

What next for B2B marketing in 2020?

Thoughts and predictions from the experts

Kingpin

Actionable Intelligence. Measureable Results.

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Introduction

As the B2B marketing industry accelerates into new territories, it is crucial that the industry is prepared for any potential bumps in the road. And what better way to do this than by reflecting on the turbulent but exciting year we have had? In this report, we shall continue to define the current state of B2B marketing, zooming in on each crucial function. By combining the expertise of Kingpin's strategy and activation team with a selection of industry leaders, this report will help identify and analyze the successes and pitfalls the industry experienced in 2019, as well as look ahead to the major challenges and opportunities it is set to confront in 2020.

By deciphering B2B's most useful concepts, we hope to shed light on how businesses can most effectively capture and process data, without missing out on valuable insights. We also aim to explore the B2B trends that are predicted to become even more prominent in the coming year, including yet more machine learning and intelligent technology, as well as a re-focus on branding.

We hope you enjoy learning more in the following pages.

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Letters from the co-founders of Kingpin.



B2B marketing (as we know it) is both growing and disappearing simultaneously. We see businesses increasingly relying on marketers to handle colossal amounts of data. At the same time, clients expect an even higher level of personalized, emotive and entertaining customer service. In this respect, it appears that B2B marketing is transforming into something more similar to the practices of B2C with the adoption of personalization across all channels. This means that B2B is becoming better at understanding the customer throughout their journey, and how their emotional needs truly drive purchases.

Sometimes the complexity of B2B marketing can become stifling, with marketers turning to hundreds of tools to collect lots of different types of data, but not always knowing exactly how to use it.

In this report, we aim to clarify the main goals and challenges that B2B marketers should be focusing on in the coming year.

Some of the leading themes in 2020 will be the alignment of martech tools, the prioritization of brand image and personalization. All of this – personalization in particular – will help marketers begin developing more real relationships with buyers and create the best possible experience for the end customer.

To reiterate, marketers must always remember that, with any buying team involved in any organizational transaction, there is a human with both emotional and logical drivers doing the purchasing.

In 2020, vendors must try to focus more on long-term business goals, rather than merely on meeting short-term KPIs and not actively considering how these contribute to the bigger picture. There is a clear paradigm shift from mass-market B2B outreach to a person-to-person business model, and we will continue to see this progressing over the next few years. The buyer's expectations for trust and long-term relationships mean that marketers will have to redirect some of their budgets and attention to content marketing and branding in order to ensure they are providing consistent and meaningful customer interaction.

Ultimately, it's all about the customer. They drive the strategy and they decide the tactics.

James Foulkes
Co-Founder & Director



> **marketers must always remember that, within any buying team involved in any organizational transaction, there is a human with both emotional and logical drivers doing the purchasing.**



Letters from the co-founders of Kingpin.



Marketers must use data to underpin the creative and visual stories they tell. Technology has never overridden the role of human emotion in buying and selling. Considering the customer feelings associated with the purchasing process should always be top of mind for marketers.

However, as much as marketers strive to create accurate buyer personas and map out the most likely buying journeys, making an emotional connection with the buyer still relies on human intuition to a large extent.

Subsequently, marketers need to become much more knowledgeable about intent data and how it can be used.

Intent data is fast becoming one of B2B's most vital assets. Marketers need to understand both its power and the increased data privacy regulation surrounding its collection and use. In saying this, intent data is the key to developing the personalization needed to keep up with the consumption expectations of tech-savvy buyers. And the various definitions of 'intent' will soon become more universally agreed upon. Currently, definitions range from 'loose implication' to 'explicit action', and are all covered under the one umbrella term.

This shift will mean that the General Data Protection Regulation and the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations will become even more prevalent in B2B marketing and will affect how intent data is handled. Moreover, the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) will be the first state-wide act in the US that aims to protect the privacy of its citizens, and it will be interesting to watch the act's implementation and see if more states follow suit.

Data has become a marketing essential. And how creative you are with that data can differentiate you as a business in the eyes of the buyer.

Mirza Fur

Co-Founder & Director

Intent data is fast becoming one of B2B's most vital assets. Marketers need to understand both its power and the increased data privacy regulation surrounding its collection and use. But intent data is the key to developing the personalization needed to keep up with the consumption expectations of tech-savvy buyers

Highlights from 2019

> **while marketers have access to a lot of data, they are still largely unsure of how to maximize effectiveness**

The political and economic uncertainty of 2019 led to adjustments being made across all industries, and we can expect even bigger challenges in the next year as the social climate continues to shift.

