SPRING
2021

B2B MARKETING



B2B Marketing
Insight · Intelligence · Connection

WE DON'T DO WALLPAPER

Repetitive, predictable, monotone B2B work is everywhere you look – although we wouldn't blame you if you hadn't noticed. We often wonder if the old saying that you can 'piss money up the wall' was coined as a direct result of the millions wasted on B2B ads that people stroll (or scroll) past every day, without so much as a glance of the eye.

True was founded to be a different type of B2B agency. To break free from the world of short-term 'performance' marketing that swamps the industry with no lasting business effects. We are in the business of making a difference. And we do that by harnessing data-driven and cultural insights to unearth powerful human truths that are creatively transformed into memorable brand communications – and delivered with pin-point media accuracy.

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A new era for B2B Marketing



David Rowlands,
editor,
B2B Marketing

In 1663, the world's first magazine was launched – a German publication focused on philosophy.

Shortly after, in 2004, *B2B Marketing* magazine was born – a British publication focused on marketing. Little of note happened in between.

Although magazines still have their place in the world, it is also undeniable that the way humans consume information has changed drastically.

In our always-on, connected, amorphous and flexible world, the era of the quarterly publication might not be completely over just yet, but it has undoubtedly entered its twilight years.

The fact is that the way we reach and connect with audiences has increasingly moved to the digital realm. The magnitude of the opportunity that this provides is truly incredible. A magazine – however great – can never bring people together. Ultimately, every reader interacts with it in the comfort of their own brain. There is no opportunity for connection or collaboration.

That is why we have launched Propolis – a brand new community platform for B2B marketers. Unlike the magazine, Propolis brings marketers together into one central hub, allowing them to meet one another, share ideas, overcome challenges, grow their businesses and progress their careers.

By building a community of marketers, Propolis allows us to listen to you all and – crucially – respond! It allows us to see what challenges you're facing, what avenues you're heading down, and what solutions you're turning to. The more we know, the more we can help you and your business with relevant resources and content.

It may be cliché, but, together, we truly are stronger.

To find out more about what Propolis is and how you can get involved, head to page 10. The features that follow will give you a taste of all that Propolis has to offer, and the value it can deliver.

Sadly, we have taken the decision to discontinue the magazine in order to ensure that we can continue to connect and engage with all of you in the most relevant and suitable way. So, from everyone at the magazine team, thanks for being an avid reader over this past 17 years. This certainly isn't goodbye.

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b2bmarketing.net • b2bmarketing.net/propolis

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why
Every business needs to find theirs.
Get our B2B Brand Purpose Report.
And we'll show you how.
Download it now at **brayleino.co.uk/findyourwhy**
or email hello@brayleino.co.uk.
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Can AI take your business performance to a new level?

With interest in artificial intelligence continuing to grow, David Rowlands spoke with Tony Lamb, Hive expert for data strategy, intelligence and insight, to learn more

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How to build an award-winning team during Covid-19

B2B Marketing's Joel Harrison recently spoke with Maria Jennings, director of marketing and brand, PwC UK, about PwC's recent win for 'Marketing team of the year'

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What's the point? The importance of brand purpose

For all of the interest in brand purpose, there is an equal amount of misconception. David Rowlands spoke with Jill Pringle to delve into just why it's so important

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Last post: An ode to a publication that shaped an industry

With this being the final edition of *B2B Marketing* magazine, Joel Harrison looks back on its inception, its development since, and assesses how far the industry has changed since those pioneering times

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How to build a world-class ABM campaign

At the B2B Marketing Awards 2020, Transmission won Gold for 'Best use of account-based marketing'. David Rowlands caught up with David Reid to learn how

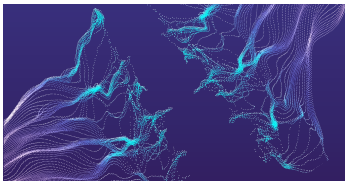
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Optimising your martech stack to reach your full potential

In 2021, we're in a complex martech environment in B2B marketing. Editor-in-chief Joel Harrison spoke to three martech leaders about how B2B brands can ensure they're building and optimising the right stack

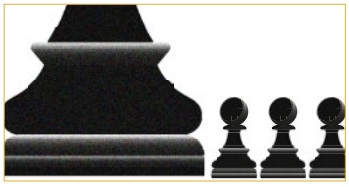
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Reintroducing physical events with Chris Wickson

With the vaccine rollout underway, Kavita Singh spoke with Chris Wickson, general manager, EMEA at Integrate, about what 2021 might have in store for physical, hybrid and virtual events

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Has B2B ecommerce finally come of age?

