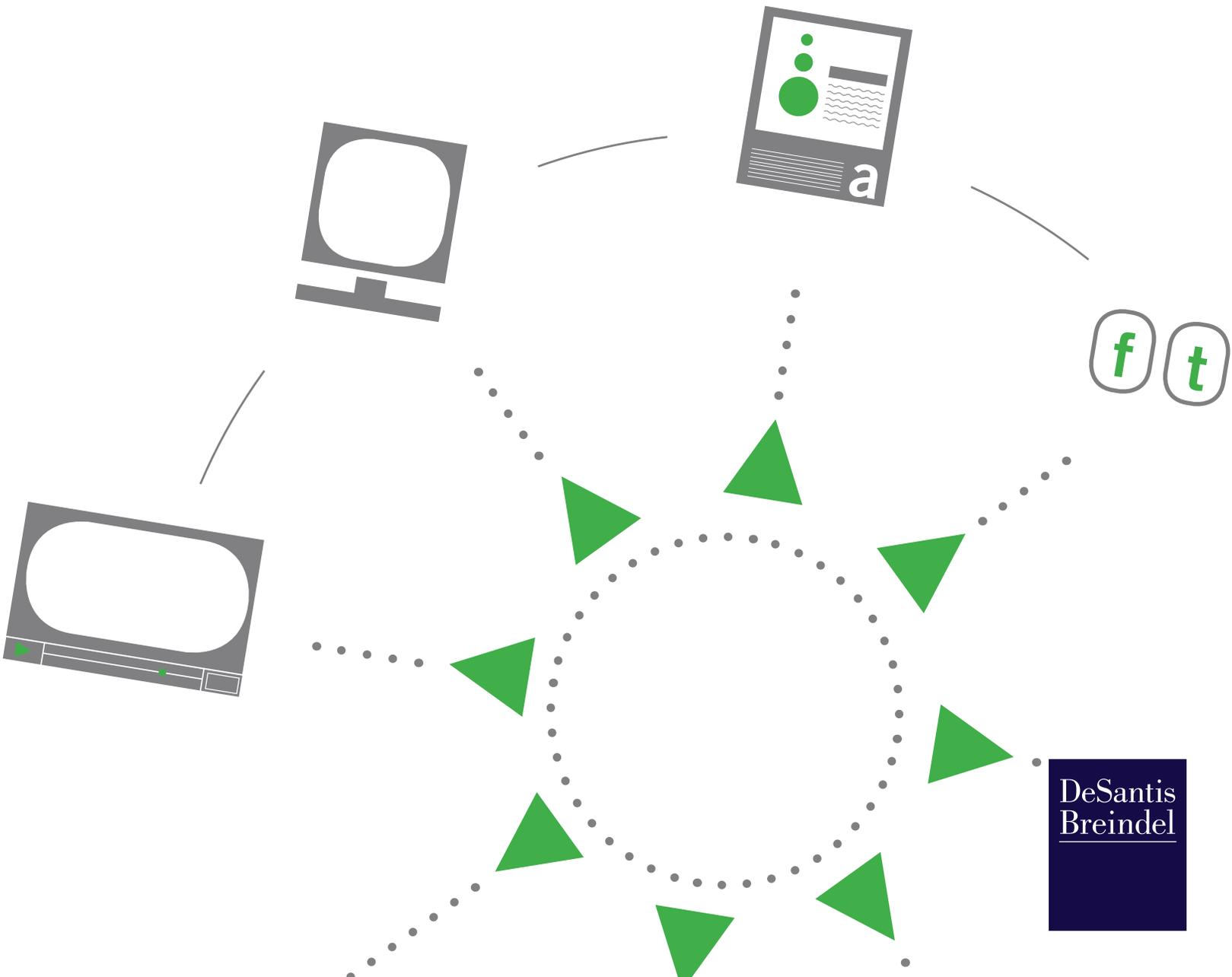


BRANDED

Fresh Thinking About
Branding And Marketing

INTEGRATED MARKETING IS NO LONGER ENOUGH:

Why B2B Brands Need to be Synchronized



DeSantis
Breindel

In today's connected marketing environment, where the conversation never ends and every message can link across platforms, the static Integrated Marketing model that has guided marketers for nearly 20 years needs to be upgraded to a less linear approach. Smart business marketers with high stakes riding on the success of their singular brand message reaching customers at all touch points ought to synchronize, not integrate, their marketing plans.

Integrated Marketing has been on the Top 10 List of Most Overused Buzz Words in Business for at least 15 years. If you Google it, you'll get nearly 10 million results. For some reason probably related to those baffling algorithms, Yahoo's Bing gives you more than 34 million search hits, but let's agree, there's lots of stuff written about Integrated Marketing, or named after it.

When Integrated Marketing was first used is hard to say, but it grew in popularity as media became increasingly fragmented and traditional marketing experts, largely ad agencies, looked for ways to leverage their expertise across the growing media landscape in return for a greater share of limited marketing dollars. What has always been missing from the Integrated Marketing model is a committed brand focus. It was never really media agnostic in practice. Yet, it rolled happily along, largely centered on an advertising idea applied across other platforms, eventually including interactive sites. If the model was out of step then, it is clearly old school now that social media has upped the ante, turning marketing into an ongoing conversation whose location, start or finish is impossible to control.