The UK has witnessed its marketing spending flatline in 2019 (Q2 2019 IPA Bellwether Report) with many putting the blame on Brexit and its impact on business confidence. Marketers have been quick to recognize the need for rapid innovation and the need to adapt traditional industry operations to fit new guidelines, new consumer expectations and a difficult market. These circumstances have made it a fascinating year for B2B marketing so far, and we will see the industry continue to react and adapt into the next year.

Increased data privacy regulation has fundamentally changed the way we can market. The GDPR, the PECR, ePrivacy and the CCPA have affected the handling and passing of data globally and will continue to do so in the coming years. While these regulations are not to be feared by the majority of marketers, who naturally prioritize the consumer's privacy, further political discourse could make privacy even more of a focus.

In particular, the shifting Brexit events in the UK and the petition for data protection to become a federal law in the US could mean that marketers are placed under increasing limitations on what they are able to do with data. In addition, the ongoing antitrust reviews in the US – directed at the likes of Facebook, Google and Amazon – could lead to more data protection legislation and impact how these platforms can be used for marketing activities.

Changes in the politico-economic climate have caused the market to move away from the volume-driven world of leads, and toward a rediscovery of the importance of brand and image. Branding can be an effective method to instill consumer confidence and to build higher customer loyalty and retention. The realization that branding is as important as leads is becoming an important part of the Brand-vs-Demand conversation, particularly as B2B is beginning to refocus on the person at the end of the sales funnel and their customer experience.

For years, we have seen the martech landscape expand at an exponential rate, leaving it more crowded than ever. However, this year the number of new providers has started to plateau. This might be put down to reaching 'peak martech' or equally due to the uncertainty that shadows the tech industry.

Regardless, it is essential for businesses to pay attention to the martech that is at their disposal, comparing their own stacks with the software that is available and refining their tools to complement their innovation strategy. Gartner trending data found that about a quarter of marketing budgets are reserved for the martech stack, giving marketers great scope for development in this area, if their attention is well-focused.

Increased personalization continues to be a major growth area for marketers, but how many are implementing it effectively? According to Evergage's research, 98 percent of marketers believe it advances customer relationships, but only 18 percent are confident that their own organization has a successful personalization strategy. In other words, while marketers have access to a lot of data, they are still largely unsure of how to maximize effectiveness.

Conversational marketing is also lifting off, with the help of voice technology devices and the growing popularity of podcasts and livestreams. In 2020, we can expect video live streams to account for approximately 82 percent of internet traffic (**https://www.go-globe.com/live-streaming-statistics/**),

and by 2022, it's estimated that the number of regular podcast listeners will grow to 132 million people in the US (https://www.statista.com/topics/3170/podcasting/). Now is the time for B2B marketers to improve their understanding of the opportunities voice offers and how they can apply it to their marketing. Voice technology services like Amazon's Alexa make purchasing easy, and conversation capture can improve marketers' understanding of consumer needs and desires.

The growing popularity of speaking and listening in marketing might be considered the next step to personalization by providing a high-quality human-to-human buying experience. In the B2C sector, the Oreo brand has recently launched its first voice technology ad campaign, encouraging consumers to use Alexa to guess new flavors and offering people the chance to order some cookies on Amazon at the end of the interaction. Could a similar ad model do well in a B2B context?

Most marketers can appreciate that one of the industry's main challenges is the amount of data that gets overlooked, under-analyzed and misapplied. This is an ongoing concern for the B2B marketing industry. The plethora of data lost from an overwhelming number of sources can result in an incomplete sales picture, which in turn is detrimental to the planning of future marketing activities.

This is a particular issue with offline information, such as improper follow-up of attendees after events, calls not being recorded and meetings not being attributed by sales reps. In 2020, marketers must set themselves the goal of maximizing their understanding of the data and the martech they already have access to. They need every advantage to navigate an economically uncertain marketing terrain.

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My top tip would be to invest in analysis skill training for marketers. One of the biggest challenges for marketers right now is knowing what to do with all the data. To extract insight from data requires synthesis to identify trends, gaps, opportunities and patterns. Whether you train your people or outsource the analysis, it's crucial to be sure to extract the implications of the data for effective use.

Lisa Dennis, President of Knowledgence Associates and ITSMA partner

ABM



ABM has maintained its position as the biggest buzz phrase in B2B for years now with good reason. The term, coined by ITSMA back in 2004, realigns marketing's core principles of segmentation, targeting and alignment. The result is that businesses effectively focus their resources on the top percentage of accounts that matter most to them.