If 2020 was all about being tactical to survive, how can B2B organisations apply these learnings to their 2021–2022 strategy? In this interview, Shane Redding explains why she thinks ecommerce will be a key strategic theme for many

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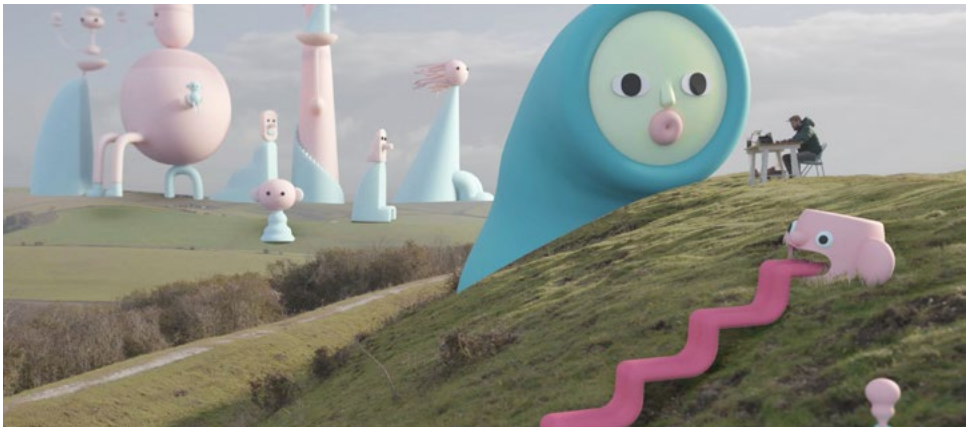


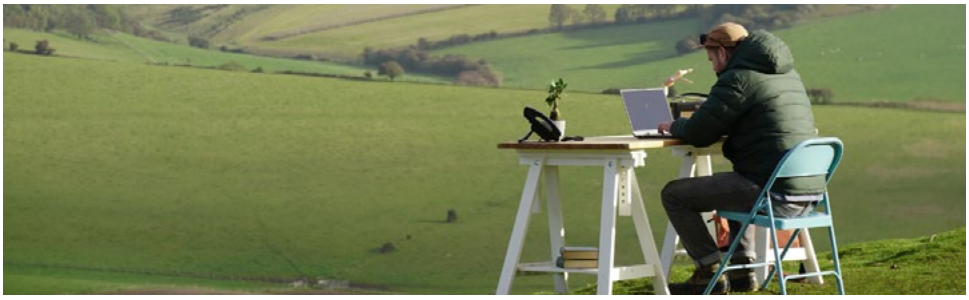
Keeping up with the transformation agenda

With the rollout of vaccines now underway, we asked several senior marketers: 'How are you going to maintain the momentum of the 'transformation agenda' in 2021?' Here are their responses

STAR CAMPAIGN

HP, Intel and Movidiam create art-inspiring campaign about remote work





Kavita Singh spoke with George Olver, co-founder of Movidiam, about how HP, Intel and Movidiam's campaign revolutionised the idea of working from home and inspired creative professionals to innovate, regardless of where they may be

Technology market leader HP partnered with Intel and creative freelance network Movidiam for a unique project, highlighting the power and performance of the new HP ZBook Create.

The campaign video was filmed on 15 October last year, at Nolithic Fort Cissbury Ring. Animator Laurie Rowan was challenged to create as many of his signature creatures as possible on the landscape using just the HP ZBook Create.

Laurie is an animator, illustrator and director and has worked with clients such as the BBC, Channel 4, Disney and Google and has won numerous accolades, including a Children's Bafta win and Lovie Award. Movidiam, Intel and HP felt his appealing art style, ability to speak to the camera and his charisma made him an excellent candidate for the campaign challenge.

The campaign challenged entrants to work out how many characters Laurie was able to create on the landscape featured in the video. Those that guessed the correct number were then entered into a prize draw for a chance to win the HP ZBook Create G7 with an Intel Core™ i7 processor and NVIDIA GeForce RTX 2070.

