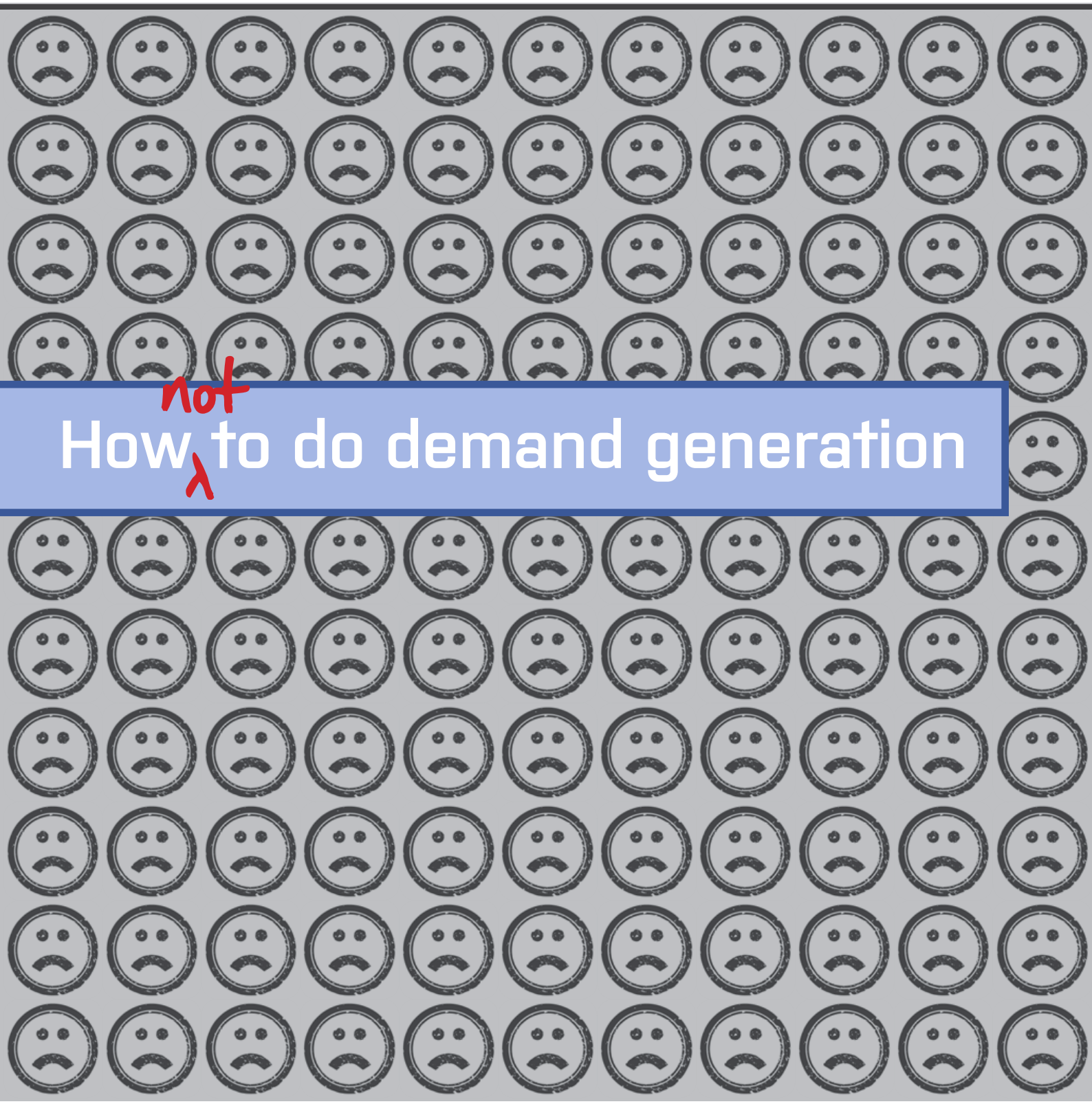
B2B Whitepaper

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B2B Marketing



How not to do demand generation

In association with: ORACLE | eloqua.

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INTRODUCTION

Longer buying cycles and general unquestioned president correctly dictate that demand generation is a central element of B2B marketing. It always has been, and it's likely it always will be. It's at the core of a great deal of B2B marketing activity, and it sits very neatly with a focus on multi-channel, social and content.

However, the arrival of these digitally charged developments has caused an issue for some brands. Namely: that they are making mistakes in areas that should be a marketer's bread and butter.

Take, for example: content marketing. Marketers have been producing content for a very long time. But new techniques, channels and the new phraseologies they accompany have caused people to get distracted by the lights. Instead of concentrating on creating content likely to prove useful to prospects and clients, some marketers get wrapped up in 'going viral' or being seen as a 'thought leader,' or even 'making sure they have an app' (for that).