The adoption of ABM by European organizations is anticipated to increase from 49 percent up to 66 percent in 2020 (2019 State of IT Marketing report by Spiceworks), and the steady incline of its practice will continue to have a meaningful impact on ROI for businesses that implement it properly. More marketers than ever are relying solely on specialist vendors to run and deliver ABM tactics to account lists. But many companies still don't have a full in-house ABM strategy, despite the demonstrated benefits.

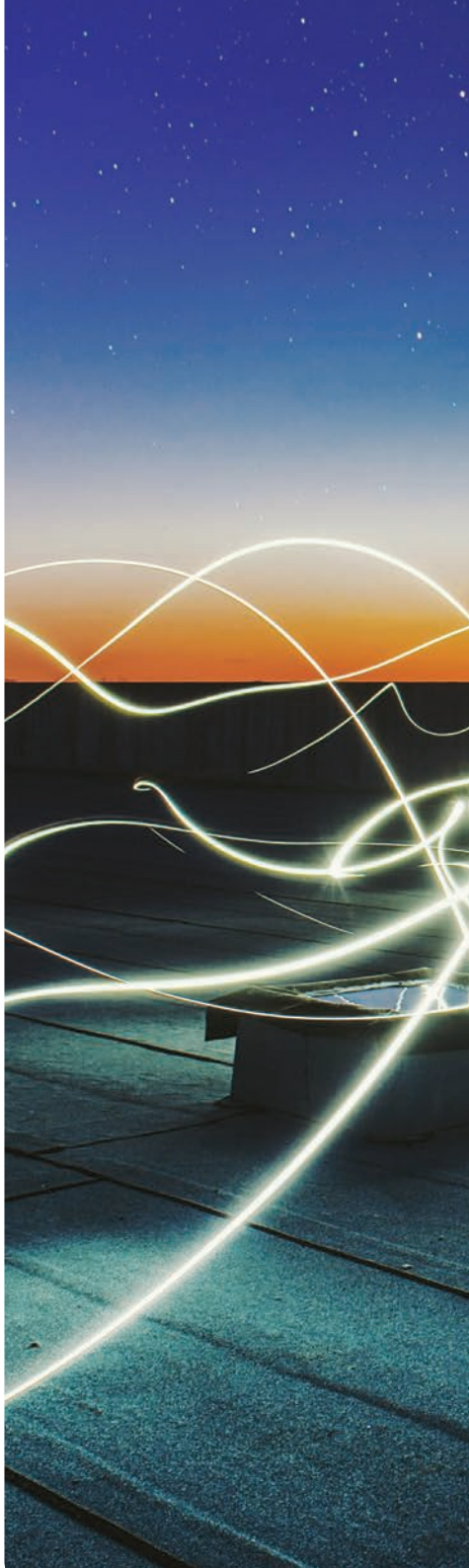
A main challenge that marketers continue to face in the implementation of an ABM strategy is organizing and defining the KPIs. Many strategies focus on quantity-based goals, despite the fact that this negates the very principles of ABM. Marketers must remember not to focus on vanity metrics such as the volume of the traffic, impressions and the number of leads they are attracting on their content. Instead, they should track the subsequent activity and engagement of individual accounts, prioritizing the quality over quantity approach in how they measure success. This will pay off in the long run by securing more conversions and more meaningful buyer relationships, thereby increasing revenue.

In 2020, marketers must focus not just on aligning with ABM, but on integrating it. A holistic approach should mean that sales, marketing and product marketing all incorporate coordinated ABM strategies to create the most targeted campaigns possible. As a result, salespeople spend less time following up unqualified leads and marketers spend less time composing badly targeted campaigns. Successful integration will mean that previously separated departments will be able to work toward long-term goals as one, thus wasting less time and resource.

Marketers should continue to personalize content to target individuals or accounts. B2C has raised the bar in terms of the personalization expected by buyers. Personalized, engaging content has been proven to accelerate the sales cycle and improve the customer experience. This will continue to cover everything from websites to content, emails, direct mail and advertisements. Technological advancements mean that effective ABM is more feasible than ever, with platforms such as Argus allowing you to view all of your identified in-market accounts and individuals side by side, along with engagement scores, campaign performance trackers and layers upon layers of content consumption data.

