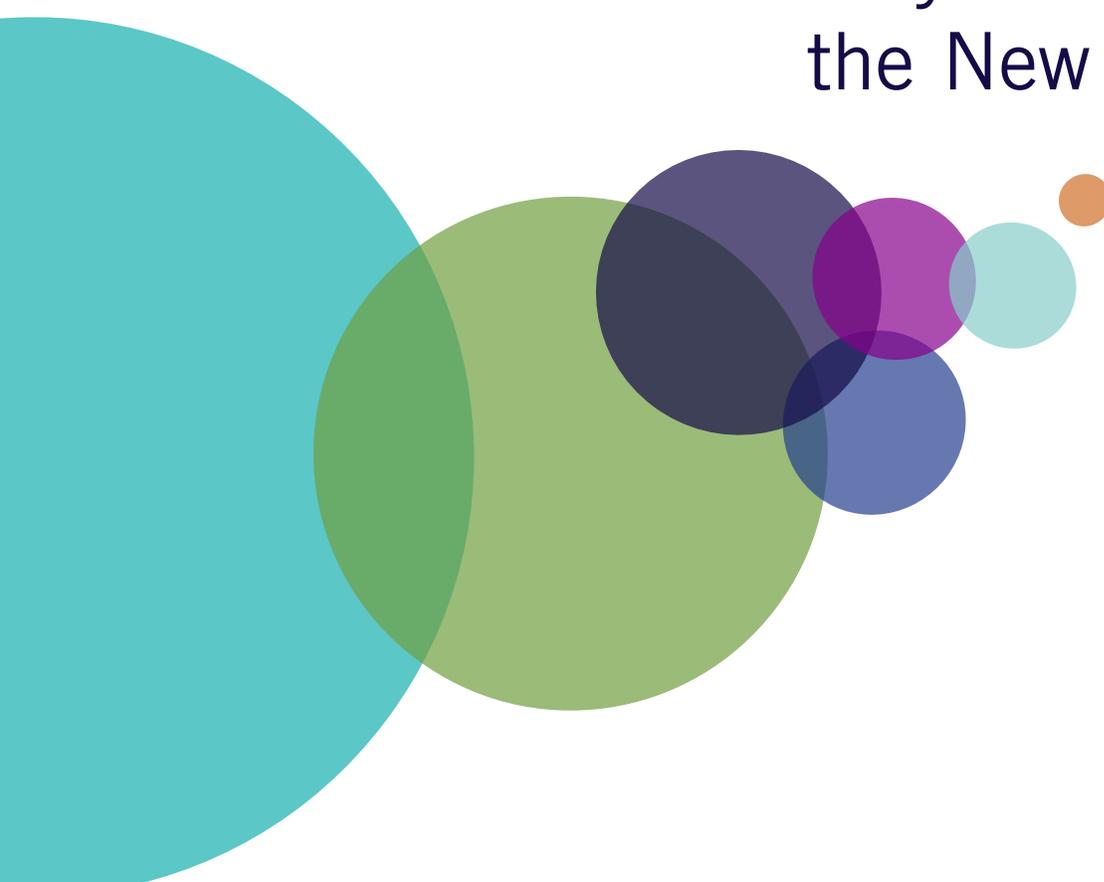


BRANDED

Fresh Thinking About
Branding And Marketing

B2B Marketing: Why Content is the New Creative



DeSantis
Breindel

A revolution is brewing in the world of B2B marketing. Lack of differentiation, fragmented media, complex regulation and brutal competition has turned decision making into a Rubik's Cube for corporate buyers of enterprise products and services. To differentiate themselves in the morass, smart business marketers need to add a magical element to traditional marketing, and leverage their proprietary assets and most experienced talent to fuel their intellectual property. Those who deliver valuable, relevant information in compelling, engaging and even entertaining communications that make their prospects smarter, stand to power-charge their creative, make meaningful connections and win the day.

Content is becoming the lifeline B2B marketers need to break through the clutter and make meaningful connections in an increasingly complex environment.

In a report released last month by the Custom Content Council, the number of CMOs who believe that Content marketing is the future of their world has nearly doubled in the last five years. Moreover, their research showed that decision makers increasingly prefer customized educational information from a company in a series of articles over an ad. If corporate buyers have become hungrier for relevant information in making important purchase decisions, is it any surprise then that they are looking for ways to Tivo through irrelevant, interruption-based marketing to get to the heart of what really matters to them. They thirst for deeper, more meaningful information that can help them make an informed decision and a compelling case to their C-suites.

The Content Marketing Institute defines Content marketing with a capital "C" as the art of communicating with customers and prospects without selling. Instead of pitching products or services, you deliver information that makes your buyer more intelligent and knowledgeable.

Natural Fit for B2B

B2B marketing has always relied more on gray matter to move onto the buyer's short list than consumer marketing. Over the years, whole forests have been killed for glossy print ads, brochures, pamphlets, charts and studies to sell enterprise-wide multi-million dollar solutions to large, mid-cap and even small companies. Now, done right, in support of a great brand, Content is becoming the lifeline B2B marketers need to break through the clutter and make meaningful connections in an increasingly complex environment.

Moreover, B2B marketers usually have enough intellectual property to impress a Harvard admissions officer or a Jeopardy contestant recruiter. They have proprietary ideas, systems and

technologies. They are populated with smart, erudite employees who give educated opinions every day to clients, publish in business journals and magazines, and reveal insights to CNBC anchors or Wall Street Journal reporters. Yet, these same companies have stopped short of leveraging those rarefied ideas in a synchronized, well planned Content marketing attack that might propel them into the coveted consideration set.