George Olver, co-founder of Movidiam, said: "ZBook Create is an extremely powerful high end machine that is very compatible with the network of users that we have on Movidiam, so it was a natural marketing collaboration. We looked at this concept and said: 'A lot of these bits of content, infomercials and brand films are related to the specification and the tech, such as the power and battery life.' Those elements are great and all very important, but there's an element increasingly around the lifestyle of the creator."

The team decided to film on a remote location to showcase the freedom and flexibility creative professionals might be yearning for while confined at home. In addition to its 14-hour battery life, while onsite, Laurie raved about the ease of use while creating designs.

George added: "I think Laurie was quite surprised by the product. Those were complex computations to get to animations like that integrated into those live-action scenes that we shot on the day. It was particularly cold that day and sometimes batteries struggle in the cold, but it worked really well, and it lasted well beyond the length."

The project saw a significant return of investment, gaining millions of impressions and 100% positive sentiments. In total, 36% of entrants correctly identified the number of creatures in the landscape and were entered into the prize draw. The winner was Matt Meech, offline film editor, who has worked for the BBC on *Blue Planet* and for Netflix, and has been previously nominated for British Academy Television Craft Award for Editing.

Matt commented: "The laptop looks amazing. So chuffed to have won! It's very slick looking and blazingly quick. The internal speakers are stunning too. Using Adobe Premiere on the ZBook Create has been exceptionally stable so far. Rendering and exporting was the fastest I've experienced on a laptop. Looking forward to trying Avid on it for my next project."

News round-up

PUBLICIS GROUPE UK ACQUIRES OCTOPUS GROUP

Octopus Group will move to Publicis Groupe UK's offices in Chancery Lane. It will sit alongside other agencies, including Saatchi & Saatchi, Leo Burnett and Digitas.

Annette King, CEO of Publicis Groupe UK, said: "We've been looking to acquire the right B2B partner to supercharge our skill-set in this area for some time. Octopus has a proven track record of solving client challenges in ways that transform categories. Bringing them in to Publicis Groupe UK as part of our Power of One model, presents a great opportunity for client and agency growth."

MSQ LAUNCHES GLOBAL BUSINESS AGENCY MSQ B2B

MSQ has launched its new business agency MSQ B2B and is aligning nine of its agencies to offer "a unique business-to-business agency model, providing end-to-end creative, tech and data-led marketing capabilities." MSQ B2B will bring together expertise from across the MSQ group, a community of agencies that each offer best-in-breed capabilities and proven award-winning experience working with B2B brands.

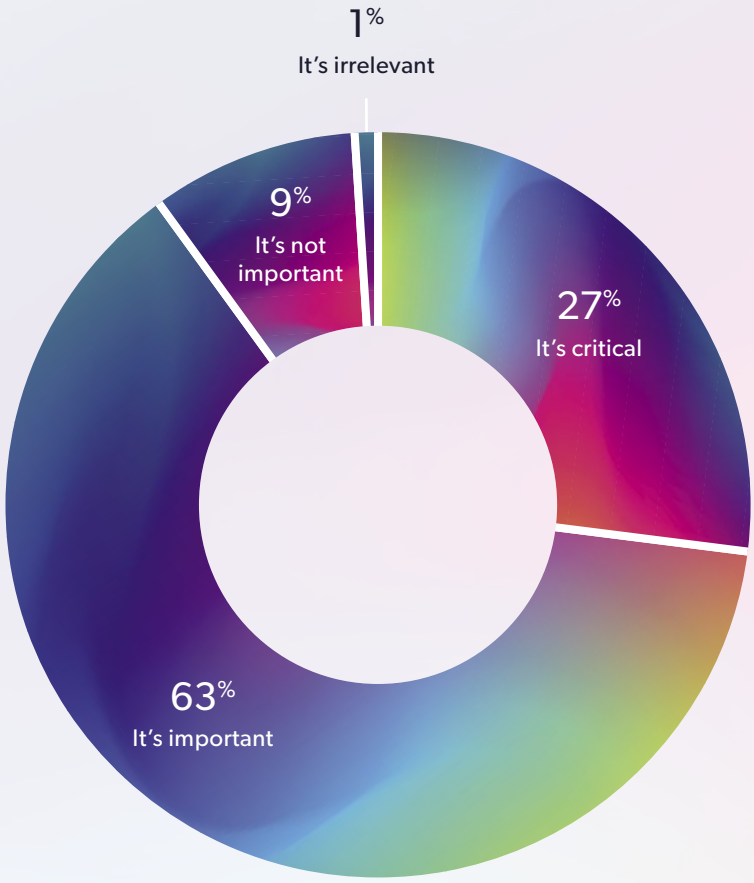
TECHTARGET TO ACQUIRE BRIGHTTALK

TechTarget, the B2B intent data service, has announced its agreement to acquire BrightTALK, a marketing platform for webinars and digital events.