The move toward ABM has inspired a move toward MQAs (market-qualified accounts) over MQLs for somewhat obvious reasons, but this doesn't mean we will be forgetting about MQLs entirely. The problem with relying solely on MQLs is that if multiple individuals from one account make different touchpoints, their individual engagements might not be scored highly enough for this to be flagged. Or the picture of their interest and position in the buying cycle may be inaccurate. The rise of the MQA will be largely dependent on the specific sector your business falls into and the typical size of accounts, but it is something that we are set to see more and more of nonetheless. .

Matthew Ramsay
Senior Account Manager



“This year, we’ve seen more businesses improve the level of account insights they are gathering to deepen their understanding of buyers. That information will help shift the communication focus from pure products and services to encompass buyer needs and challenges. Knowing what and when buyers are likely to buy is very helpful, but it is only a piece of the puzzle. Account insight research will go a long way to crafting more targeted messaging and campaigns. The year 2020 will see businesses needing to think more deeply about buyer-focused value propositions, informed by data and insights to make these as effective as possible.

Lisa Dennis, President of Knowledgence Associates and ITSMA partner



Intent Data



Intent data is crucial to a successful ABM strategy and the important thing for businesses to focus on in 2020 is knowing what to do with it. The rise of intent data explains the spike in acquisitions of data analytics firms we have recently seen across the industry. And we can expect to see more data analytics firms popping up throughout the coming year.

Some of the largest data analytics acquisitions we’ve seen so far have included the likes of Google Cloud’s acquisition of Looker for $2.6 billion and Salesforce’s acquisition of data visualization company Tableau for $15.7 billion. Data visualization platforms are useful in helping you to view the intent data being built and give you visual clues of what actions should be taken accordingly.

Data that was once static now provides us with constant insights into which buyers are active, exactly where they are, what they’re looking for and when. Though this ‘big data’ has revolutionary marketing potential, most operational practices have yet to catch up. The vastness of intent data means that successful visualization and targeting schemes can be difficult to implement, which is why intent data services can be helpful. Our own platform, Argus, is a great example of this.

Marketers need to be wary when using bidstream intent data. Bidstream can present accuracy issues and, due to the huge levels of signals it creates, can be detrimental if used against the signals from more accurate data sets. A bidstream data collection method known as fingerprinting allows marketers to begin to identify web users even when their cookies are turned off by collating information records about that user. This loophole does not provide reliable returns.

In addition, the legality of this practice is being called into question and further instruction from the ICO could mean that we will see bidstream data collection turned off entirely. Location data acquired from bidstream can also be inaccurate (often providing locations with a 1km span that is useless in a city), so marketers need to rethink how much they rely on this data.

In the coming years, marketers need to be wary of a data crisis. The industry’s current combination of high-quality and low-quality data, with no method of differentiating them, could lead to the increased failure of marketing campaigns due to the misleading quality of the data at hand. As marketers have no real way of telling the likes of ‘good’ location data from ‘bad’ location data, some are relying too much on low-quality data, meaning that campaigns are failing to deliver despite looking promising. If marketers and regulators are not careful, this will result in a data crisis and could put the current success of the marketing industry in jeopardy.

This year, we will see more clients starting to develop their own intent data and data management platforms. By tracking the activity on their own sites and publications, they can create very specific topic and sub-topic tags to define who their buyer is and what they’re after. However, these businesses may still need external assistance to be able to action this data.

Mark Mills
Head of Strategy

Data Privacy



Although the Cambridge Analytica scandal didn't hugely impact B2B marketing activities, it has brought data privacy into the spotlight. The introduction of new data privacy laws will continue to have repercussions on certain activities in the coming year and marketers must be aware of how to work with the increasing regulation.

In the UK, businesses will still be beholden to the GDPR and, regardless of the Brexit outcome, the UK is likely to adopt ePrivacy standards once they are reviewed in the form of the PECR regulation. EU data laws will continue to impact the UK, due to the importance of maintaining equivalency with the EU and to ensure the frictionless passing of data across borders. The UK could even end up having to adopt extra precautions and regulations if the EU requires higher data standards for non-EU nations.

Additionally, the ICO has issued updated advice including the requirement for UK businesses operating outside of the EU to have an EU-based legal representative. The potential for marketers to slip back into old habits with regards to data usage, combined with the general public not understanding what the GDPR means to them, could lead to a corporate panic in 2020 (similar to when the GDPR was implemented). That said, it has become apparent that the ICO currently does not have the resources to properly police GDPR breaches, let alone punish them.

The updated ICO advice also states that businesses are still over-reliant on the 'legitimate interest' argument against GDPR claims, and that legitimate interest cannot be used to defend the usage of bidstream data that inherently violates these terms. New regulations will also result in the death of the cookie as we know it, with Google Chrome following the lead of Apple Safari and Mozilla Firefox in using intelligent technologies to block third-party browser cookies.