“Content is the new black.” - Chief Content Officer Magazine

All that is about to change. A recent trends report by the **Content Marketing Institute** and **Marketing Profs** (in conjunction with the Business Marketing Association and American Business Media) showed that while 90% of B2B marketers already consider Content key to their marketing mix, most have merely tip-toed into it. Interestingly, those who report the greatest confidence in its effectiveness have embraced Content marketing with the enthusiasm of a Charlie Sheen rant on his exceptionalism.

These Content fans use 8 different tactics on average (e.g. social media, eNewsletters, case studies, blogs, white papers, events, surveys, conferences, perspectives, webinars/webcasts and videos) vs. six tactics by less effective marketers.

The self-described effective B2B marketers not only adopt more avenues, they invest more in Content creation and distribution. These rabid enthusiasts exist in every size company. No surprise, they also report more senior management buy-in than the less effective Content experimenters. What might surprise is that across the board—both raving fans and those not so much, reported they plan to increase their Content marketing budget in the next year. All this points to huge growth in Content marketing, and an even greater need for superior creative to break through the clutter.

The **Content Marketing Institute** is acting on its own evidence. It published its trends report on its website and created a platform to leverage its own Content. They now publish **Chief Content Officer** magazine targeted to people who used to be called CMOs. Their motto: Content is the New Black.

Timing is Everything

By getting into the game now, there could be a unique opportunity for smart B2B marketers to win market share.

In B2B, however, Content is more than the latest sexy style. We believe that a year from now, all effective B2B marketers will be adding Content creation and distribution to beef up the power of the glossy-magazine print campaign and other traditional marketing tactics to open dialogues with prospects. They must, or they will find themselves left behind in the fight for intellectual shelf space.

By getting into the game enthusiastically now, there could be a unique opportunity for smart B2B marketers to win market share. Those who can turn their intellectual property into Content that supports their brand, and leverage the exponential power of all the distribution channels, stand the best chance of becoming their industries' thought leaders. Recent history is

peppered with success stories of those who recognized the value of speed in the digital world. And chock-a-block with tales of laggards as well.

Until the turn of the millennium, for instance, few law firms saw branding as necessary or even desirable. As those that developed a brand began to win market share, many started thinking about branding, and then websites and conferences, as a way to win new clients. By 2005, many already had CMOs. Now, some are figuring out how to create content to support their brand. One legal blogger predicts 2011 will become the year that content marketing becomes king.

One of our own clients, a mid-sized investment and wealth management firm located far from the hallowed halls of Wall Street, found itself in an enviably secure position last year as other investment firms were foundering. It wondered if this wasn't a unique opportunity to enhance its visibility and build market share. We helped define its brand and communicate its unique story in words and images that would resonate with C-suite clients at a time of great unease and uncertainty.

Based on the insights we gleaned from qualitative and quantitative research, we developed a new brand based on independence. To showcase the firm's independent thinking and separate it from the herd mentality that roiled the markets, we launched an intellectual capital series called Viewpoints, which included white papers, videos and webinars. Unique insights published in the right places on a relevant topic clients cared about has established the firm as a thought leader, and who today isn't looking for smart solutions in an industry that measures volatility with its own index? And without the price tag of expensive traditional media used by its much larger competitors.

Corporate buyers have become hungrier for relevant information that can help them make an informed decision and a compelling case to their C-suites.

Intellectual capital is not the sole province of service companies. Another client, a manufacturer of computer network equipment, competes for the attention of Chief Information Officers against much larger and better known companies with Cisco-size marketing budgets. To break through the clutter on a much smaller purse string, we built a wealth of intellectual capital in the form of unique perspectives and new technologies that led prospects to events, conferences and webinars. We also gave CIOs the all-important ROI ammunition they need to present the case for new technology to their CEOs and CFOs haunted still by recession nightmares.

Raising the Creative Bar

Content's magic is that it is the gift that keeps on giving. It can be repurposed across many media. A whitepaper can become a webinar, an article or a video. **Marketing Profs** reports that there is a growing expectation for multimedia communication. As Content becomes the new Creative, creativity will become ever more important. Boring, dull information will be as successful in attracting attention to B2B products and services as a sober physics professor in an episode of *The Jersey Shore*. Provocative, irreverent and even entertaining Content will be in

demand, just as Aflac, Geico and E-trade have raised the bar in B2C marketing and attracted the attention of the board room along the way.

It's time for B2B marketers in 2011 to stop worrying about their next campaign and look to leverage their Content to impact their brand. If they publish compelling unique and timely insights in all the right places, synchronized for maximum impact, it will become part of their brand, establish them as thought leaders in their industry and open the door to the sweet spot in B2B: consideration for a meeting with the right decision makers.

Of course, it all starts with the Holy Grail of marketing--a solid brand foundation that includes a positioning that differentiates a brand in a crowd, a persuasive messaging platform with unique messages mapped to critical audiences and a savvy, sophisticated synchronized marketing plan that delivers messages to all the touchpoints that influence today's corporate decision makers. Grounded in brand discipline, B2B marketers can begin to reach for all the stars that await them in the Content galaxy in 2011, and figure out how to elevate their own creative.

About DeSantis Breindel



DeSantis Breindel is a B2B branding and marketing firm based in New York. At critical inflection points, we work with our clients to align brand strategy with business strategy—creating stories and experiences to engage customers, influence prospects, rally employees, inspire investors and build communities. To learn more go to www.desantisbreindel.com

For more information, please contact:
inquiries@desantisbreindel.com

30 West 21st Street
New York, NY 10010
212 994 7680
desantisbreindel.com