The boards of directors of TechTarget and BrightTALK have approved the transaction subject to working capital and other adjustments. The transaction is expected to close by the end of the year.

Creativity = ROI

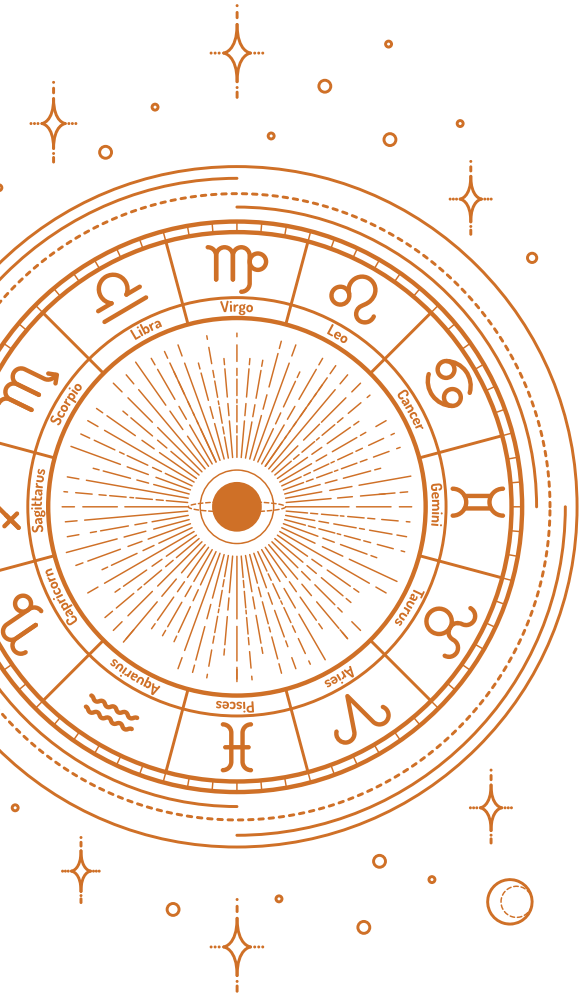
How important do you think the role of creativity is in achieving your marketing goals/KPIs and increasing ROI?



In our recent survey-based report on creativity, we asked participants 'How important do you think the role of creativity is in achieving your marketing goals/KPIs and increasing ROI?'. So, looking at the above, get outside of the box, and start thinking differently!

B2B MARKETING 2021 PREDICTIONS:

WHAT'S IN STORE?



What does the rest of 2021 look like? Here's what some marketing leaders had to say about sustainability, marketing planning and the trends to look out for this year



Sustainability in B2B

Leeya Hendricks

Leeya Hendricks, CMO at Delta Capita, discusses how sustainability will enable business growth

It is no surprise that we are all looking for positive changes in 2021. The good news is that there is a lot to look forward to.

Currently, organisations are not just focused on creating value in products and services, but are also reinventing the way they work. For businesses, enabling growth and development through moments of impact will be critical for expansion.

Environmental, social and governance (ESG) based initiatives are topping businesses' 'to-implement' list this decade. While ESG criteria have been around since the 1960s, high impact and successful results from early adopters across industries spur more firms to revolutionise their value chain though sustainability.

Incorporating ESG principles into your business model is now essential to survive and thrive as an organisation. The public mindset has shifted into thinking long-term about what kind of impact businesses have on the community and environmental sustainability.

Implementing ESG measures for long-term returns

Businesses should be focused on building and maintaining consumer trust. It is essential to be authentic and ensure that sustainability is aligned with doing business for good, not just focused solely on profitability. For example, you will want to consider long-term investor outcomes as well as short-term gains.

Staying ahead of the curve

Doing good creates value, which in turn generates profit and better brand visibility. Sustainable marketing can help drive profit with purpose and enable a shared economy for all.

As the market remains volatile, we need to keep our eye on both short-term and long-term goals. Ultimately, we need to understand that the eventual reality is that building a sustainable business model will become the default.