All the fantastic opportunities presented by the digital communications landscape can help B2B marketers deliver compelling brand experiences. But as soon as the pursuit of the new becomes a goal in itself, the brand and the actual generation of demand are certain to be the losers.

It's with this in mind that we put together this guide to highlight the many obstacles lining up to derail a B2B marketer's demand generation efforts. Don't follow these worst practice tips if you want your audience to ensure you're on the shortlist towards the end of their buying cycle.

See also: How not to do social media.



BY ALEX ASPINALL
HEAD OF CONTENT
AT B2B MARKETING

"As soon as the pursuit of the new becomes a goal in itself, the brand and the actual generation of demand are certain to be the losers."

HOW NOT TO DO CONTENT MARKETING

It's best not to do these things if you want to succeed with content marketing...

"Bad content damages your brand as much as good content improves it."

Assume you are interesting
Some brands lend themselves to storytelling and narrative better than others. Certain companies have interesting and unique histories that have bled into the ways in which the business has developed. These lucky brands can get away with publishing pieces about themselves. Most brands don't fall into this category. But this doesn't matter. You just need to make sure you create content that your audience would actually want to consume. This is the single most important content consideration.

Assume you can write
Writing is one of the media world's most undervalued skills. But its position in the pecking order doesn't mean everyone can write to a professional standard. There is plenty of well-written marketing copy out there. But there is more filled with meaningless phrases such as 'most unique,' that simply doesn't make the grade. Which camp does your copy occupy?

Don't share
It's one of the first things you learn as a child, and it's just as relevant in the cutthroat world of online marketing; sharing is caring. Remember, the days of 'if you build it they will come' are long gone (if they ever really existed). You can have the best content anyone has ever created; it might be relevant, engaging and inspiring, but if you don't share it across the web – making use of as many channels as are relevant to your target market – it's not going to get you anywhere.

Do everything all at once
Thanks, in part, to social media and the mobile revolution, the internet now runs at 100mph. There is an emphasis on being new and first. While this is exciting, it can create a sense of urgency that serves to force brands into decisions they don't want to make. It is much better to produce less content and make sure it is of a high quality than it is to push out new stuff everyday that looks like it's been put together in five minutes. Bad content damages your brand as much as good content improves it.

Put it behind a huge data collection form
Though there is always huge pressure on marketers to deliver leads, there's little point in creating content that's hidden behind intimidating registration forms. Content is designed to be consumed. It is not designed to be hidden away in a concrete box, and made available only to the most desperate. Data and leads are important. But are they more important than people actually consuming your content? Perhaps try giving some away for free, then adopting a progressive profiling approach, once they are hooked.

HOW NOT TO DO VIDEO

We've all heard that video is the new corporate must-have and that it's 5,000,000 times more engaging than anything else out there in marketing land. But there are lots of ways to get it wrong. These are just a few.

"You're going to need a petty remarkable piece of content if you're going to retain your audience's interest for more than, say, two minutes."

'We've all got iPhones now, so we can all make videos'
This annoying phrase has been chucked around a fair bit over the last couple of years, mainly by people producing substandard video content. Yes, it is factually correct; most of us have the technology in our pockets to record a video. But that doesn't mean we all have the skills, ideas and understanding of narrative structure and brand identity to produce professional quality video. Owning a paint brush doesn't turn you into Picasso.

Go off-piste
Tearing up the brand rule book is an error far too many organisations make when it comes to producing video; maybe because relatively few people are used to the process. Whatever the reason: if you wouldn't break a brand rule on social or in other written collateral, don't do so on film. Make sure the person putting the video together understands your brand.

Calls to action
Again, brands new to video that would never fail to include calls to action elsewhere often fail to do so when making the leap to film. It stands to reason that you probably want to ellicit some kind of response from the people that view your videos. Even if it's just a case of including clickable links leading to 'more information,' it's worth making it easy for interested parties.

Being boring
Videos, much like any other form of content, need to be of the correct length if they are to resonate with their audience (just ask Lord of the Rings fans). In the B2B marketing context, this means that you're going to need a petty remarkable piece of content if you're going to retain your audience's interest for more than, say, two minutes. In short, keep it brief.

Not recycling
Decent video content does not come without meaningful investment, so make sure you're making the most of your video budget. Perhaps you could repurpose the video content, making a whitepaper or blog from the content. Whatever you do, don't forget to integrate the video across your channels, and share it as widely as possible.

