

# 2016: The Year of the Human Touch in B2B Marketing

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So, here's the first thing that B2B marketers need to do: **stop thinking that they're marketing to emotionless businesses.** While there may be disagreement on the concept that corporations are people, few would argue that people run them. And that's who B2B companies are marketing to...people.

Companies must display both warmth and competence to connect with their customers and be successful. They must market human-to-human, not business-to-business.

## **Add the Human Touch**

It's easy to say "be more human," but how do you make it happen? To add the human touch, you first need to understand your buyers. After all, solid relationships always start with getting to know each other.

Do people in your company truly understand how customers make their buying decisions? What questions do they wrestle with as they start to explore solutions to their problems? Why does solving the problem even become a priority with everything else that's on their desk? How do they weigh the benefits of one solution over the other? And what makes some people become brand advocates?

Learning the answers to these questions takes in-depth customer research. Once done, you can create buyer personas — profiles of your customers. These profiles put a name and face to the people to whom you're marketing. They humanize them and enable those in your company who interact with prospects and buyers to empathize with them.

Once done, you can develop content that helps buyers move through the buying journeys a step at a time. Also, develop a plan for when the human-to-human interactions will occur. Buyers want to do a lot of research on their terms, but they also need to connect with someone who can answer their questions and help them to shape a solution that meets their needs. They would like to feel the warmth of a human relationship. They must personalize their approach online and off.

## **Get Personal**

The buyer profiles are just a starting point. As prospects start to interact with you, you want to personalize their experience as much as possible. You can do this using the following tactics:

- **Website Personalization**

Tools, powered by algorithms, enable you to customize what a visitor sees on your website based on how they interact with it. Think Amazon—the site that tells you what else you might like based on what you've viewed. It works in the B2B world too because, as we discussed, it's still all about people.

- **Retargeting**

Even if you have not used retargeting, you've likely experienced it. One day

you're on a website searching for that vacation you need to the Virgin Islands. Next, wherever you surf the web, you see ads featuring sandy beaches and turquoise waters.

It's all courtesy of the cookie-based technology that enables companies to follow their visitors as they move around the web and offer up ads when the opportunity arises.

The theory behind retargeting is that if somebody visits your website, they have some level of interest in the product or service that your company provides. So, just because they hopped on and left, it doesn't mean they have solved their problem without you. Like you, they are probably juggling a lot.

Retarget your audience with personalized content offers, demos and free trials to turn them into leads. Or use retargeting to nurture existing leads and solidify your relationship.

- **Account Based Marketing**

For many B2B companies, the potential for sales is concentrated in a few large accounts. So, instead of focusing on overall market penetration, it's better for them to view each of these large accounts as its own market and emphasize expanding their reach with target companies. After all, some Fortune 500 companies have revenues greater than the GDP of some countries. This strategy is called account based marketing.

Salespeople have been trying to develop accounts for decades. However, marketing organizations have not been aligned with this sales strategy. Now they have the tools they need to follow suit.

How does it work on the web? Once you develop your list of target accounts, you can use reverse-IP-lookup tools to determine if any of your website visitors come from these companies. If so, you can serve up content relevant to people at that organization. So, even if an individual from one of these target organizations has never visited your website before, you're able to tailor their experience.

- **Go Beyond Technology**

Clearly, there are all kinds of fun tools that can help us be more personal with

our prospects and customers. But remember, we are talking about human-to-human relationships. That means that we cannot rely on technology alone. To understand an individual on a deeper level, you need to talk with them.

The most cost-effective, efficient way to do this is to pick up the phone. Use inside sales (also known as remote sales or telemarketing) to learn about a prospect's problem, the decision-making process within their organization, and the role that each person plays. This good old-fashioned tactic will put you ahead of the game as it enables you to help the prospect define their requirements and together find the best solution. Also, it provides the intelligence your salespeople need to navigate the account and close the sale.

**Call us at +1 718-709-0900 (US) or +39 06 978446 60 (EMEA), or contact us online to learn how to add the human touch and improve B2B sales.**

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