Check out the full blog here: bit.ly/B2Bsustainability • @LeeyaHendricks



The latest marketing trends

Mercè Cozens

Mercè Cozens, founder, lead consultant and chartered marketer at Think Beyond, teases what's to come in 2021, including ABM, digital experiences, influencers and partnerships

Go on, admit it. The crisis has dragged on much longer than we all thought. What we all initially assumed was a brief interlude from the frenetic pace of commuting and office work has continued. Some of us delayed planning until 2020 was laid to rest and others spent much of 2020 planning for a better year. Now that everyone is back in the groove, albeit at home for the most part, we can help you to make the most out of 2021 with the latest trends.

What's new for 2021?

Well, it isn't a blank sheet of paper, so that's the good news. Looking back to June 2020, The CMO Survey found that B2B marketers were optimistic about the next 12 months and would choose to invest in a few targeted areas.

These include:

1. ABM
2. Digital experiences
3. Influencer marketing
4. Partnerships

As B2B marketers are well aware, the benefits of ABM in terms of deal size, conversion rate and wallet share are great. The efficacy of the approach lends itself well to the ongoing pandemic.

Digital experiences go without saying. With challenges in meeting clients face-to-face and fewer resources available to service customers due to furlough, digital comes first in many instances. As a result, it is critical that your digital experiences stand up to scrutiny and to competitors.

Influencer marketing is less popular in the B2B world, but is set to ramp up as more people take a 'digital first' approach and stay at home more often.

B2B service companies are set to expand partnerships, which has long-term benefits. After all, it may be easier to sell through a partner than summon the marketing funds to 'pull' people in.

Check out the full blog here: bit.ly/B2B2021trends • @MerceCozens



Marketing plans for 2021

Emma Crofts

Emma Crofts, senior content writer, The Marketing Pod, breaks down some key insights on how to make a marketing plan flexible enough for 2021's unpredictability

I don't know about you, but I've never wanted psychic powers (or maybe just a good, old-fashioned crystal ball) as much as I do right now. The events of 2020 changed so many things and, for many of us, the personal and professional lives we lead are not only still in a state of flux, but look set to stay that way for some, if not all, of the year ahead.

Whether Covid-19 has presented new opportunities or pressing challenges for your business, we've all had to adapt to new ways of doing things, including your customers and prospects – which may make marketing to them feel more complex this year.

For marketers who have unrelenting targets and want to make the most of 2021, the ongoing uncertainty might feel frustrating. It can be tempting to throw strategy out of the window and focus on quick-wins and clever tactics. But short-termism is never going to deliver the same results as a well-honed plan based on long-term objectives. Now is the time to try to create a plan for the year ahead that will make the most of your resources and capitalise on every opportunity. This year, only a flexible plan will work.

So, where to begin? The best place to start when making any plan is always with the things that you do know, and, in this case, the list will usually include your overarching objectives. While your business objectives – and therefore your marketing objectives – might have shifted slightly thanks to the chaos of 2020, you should hopefully now be in a position to define them for the year ahead.

Check out the full blog here: bit.ly/B2Bmarketingplan • @Em_Crofts

INTRODUCING OUR NEW COMMUNITY:



Any company can say they are a community for X, Y or Z, but few really are. At B2B Marketing, our new platform – Propolis – really is just that: a community for B2B marketers to meet, share ideas, overcome challenges and learn from the best. So, what's it all about, how does it work, and what value does it deliver? **David Rowlands** provides the detail

Hive structure



Assuming you've already my comment (and if not, why haven't you!?), you'll know why we created Propolis and why the magazine must sadly come to an end. But, what does Propolis look like and how does it work?

What is Propolis?

Above, you will see eight 'Hives' that Propolis members can join. These Hives are designed to cover the core pillars of B2B marketing, meaning there's a perfect home for everyone. Each Hive includes a dedicated Hive expert, who can help you find what you need, offer advice on whatever topic you're struggling with, and ultimately help you become a better marketer.

Within each Hive, you'll find:

- Opinion pieces
- Productivity and workflow tools
- Industry-leading analysis
- Webinars
- Roundtable invitations
- Event access
- Competency assessments and diagnostics
- Skills and advisory on tap.

In addition to this, every year, each Hive will include one dedicated report. These reports will mostly be survey-based, taking stock of that particular area of marketing, and providing a detailed lay of the land, and steps for improvement.

If you've ever attended B2B Marketing Ignite London, think of Propolis like a 24/7 on-demand version of that event. All of the opinion, analysis and networking, all of the time.