HOW NOT TO BECOME A THOUGHT LEADER

If you're thinking about how you can become a 'thought leader,' chances are you'll never get there. But if you're serious about making it work, here are a few things you might want to avoid along the way...

"The genuinely 'leading' thinkers did not attain their status by Googling: 'how to become a thought leader"

The blind leading the blind
The first thing worth flagging here is that it is probably impossible for every marketer and brand to be a thought leader. If everyone is a leader, it leaves no one to do the following. In most instances it is probably enough to add meaningfully to the conversation occasionally, and ensure your core proposition is coherent and relevant to the messages you're sending out. We can't all be shepherds.

Google 'thought leadership'
Semantic issues aside, the genuinely 'leading' thinkers did not attain their status by Googling: 'how to become a thought leader'. They probably didn't even really set out to become thought leaders. Thought leaders, innovators and those operating at the top of their games don't tend to be bandwagon jumpers; they are more likely to have discovered new things by trying things out, having ideas and embracing a willingness to fail.

Fear of failure
Real thought leaders don't write things they think people want to read. They write new things; things that other people may not agree with or might not be able to see the value of yet. Content marketing best practice usually dictates that you should produce content your audience wants to consume. But with thought leadership the focus should be on producing content your audience don't yet know they want to consume, and that's much harder.

"I am a thought leader"
This may be a personal preference, but I think actions speak louder than words. If you are putting out insightful content, advancing understanding and discussion in your space, people will regard you as a thought leader (or at least a trusted content producer) and look to you for inspiration. Labelling yourself as a 'thought leader', however, especially if the thought leadership content isn't quite up to scratch, can be rather jarring.

Greater than the sum of its parts
If you're trying to negotiate thought leadership status for your organisation, rather than as an individual, don't forget to leverage the collective brainpower of everyone on the payroll. Though marketers and PR professionals are likely to be the ones turning insight into digestible content, almost everyone in the company could potentially have something to offer your thought leadership efforts.

In short, here's how to become a thought leader:
Produce content offering meaningful insight beyond that which gets regurgitated day in day out across the internet.

HOW NOT TO DO EMAIL

Email is easy to churn out, that's why there's so much dross clogging up your inbox. Don't be part of the problem, be part of the solution...

"Firing out weekly emails to mickey.mouse@xyz.com is pointless if Mickey has moved on to pastures new."

Email is easy
Email is relatively cheap to fire out, good data is readily obtainable and it's a quick win. None of that is true, though you will definitely have heard each of them churned out with regard to 'why email marketing is still top dog in B2B.' Email is no longer the quick win it once was supposed to be; spray and pray is obsolete and you need to work much harder than in the past to be successful. That doesn't mean email has nothing to offer, it just means lazy marketers should be prepared to fail.

Ignore the data challenge
Once you've purchased your data from a cheap and/or disreputable data company, you're set to go. Again, this isn't true. Data is the most important element of making email work for you. You're going nowhere if you don't ensure your data is comprised of relevant, up-to-date and opted-in contact information. Firing out weekly emails to Mickey.Mouse@xyz.com is pointless if Mickey has moved on to pastures new.

Spam Attack!
Amazingly, the actual content of marketing emails is often overlooked. The best thing you can do before deciding whether you should send any email is think 'is this useful?' We're all familiar with the annoying experience of receiving pointless emails, so don't send them out. Make sure your emails are likely to be of interest to your recipients. This should be obvious, really...

Dear John X {Surname}
Personalisation is one of the best ways a brand can overcome the dangers of inbox overload. The subtle tailoring of messages can foster a pleasant 'we're already mates' kind of vibe. But get it wrong and personalisation attempts can quickly sever would-be friendships. Emails from my internet provider always come addressed: 'Hello Daniel...' I'm looking forward to dropping them when my contract is up. And I don't even get wifi signal in the kitchen.

Analyse this
Another misconception about email marketing is that once you've pressed 'send,' you can get straight back to arranging where you're meeting your friends after work. The days immediately after the email is sent are when you should be analysing how well the email worked. There are all sorts of insights you can look for, from subject line success through to how well certain calls to action worked. You could even go crazy and do an A/B test. Don't be lazy. And don't (re)repeat the mistakes you've made before.

HOW NOT TO GO VIRAL

If your content goes viral, it's usually good news. But make sure you don't fall foul of the booby traps that lie in wait for the would-be internet star.

"It's true that some things go viral without a huge budget but, make no mistake, they are in the minority."

Sit back and relax
From the outside looking in, content can seem to 'go viral' of its own accord. And sometimes this is true, but for the vast majority of well-viewed pieces of content on the web their viral status was hard earned. And it's not just about sharing your efforts once on Twitter, you'll need to tap into industry contacts, friends, family and any other interested parties if you hope to see your content fly. We'll not even mention paying for views and shares here.