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The stakes are even higher now in this slow growth, post-recessionary environment, where lack of differentiation, constrained budgets, fragmented media, complex regulation and brutal competition have turned making the right recommendation to the C-suite into a contact sport for corporate buyers of multimillion dollar products and services. Therefore, it's high time for B2B marketers to give them all the help they can. They need to think about marketing in a different way, starting with the language and what it means.

What is Synchronized Marketing

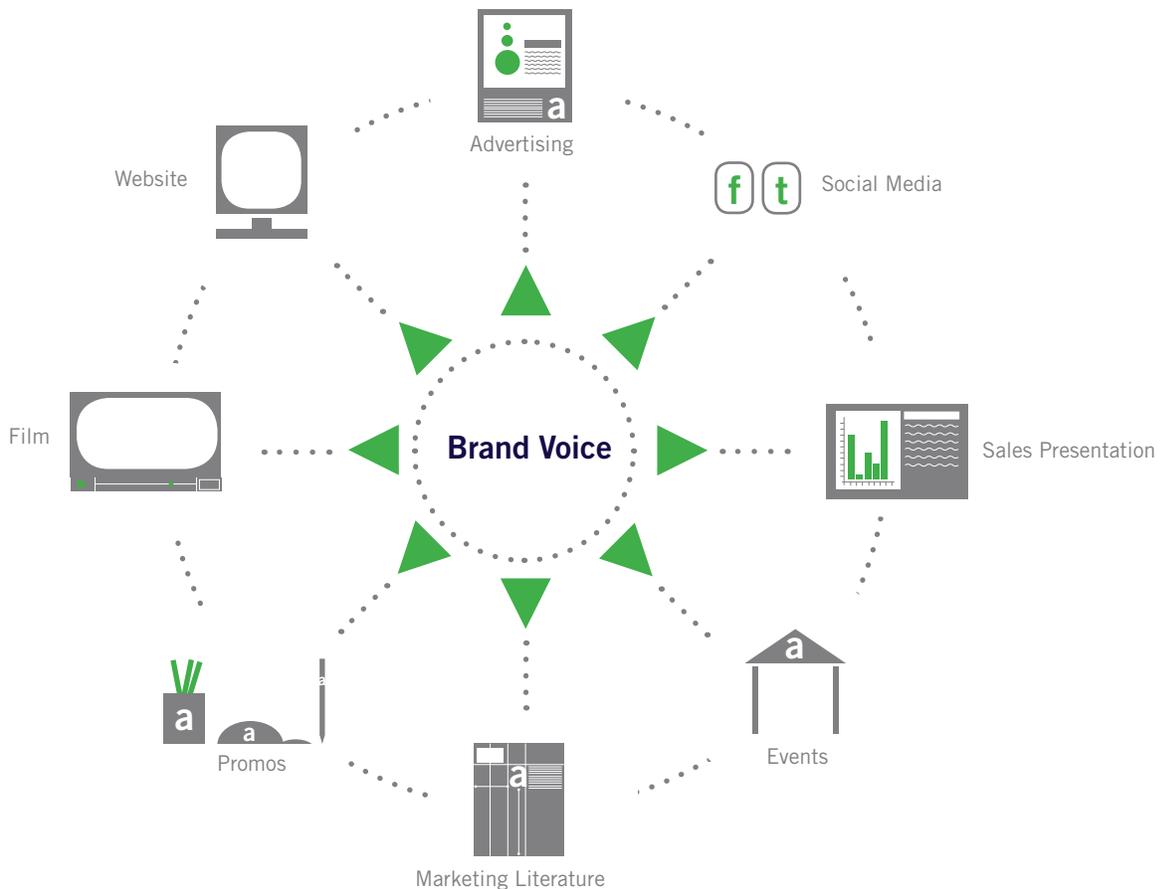
Synchronization goes beyond integration, allowing the voice of the brand to speak to every target, through every relevant discipline (advertising, public relations, promotion, marketing literature, sales force presentations, outdoor, event marketing, design, etc.) at every touch point. It is driven by a singular brand idea, not an advertising concept. It is collaborative. Its cross-discipline thinking is simultaneous not sequential. It doesn't start with an advertising execution, which is homogenized and

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rolled out to be translated to other platforms. Each discipline draws from its own strengths. And notably, synchronization allows the marketing plan to be continually fine-tuned based on real-time customer feedback and customer buzz from microsites, mobile technology and social networks. Done right, Synchronized Marketing connects the individual touch points on their own terms, strengthens each and energizes the brand. If you think of synchronized swimming in the Olympics, all the swimmers orchestrate their moves simultaneously to create a much larger and more important image than any individual stroke. In today's marketing environment with easy access to information and all sorts of opinions, corporations don't control exactly where or when customers or prospective customers encounter their brand. The old model sequence (it assumed first your target saw the print ad in places like Fortune or Businessweek; then they saw the website; and then the sales presentation) no longer works when the first encounter a prospect has with a brand could be a Twitter feed, a mobile app or a diorama in the airport.