These Hives are designed to cover the core pillars of B2B marketing, meaning there's a perfect home for everyone

Different companies and industries coming together to drive marketing forwards

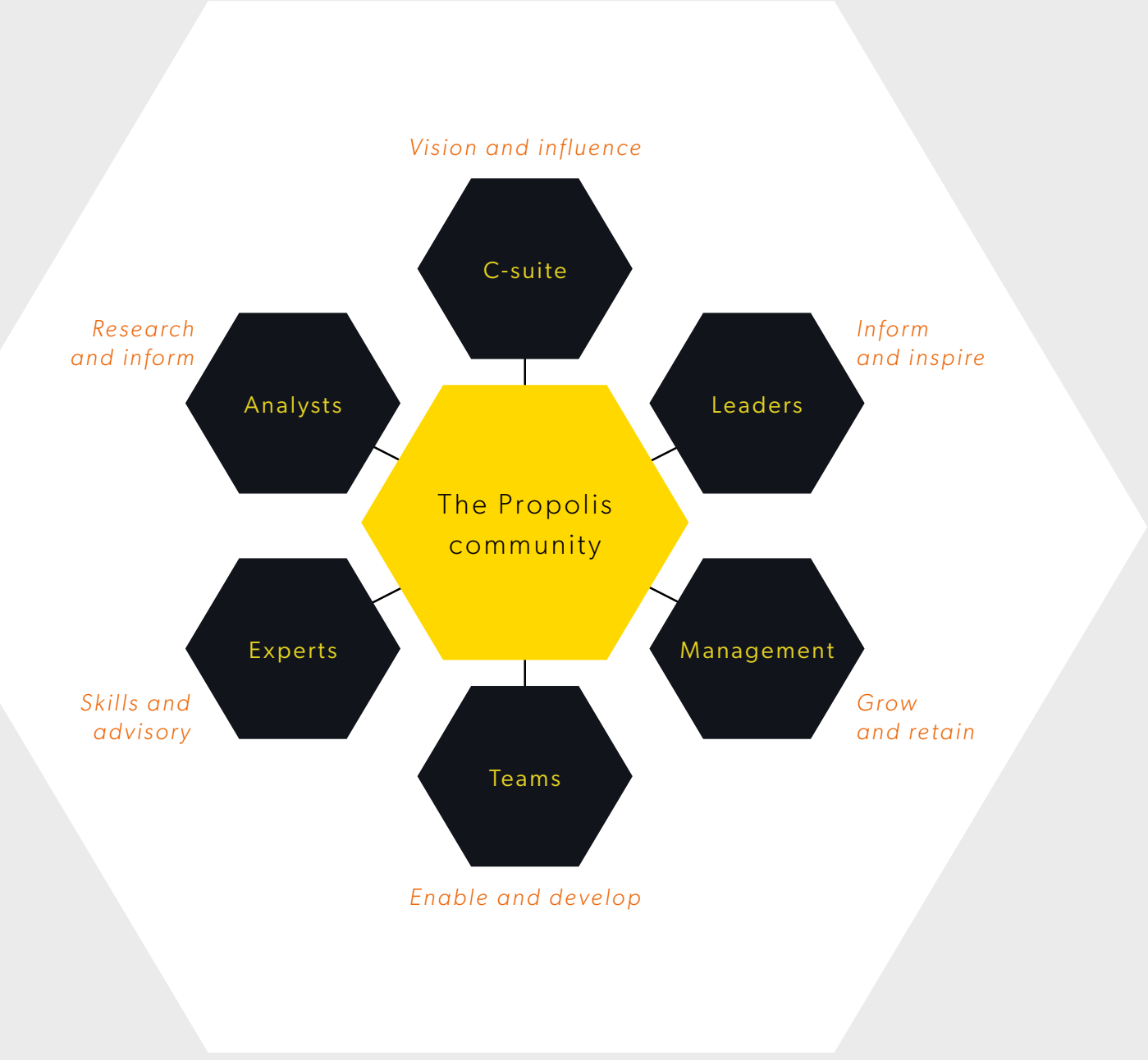
Propolis includes teams of marketers from all different companies and industries. This cross-pollination of different industries will help everyone learn from each other.

As we know, some industries are hotter on certain topics than others, and vice versa, so it stands to reason that everyone – whatever industry they're in – has much to teach, and much to learn.

