show soon in India. With the proliferation of Android-based phones, iPhones, location oriented services, apps and other technologies, mobile offers B2B marketers a critical channel to interact with potential buyers.

Therefore it is important to have B2B websites mobile-ready. With so many apps running around, it may be a wise idea to develop an appropriate app for your services or products as a campaign.

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