Build it in the brief
'Going viral' should not be an objective itself and, ideally, it shouldn't really be used as a significant part of a brief to agencies and/or partners. Of course you want lots of people to see your marketing efforts but, as any B2B marketer worth their salt knows, it's not all about numbers. It's unlikely the teens lol-ing at your video are going to buy your industrial screws.

Do it on the cheap
There are relatively few examples of genuinely viral B2B marketing offerings. Of particular note is the recent Volvo Trucks video with Jean Claude Van Damme, but not every brand has the kind of budget required to deliver that kind of ad. It's true that some things go viral without a huge budget but, make no mistake, they are in the minority.

It's all about you
Relatively few brands are interesting in themselves. Apple is one of the very few examples that spring to mind. The Californian computer giant could release a video about the colour of paint present in its toilet facilities and generate several million views. Your brand probably couldn't. The vast majority of viral content does not tell a brand story. Fame by association should be the aim here.

Don't be careful what you wish for
As described above, it's pretty difficult to see your content go viral and secure your 15 seconds of digital fame. It generally involves latching onto a zeitgeist, and delivering something unique with humour. The easier way of doing it, however, is to draw attention to half-hearted misguided efforts. The internet loves an error. So much so that the old 'no such thing as bad publicity' adage is looking rather outmoded.

HOW NOT TO DO MOBILE

Mobile devices are now responsible for almost a third of the internet's total traffic. And, since decline is unlikely, it pays to know what to avoid when mobilising your brand.

"You'll need to make sure every pixel is working for you, helping deliver the experiences you intend."

Simplification
Not long ago some industry voices argued mobile should offer a simplified version of your desktop experience. This is no longer the case. As mobile devices have become increasingly commonplace, users have started to expect to be able to do everything on their mobile that they can on their desktop. Don't punish your users for their device choice.

Make an app
Apps are as iconic a feature of the digital age as smartphones, selfies and the @ symbol, and they can allow brands the opportunity to deliver great value for their customers. However, making an app shouldn't be something you start doing lightly. Though this may change in the future, most B2B brands probably don't need apps. Think before you commit to the sizeable resource demands of app creation and support.

Target the early adopters
Despite reports suggesting that British 4G pioneer EE has enjoyed double the take up it was expecting, superfast mobile broadband is still something enjoyed by a small minority of the UK's mobile internet user base. Though this will change in time, it does highlight that brands should be tailoring their mobile experiences at the many, rather than the privileged few. And this goes for device models and operating systems, as well as speed.

Ignore the data
Any brand starting to inch its way down the mobile path, should first of all understand the level of mobile interaction their assets currently receive. The good news is: it's easy to garner a pretty detailed understanding via Google Analytics. Even the most cursory of glances towards your website analytics account will reveal information about which devices are accessing your site, how long they are staying and what they are looking at, which is all very useful when you come to map out your mobile strategy.

Scrimp on design
Design is, clearly, an important element of any kind of brand communication. And mobile, rather than providing the exception, is an environment where bad design can really damage the user experience. The amount of screen real estate available on mobile devices is very limited – even on some of those 'phablet' devices some people have, so you'll need to make sure every pixel is working for you, helping deliver the experiences you intend.

About B2B Marketing

B2B Marketing is the comprehensive information resource for B2B marketers. Its mission is to provide practitioners with the information they need to perform better and achieve more, whatever sector of the B2B space they are operating in.

Launched in 2004 as *B2B Marketing* magazine, it has since evolved into a multi-faceted resource, delivering a broad range of content in a variety of different forms and formats. Its key products are:

- Online community
- Magazine
- Awards
- Research
- Reports
- Training
- Events
- Membership

For more information on any of these products or services go to b2bmarketing.net or call +44 (0) 20 7438 1370

About Oracle Eloqua

As the leader in modern marketing, Eloqua is now the centrepiece of Oracle's marketing cloud. Its innovative marketing automation and revenue performance management solutions help modern marketers target the right buyers, easily execute campaigns, get the best leads to sales and deliver the highest return on your marketing investment.

Eloqua is now a part of Oracle's comprehensive Customer Experience Cloud designed to help companies transform the way they market, sell, support and serve their customers. By adding Eloqua's best-in-class Modern Marketing platform to Oracle's Customer Experience Cloud, marketers will be able to play a critical role in delivering an integrated and highly personalized customer experience.

For more information visit: www.eloqua.com



B2B Marketing
Clover House
147-149 Farringdon Road
London
EC1R 3HN

info@b2bmarketing.net
b2bmarketing.net