While data privacy in the US may never rise to European standards, many companies have had to adjust (and will continue to) in order to become compliant with UK/EU regulations to continue operating in these locations. In addition, the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) is set to come into effect in 2020 and, if it's successfully implemented, more US states could begin to regulate data privacy at a state level.

In 2020, we can expect to see the continued adoption of intelligent machine learning systems to automate many manual data processes. However, this could also be impeded by European data privacy regulations. The GDPR prevents UK businesses from using data in any way other than how it was originally intended, meaning that businesses are limited in what they can do with data before they understand its complete potential or analyze any insights and trends they didn't anticipate. The regulation also places limits on the extent to which companies can rely on automated processes. In spite of this, the number of businesses using machine learning systems (that work with GDPR-compliant data) will continue to rise.

The prominence of intent data in ABM means that the role of the data scientist will become increasingly important – creating hundreds of thousands of jobs in this sector. The industry reliance on data shall be assisted by natural language processing (NLP), a system that enables big data to become a lot more manageable and user-friendly. Wider adoption of NLP may be a slightly slower process, stretching into the next few years as the technology grows and evolves.

Karl Wakley

Head of Data, Insights & Analytics



The role of the CMO



Marketing used to be focused on creative strategy, but in recent years we have watched and encouraged this focus to exponentially shift toward a wider range of areas and departments within a marketing agency. This focus on creativity is now underpinned by data. As marketing evolves, so does the role of the CMO, and the shift in focus means that the role is now more concerned with monitoring business revenue, growth, innovation, reputation, customer retention and advocacy.

Most important, the CMO owns the customer experience (CX). A positive CX is one of marketers' most imperative goals, as 50 percent of a buying decision is influenced purely by personal experience (according to the CDN Chief Marketer report, 2018). In fact, the emphasis placed on monitoring and tailoring the customer experience has led to some larger businesses opting to hire individuals to take over care of the CX from the CMO, creating an entirely new role, although this isn't a widespread practice.

The CX role can be helpful for businesses that want to focus on gaining a more comprehensive understanding of what customer experience they currently provide and how they can continue to improve it. A recent survey by Gartner found that 5,000 organizations worldwide now have a dedicated CX leader, with more than 40 percent reporting directly to the CEO (CDN Chief Marketer report, 2018). All internal departments need to be aligned to ensure that the customer experience achieves a high and consistent standard. As such, an effective ABM strategy will still be crucial to the CMO and the business overall.

The CMO's role is important now, but that does not mean it will always be safe. We frequently see CMOs whose jobs are endangered, despite meeting goals. CMOs are expected not just to meet their targets, but to exceed them substantially. The net result is that CMOs suffer the highest turnover rates of any C-level exec, averaging just 3.5 years on the job, according to leadership consulting firm Spencer Stuart (CDN Chief Marketer report, 2018).

Threats to the longevity of the CMO role are catalyzed by the increase in data exposure and digital tech and machine learning. The vast amount of data, and the huge number of things you can do with it, has created a lot of confusion among CMOs, but it is critical that they learn how to use it. The marketing industry as a whole is struggling to comprehend the huge amounts of unstructured data that it currently owns or has access to, and impending data privacy laws will confuse marketers even more. The CMO must make an effort to learn how to take care of this data before we reach a data crisis point in the next few years.

In a nutshell, it is the responsibility of the CMO to make sure that customers are being engaged across multiple channels and that data is constantly being collected from those interactions with existing customers. From there, CMOs need to analyze the engagements to understand what strategies work best and in which specific channels. To satisfy the customer-obsessed industry in 2020, the CMO must provide effective feedback on customer interactions and ensure the same is provided by all internal teams. The effective collaboration of separate marketing teams is going to be vital in this process.

Paul O'Malley
EVP

Three trends are predicted for the coming year. First, the CMO will be asked to drive directly, as well as facilitate, a broader scope of activities than previously, with a particular focus on customer experience, increasing engagement and advocacy. This wider scope of activities means marketing leaders need to build up the different skills within their team to work toward new projects and goals. One of the challenges faced by CMOs in 2019 has been a lack of budget – at large companies, a survey found that, in most cases, the CMO will on average control only around 15 to 20 percent of the company's total marketing budget (Strategy and PwC CMO report, 2019). CMOs are often denied the funding and staffing to match the seemingly ever-expanding breadth of their brief. Prioritization is the key to doing more with less(or with the same).