Hive experts help lead the conversations within Propolis, but it's these community members that are the heart of everything. They communicate with one another, share their insights, learn from one another, and actively involve themselves in research projects to help provide a picture of the industry.

If Propolis members are the bees, think of Hive experts like the beekeepers.

If you've ever attended B2B Marketing Ignite London, think of Propolis like a 24/7 on-demand version of that event. All of the opinion, analysis and networking, all of the time



Introducing the experts, in their own words



Barbara Stewart,
customer experience
Hive expert

"I am a passionate end-to-end customer experience and marketing consultant with a knack for distilling complexity into simplicity. I have extensive experience creating and delivering customer-centric programmes that deliver value back to businesses and their customers. I believe really getting to know your customer is key for long-term business success. I specialise in agile customer experience to unearth insights that direct business transformation and shape market propositions that deliver value exchange for customers. Throughout my 18-year career, I have worked across most sectors, including FMCG, travel, financial services, healthcare, real estate, software and tech, public sector, retail and telecoms business of all shapes and sizes."



Robert Norum,
growth
Hive expert

"I am a B2B marketer with over 30 years of experience. I have worked in magazine publishing, IT distribution, marketing agencies and, for the last 17 years, as an independent marketing consultant. During this time, I have worked on brand, demand generation, channel, ecommerce and sales enablement. For the last nine years, I have mainly specialised in ABM, working with a number of leading agencies and directly for a wide cross section of global brands. Since 2017, I have delivered the ABM Essentials training course for B2B Marketing, training over 400 marketing professionals in the process."



Simon Daniels,
marketing operations and process
Hive expert

"I am a widely experienced B2B marketing operations specialist, with an extensive track record advising marketing leaders on the challenges of data, technology and process. Client-side and consulting project highlights include marketing automation implementation, audience data enhancement, campaign and lead process improvement and analytics delivery, together with team formation and leadership. I have worked extensively in technology and a range of other sectors across Europe, North America and the Asia Pacific regions, both driving and facilitating go-to-market strategy, execution and measurement."



Shane Redding,
strategy and evolution
Hive expert

"I'm an independent consultant and expert trainer on strategic marketing and digital transformation with 30 years of experience. I use my skills, network and knowledge to help global businesses transform their marketing by choosing and implementing strategies that work for them and their customers. My background includes deploying data, software and leading teams to make a real difference to results. I enjoy portfolio working and also hold a number of board advisory roles with fast growth companies looking to build and exit applying my experience of management buyouts and trade sales."



Maria Cameron,
teams, resourcing and D&I
Hive expert

"I've been in marketing for over 20 years and have led large marketing teams for global brands like BT and Vodafone as CMO and marketing director. I'm a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Marketing and, as well as advisory work, I also teach marketers on key skills for successful marketing strategy and successful marketing careers. My passion is working at the intersection between marketing and people, looking at giving people real meaning and purpose at work, as well as making sure we address challenges of the future by having the right talent, in the right roles, at the right time."



Kate Roe,
brand and content Hive expert

"I published my first newsletter aged 11, using Crayola and my best handwriting (readership: three). So began a passion for marketing! For 30 years, I have challenged dull B2B marketing practices at various tech companies, spanning field marketing, sales enablement, PR, internal comms and more. It culminated in the dream role of global brand narrator for American Express Global Business Travel, at a time of transformation for the 170-year-old brand. It's also been my privilege to be part of the B2B Marketing Awards as judge and now, heading up the Propolis brand and content strategy Hive. "



Steve Kemish,
execution and campaigns Hive expert

"I'm an award-winning marketer and public speaker who has worked in digital marketing since 1997. I've worked both client and agency-side on digital, CRM, marketing strategy and consultancy with many global brands, including Motorola, ADP, Oracle, Lego, Skype and Capita. As well as my role at marketing agency, Junction, I am also a guest lecturer at various business schools, a member of the DMA Digital Council and a longstanding Superbrands and AEO judge. My passionate and insightful approach has gained me numerous awards. In recent years, my work has seen wins at the B2B Marketing Awards (eight times), and various other awards programmes."



Tony Lamb,
data strategy, insight and intelligence Hive expert

"I'm a senior data leader with experience building high performance data functions for organisations of varying sizes. I formed an independent data consultancy in 2001, and have experience working closely with c-level sponsors, senior leadership teams and cross-functional areas to build bottom-up data strategies that deliver business value, and then scoping, designing and embedding sustainable data solutions in businesses. I am also a director of Nua Training, with expertise in presentation, negotiation and sales skills, as well as a conference speaker with specialisms in data strategy and master data management. I was also the chair of the DMA Data Council for several years."