In B2B, any of these entry points could lead to time spent reading a white paper on a microsite or viewing a video on YouTube, but not necessarily in any controlled order. It is more critical than ever, then, that the Brand Voice harmonize at all touch points.



Four Tips for Synchronizing your Marketing:

Keep the dialogue going and growing.

As far back as Willy Loman, the best salesman was the one who could avoid the dead-end conversation and leave the door open for another day. Social media and the Internet in general have raised opening doors to a higher level, becoming a meeting place for constituents to converse about a brand. Today's customers want to be engaged with brands, in fact they demand it. By having a dialogue with them one on one, the best marketers know the payback can be lucrative. They are making their constituents into fans and part of the family.

A dialogue about a company's product or service on Facebook, for instance, can spill over to Twitter and overnight, lead to a far-ranging conversation with thousands of voices and lots of feedback. By understanding the dynamic and keeping the dialogue going, smart B2B companies can lead the prospect through the conversation to the sales sweet spot: consideration for his or her short-list.

When a technology company introduces a new product to the business marketplace, it needs to ramp up its education activity to be part of the conversation in the less tech savvy world it is selling to. A good example is IBM's effort to create a high profile in the complex conversation about cloud computing, adding clarity and understanding through simple language and compelling creative on every available communications channel. It's a far cry from Cloud Computing for Dummies to most of us, but in IBM's high-end services world, its robust and synchronized educational efforts for its B2B collaboration network has helped make it an industry thought leader and a magnet for prospects trying to make sense of it all. The critical role of social marketing to influence and to respond to the marketplace is no longer lost on the corporate boardroom. Significantly, Ford's social marketing chief reports directly to CEO Alan Mullally, credited with leading the turnaround of the car icon's reputation, sales and stock in that order.

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Connect multiple platforms.

Old-school barriers between a print ad, a TV commercial and making it into a prospect's consideration set no longer exist. When marketing is synchronized and built on a solid brand foundation, all touch points feed each other, and become connected in web of conversation. A print or on-line ad with a url can lead to a microsite where a corporate buyer can download a white paper or watch a You Tube video offering valued information and insight. Or an outdoor ad can invite corporate prospects to scan a QR code with their mobile device and take them to a microsite with more information.

Content Marketing: the New Black.

Our recent white paper, "B2B Marketing: Why Content Marketing is the New Creative," reports that more and more corporate prospects are short-listing companies based on their ability to educate, clarify and give perspective to complex issues. As a result, CMOs are turning their firm's intellectual property into a wide range of Content, learning that it is the gift that keeps

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on giving—a scintillating white paper can be marketed with an HTML email campaign that leads prospects to a microsite featuring the white paper and maybe a related video, a bylined article in trade or business publication, a webinar on a similar topic, a tweet message, a link on Facebook or Twitter or a post on a blog. The most enthusiastic and effective Content fans have learned to synchronize their compelling and timely insights with their brand at each touch point, establishing them as thought leaders in their industry and opening the door to a meeting with the right C-suite decision makers.

Don't forget employees!

Enlightened companies have always recognized employees as a critical part of their brand, so it is surprising how often they are overlooked as a significant communication channel to external audiences. They are not only the face of the company in every interaction with clients and prospects, they are active in social media, business networking and society in general. Today, businesses who empower employees with a compelling brand messaging platform, and help them to understand their importance in their companies' and their own prosperity, can activate a consistently strong brand identity at thousands of touch points. These companies understand that it is important to link brand strategy with brand behavior so that you not only talk the talk but walk the walk.

One of our clients, a fast-growing community bank, looked to expand by acquiring other community banks in new markets. Our research revealed its success was largely due to its high-touch, personal approach to business banking—something customers felt they couldn't get from large national banks. The bank's challenge was to maintain its high-touch brand as it expanded into new markets and grew larger. To succeed, it had to align its expansionist business strategy with its brand strategy, leveraging its brand attributes across its growing enterprise, and importantly, to synchronize communications to employees along with its other audiences. Significantly, it was important to engage branch managers to understand the high-touch nature of the brand and get them to apply the strategy to brand behavior at every customer touch point, from teller window to customer service desk to loan office. By creating a high touch experience for customers and prospects (with personal dialogues, not one-way generic mailings or automated phone calls), the bank was able to leverage the success of the legacy banking institution and reach its business goals. Its secret weapon was its own employees. They were complicit in walking the walk.

Synchronize the Connection Between the Brand and Marketing Plan

Of course, Synchronization that begins without a solid brand foundation will be as effective as Charlie Sheen test-driving his brand in front of live audiences in half-empty high-profile arenas. Sometimes it works. Sometimes, not so much. In our high-stakes B2B world, with its multimillion dollar accounts, successful Synchronization must start with a committed brand focus, including a differentiated position, a compelling messaging platform with unique messages to critical audiences and a savvy Synchronized Marketing plan that connects all touch points that influence and persuade buyers. All implemented with as much precision and harmony as our synchronized Olympians.

About DeSantis Breindel

The logo for DeSantis Breindel, featuring the company name in white serif font on a dark blue square background.

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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