"Second, an exciting prospect that CMOs should focus their attention on if they wish to stay ahead in 2020 is the widening range of intelligent marketing channels at their disposal. Voice technology advancements present the opportunity for conversational marketing, with B2C devices like Amazon's Alexa being proven to work at sustaining customer attention. Like in other areas, B2B will continue to follow certain B2C trends. Voice-assisted technology allows for improved buying services and a better understanding of the customer through conversations captured by these devices; B2B needs to take advantage of these opportunities early.

Vincent Rousselet, Vice President of ITSMA

Digital Targeting



The impending death of the cookie will bring about a huge change in the way the digital market operates in 2020. Safari and Firefox already block third-party cookies as a standard, and now it looks like Google will soon follow suit with its Chrome browser. The result will be a potential move toward browser ID being used to identify users and their habits. And because Google controls the vast majority of the internet browser market, the impact could be an increased monopoly of data for the tech giant.

The impact of cookie blocking will be felt most by programmatic advertising, which relies almost entirely on third-party cookies. A reduction in the available third-party data will create a much greater reliance on first-party data and contextual targeting.

Investment in online advertising will increase with its success proven year after year. Digital-out-of-home (DOOH) is an area we can expect to see some of this spending being targeted at and is worth keeping an eye on with the emergence of smart cities providing more digital space than ever. The prospect of more platforms plugging into billboards and escalator screens programmatically is an exciting concept, backed by its promise for almost 100 per cent viewability that cannot be matched online.

The option to expand on conventional digital inventory will make DOOH advertising much more accessible, and it has been shown to have measurable impact on consumers. What's more, the potential option to link viewers' mobiles to local DOOH screens could mean better targeting than ever before, but this might be limited to the gentle localization of ads so as not to be over-intrusive.

Programmatic TV and programmatic radio will also continue to thrive as platforms for investment, and, much like with DOOH, it looks like all forms of advertising media will be traded programmatically. Now, audio can be traded via various DSPs on a private marketplace and TV is also making waves toward truly programmatic ad experiences. As the list of connected devices grows, so does the ability to track and target users – but again, the death of the cookie might limit this.

The use of a multi-channel approach will continue, from PPC to social, but a greater accountability for ROI and performance will begin to emerge. With a multi-channel approach, businesses must remember the importance of establishing one clear voice and a consistent brand message. Where siloed teams and responsibilities have formed around paid advertising, businesses will really need to break down the walls to make sure everyone is on the same page, with team goals that help everyone to see the bigger picture. This will ensure that ROI and performance goals are being met.

Chris Smith
Head of Digital
and Programmatic

> **With a multi-channel approach, businesses must remember the importance of establishing one clear voice and a consistent brand message.**

MarTech & AdTech



In 2019, and even more so in 2020, a well-selected marketing tech stack should employ content marketing tools that get content out at the right time, in the right place, while recording the results.

An omnichannel approach, which not only engages with customers on every platform but provides consistent, knowledgeable interaction throughout, will be key in satisfying evolving customer needs.

To combine information and data from each channel, some businesses will choose a customer data platform (CDP) that consolidates the information into one place, allowing for high levels of coherence and personalization between channels. Smaller businesses are likely to continue seeking external assistance for this purpose. Lots of data will be needed to make an omnichannel approach possible; this means that developing privacy legislation, such as the GDPR, the PECR and the CCPA, could throw a spanner in the works.

This year has also seen martech innovations focus on personalization, and it appears this will continue into next year. Email marketing has been the biggest opportunity in this area so far, and personalized content marketing will continue to develop.

These developments highlight that businesses are increasingly concentrated on bettering the customer experience, and there is an ever-expanding range of marketing technologies being developed to assist in this. In particular, these include customer feedback collection technologies that allow businesses to monitor the needs of their customers' and determine their future expectations. Regular monitoring of customer feedback through martech will mean that marketers are able to gauge a customer's experience throughout their journey.

Human ad purchasing is quickly becoming obsolete, as it cannot compete with the efficiency of programmatic. Programmatic ad buying makes it quicker and easier to engage in real-time bids (which take a matter of microseconds) for ad spaces online. Not only does programmatic make this process faster, but it's also more accurate, resulting in higher conversion rates at a lower cost. That said, programmatic ad purchasing as we know it could be affected by new privacy regulations due to the privacy issues surrounding bidstream data. There is also currently no safeguard that protects you 100 percent from your ads landing on undesirable pages next to undesirable content, but as ad technologies develop further, this could change. Assisted machine learning will continue to improve the efficiency and accuracy of ad purchasing, but those tools designed to assist bid strategy could become outmoded by further ICO regulation prohibiting bidstream data – we are monitoring the status of its legality.

Customer relationship management (CRM) and business intelligence (BI) are management platforms that use data insights to improve business relationships with customers, helping to improve customer retention and encourage growth. CMOs must use these platforms to drive future strategy with accurate predictions about buyers that will help them to generate a more positive customer experience – from marketing and sales to support and service – all while boosting ROI.

The marketing technology landscape has been evolving rapidly, and marketers have sometimes struggled to keep up. Some of the most intelligent technologies currently available are far from being implemented to full effect, meaning that data is not reaching its full potential. Technological advancements will continue to deliver improved AI over the next few years and we will see this completely remodel the martech stack as we know it. In the meantime, marketers must focus on coming to grips with their current stacks and decide whether they need to employ external services to do this.

Mark Mills

Head of Strategy



Content Marketing



Personalization will continue to be a key focus in B2B content marketing as the range of personalization tools available broadens and improves. The technological advancement of these tools will further aid in delivery of dynamic content similar to some well-known B2C ecommerce functions, such as Amazon's "Customers who bought this also bought...". These dynamic tools have proven effective in B2C, and marketers need to trust that this will carry over to the B2B arena when implemented on businesses webpages, emails and social ads.

An increasing focus will be placed on content analytics, with particular pressure on the CMO to utilize a full stack of analytic tools. By using third-party tools like Pathfactory, Showpad or Uberfli, businesses will be able to understand the level of interaction they achieve with different pieces of content as well as how often these interactions generate a lead. Identifying what types of content work best on which platforms will help marketers develop a results-driven content plan that is proven to work best to deliver conversions; and with the help of monitoring tools, such plans can be constantly updated. Content analytics provides marketers with solid, statistically backed guidance on what they should be doing next, but this doesn't mean that they should refrain from creative, innovative ideas they think will work. Analytics are not the be-all and end-all in developing a marketing strategy, and they certainly don't replace the human touch needed for successful content marketing.

Marketers should aim for better collaboration across teams in the production of content in the coming year. Too often, product marketers are writing content without tapping into the valuable input their sales team have, based on their daily interactions with users. This information and content analytics data should be used extensively in the crafting of highly tailored content. Content marketing teams should be rewarded for adding a splash of creativity, even in B2B. Without personality, personalization is not enough – and writers should aim to inject more character (and, where appropriate, humor) into their content. In essence, B2B content needs to be less boring!

Having the necessary budget to implement an effective content marketing strategy will be something that some marketers have to continue fighting for, particularly in Europe. A 2019 report released by Spiceworks states that businesses in North America are 15 percent more likely to boost their marketing budgets than are organizations in Europe (42 percent in North America vs 27 percent in Europe). Budget constraints in the UK could be a consequence of companies preparing for the worst amid the uncertainty of Brexit, but this could prevent businesses from investing in some of the most effective personalization and analytics tools available or result in them relying on solely third-party agencies to create content for them.

In short, your prospects don't need more content, they need more valuable content.

James Gill
Group Account Director

Content Marketing

At long last, the role of the content marketer is recognized as a vital component of the marketing team. There is no longer a need to justify the fundamentals of what content marketing does and why it is done. However, there will be an ongoing quest to prove its effectiveness, especially with many CEOs still attempting to measure content marketing's success using vanity metrics. This is a key challenge for content marketers in 2020.

Proving that content efforts and funding are having a measurable impact on business can be tricky. The smart use of data and analytics can help, as well as aligning content creation with other marketing activities. Tying together the creation, distribution and measurement of content is the recipe most likely to bring content marketers success in 2020.

This year, there has been a reduction in campaign-based marketing while the 'always-on' approach has gained prominence. This should not be taken to mean that there won't be spikes of activity around key events, but these spikes will occur within the broader context of a long-term message. Our customers are increasingly asking for detailed, well thought-out content calendars that provide a framework that still gives them the freedom to focus their efforts on popular or topical content, based on response and feedback as it's collected.

The drive for consistency of topic, tone and approach will mean a further increase in specialization within marketing teams and agencies. On the client side, there is also an emerging trend whereby the relationship between suppliers and clients is deepening, lengthening and intensifying. Many marketers have lost belief in the effectiveness of harnessing a broad network of freelancers – or in the inconsistent uptake of content topics. To cater to the buyer's needs for consistency, and to establish meaningful relationships, marketers will have to structure their own teams and calendars accordingly.

Engaging with the audience in real time through social channels will continue as a method of attaining valuable data that can be used to personalize content and responses. In 2020, we think that the use of chatbots – as well as interactive tools, quizzes and assessments – will all be great ways to gauge audience interest while driving interaction.

Jim McGinty

> **Tying together the creation, distribution and measurement of content is the recipe most likely to bring content marketers success in 2020.**





Brand



Successful branding requires budgeting. But too many businesses still fail to recognize the importance of branding in their B2B marketing strategy. Brand marketing has been discounted in recent years, with the focus being on short-term measurements such as lead volume, rather than on what a brand can achieve overall. Now, with an increase in the digital targeting and personalization tools available to us, and those that help us to better monitor and prove ROI, success is being increasingly measured by the long-term, profitable relationships achieved. The improved measurability of branded marketing's impact should help CMOs justify its importance and the budget that should be allocated to it.

Online communities are rapidly regaining popularity as an important part of branding strategy. The smaller, niche, online forums provide a platform where your prospects and customers can talk about brand-related topics and provide advice and tips.

These forums can be a great way of spreading brand awareness through word of mouth, and interaction from your brand on these platforms (engaging with customers without just selling to them) helps to construct a reputable, honest brand image.

Social threading or social selling is a strategy that spans across all platforms and involves using them to communicate with each prospect as individuals, making them feel special and addressing their needs one to one.

The issue with using forums and social media to conduct your sales comes with monitoring audience feedback. These platforms should also be used as social listening tools to understand what your audience cares about most and how to best serve and communicate with them going forward.

Another trend forecast to take off in 2020 is creative storytelling.

This branding technique aims to simultaneously educate and entertain audiences. Storytelling will help businesses acquire new customers, as well as encourage the loyalty, and even advocacy, of existing ones.

Storytelling will give regular customers – who identify and feel affiliated with your brand's story – a reason and the resources to advocate for the services they already make use of. While the majority of B2B marketers are still running quarter-on-quarter campaigns with no longevity in their programmes, we are beginning to see particularly savvy marketers move toward long-term campaigns that tell a story and connect with buyers on an emotional level.

B2B marketers must remember that there is a person on the other end of these ongoing transactions. And, just like in B2C, that person craves creativity, personalization and emotion, regardless of the business they are working for. As a result, emotional response is becoming as important to B2B purchases as logical reasoning.

The result is that marketers are being forced to appeal to the changing expectations of their buyers. By creating a story, image and ethos that can be carried across all platforms, brands will start to build authenticity and meet the emotional needs of their audiences. This in turn will help other businesses remember who they are and what they do more easily (as humans are more likely to remember stories than any other type of information). The struggle here is that many businesses are focused on short-term goals and KPIs, whereas effective storytelling is a technique that pays dividends in the long run.

Emotional marketing is becoming a crucial function in appealing to new buyers. Businesses that hope to compete in an increasingly emotionally driven marketplace will need to begin considering their corporate social responsibility (CSR), diversity and inclusion (D&I) and brand values.

Audiences are more educated than ever thanks to the wide range of content and information available at their fingertips and, as a result, are becoming much more concerned with a brand's perceived values. Ensuring that the values your brand portrays align with your buyer persona's individual beliefs and expectations will be an important factor in the purchasing decision.

Storytelling must be executed across all channels to work, but social media will be of particular focus for brands looking to establish their brand image this year. The 2019 Social Media Examiner report indicates that most B2B marketers use Facebook and LinkedIn; they have also increased their use of Instagram in the last year.

The growing importance of social media in selling has also led to a rise in the number of B2B influencers and the measurable impact they can have. Using influencers as a way of social selling, and understanding how they can contribute to and tell your story, will be key to successful branding in the next couple of years.

Claire Dalton
Group Account Director

About

Kingpin are the strategic marketing activation partner for B2B tech brands. We help B2B tech marketers harness data, AI and MarTech to identify audiences, map-out customer buying journeys, uncover in-market prospects and build and execute strategic, insight-driven marketing campaigns that engage, nurture and acquire business customers and partners.

We are more than just a service agency.

We are tech enthusiasts and data geeks. Consultants and friends. Transparent and honest.

We are Kingpin.

Interested in finding out how Kingpin can help your business grow?

Whether it's lead generation, brand awareness, ABM, PPC, content, audience mapping or simply some friendly advice and guidance, feel free to get in touch. We always love a chat.

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