In the pages that follow, you'll find interviews with Hive leaders, advice on creating world-class campaigns, analysis and opinion

So, where can I get a taste of all that Propolis has to offer?

You're holding it now! Never ones to miss an opportunity, this issue of the magazine – which is the final ever issue – will act as a ceremonial passing of the torch.

In the pages that follow, you'll find interviews with Hive experts, advice on creating world-class campaigns, analysis and opinion. Propolis was only born in 2021, but this magazine offers a taste of what it can offer you and your team.

Interested in learning more about Propolis? Head over to: b2bmarketing.net/propolis and fill out the form



CAN AI TAKE YOUR BUSINESS PERFORMANCE TO A NEW LEVEL?

With interest in artificial intelligence continuing to grow, **David Rowlands** spoke with Tony Lamb, Hive expert for data strategy, intelligence and insight, to see what the benefits of AI are, how to implement it, what to look out for, tips for succeeding, and more

DATA STRATEGY, INSIGHT AND INTELLIGENCE



Tony Lamb,
data strategy, insight and intelligence Hive expert, B2B Marketing

According to the 2019 Accenture report *AI: Built to Scale,*[1] 84% of c-suite executives believed they must leverage artificial intelligence (AI) to achieve their growth objectives. Yet 76% acknowledge they struggle when it comes to scaling it across the business, so fail to realise the desired benefits.

In this feature, we examine how companies can start to use AI to understand how it could drive their business performance.

1. What do we mean by AI and why is it different to the analytics processes we've been using for many years?

Data analytics is the process of transforming a raw dataset into useful knowledge. AI has the potential to supercharge this by automating the data analytics process. Insights can be gained from far larger datasets, that are more accurate than traditional approaches, and often delivered in near real-time.

In simplistic terms, AI can deliver business benefits in three ways: automating business processes; gaining insight and driving action through complex data analysis; and engaging with customers and employees. These areas can broadly be defined as follows:

- **Process automation:** the automation of digital and physical tasks – typically, back-office administrative and financial activities using robotic process automation (RPA) technologies. These 'robots' (code on a server) act like a human inputting and consuming large volumes of information from multiple IT systems and can fully automate, or accelerate, processes in tandem with human interventions.

- **Cognitive insight:** brings together a number of intelligent technologies, including semantics, AI algorithms and a number of learning techniques such as deep learning and machine learning to detect patterns in vast volumes of data, interpret their meaning and, if required, drive action. This has been likened to 'analytics on steroids' and is being used in many ways, including to:

  - Predict what a particular customer is likely to buy.
  - Identify credit and insurance claims fraud in real-time.
  - Automate personalised targeting of digital ads.

- **Cognitive engagement:** solutions that engage employees and customers using natural language processing chatbots, intelligent agents, and machine learning. This category includes:

  - Intelligent agents that offer 24/7 customer service, addressing issues from password requests to technical support questions.
  - Product and service recommendation systems that increase personalisation, engagement and sales.

2. What are the benefits of using AI in business?

If you are able to scale the above activities across the business, the McKinsey survey, *The state of AI in 2020*,[2] identified these resultant benefits for the high performers in AI adoption:

- **Better overall performance.** Companies are seeing more EBIT contribution from AI experience and better year-on-year growth overall than other companies.

- **Better overall leadership.** C-suite decision-making and performance is rated more highly by staff and shareholders.

The step change in performance occurs when the business moves from the 'proof of concept' phase, to the 'scaling' phase. Accenture found in their 2019 AI report that companies strategically scaling AI have nearly twice the success rate and three times the return from AI investments compared to companies pursuing siloed 'proof of concepts'.

3. What can marketers do to prepare before implementing AI?

With data, the old adage of 'rubbish in, rubbish out' is generally true. Organisations that are thriving through their use of AI have the core data foundations in place, namely:

- They have recognised the importance of business-critical data, identifying the key data sets as priorities, and have invested in the data quality, data management and data governance frameworks for these.

- They also have multi-disciplinary teams throughout the organisation that promote and enable the use of data by the business, with clear sponsorship from the top ensuring alignment with the c-suite vision. This enables faster culture and behaviour changes in the organisation.

So, the starting point is to understand how data, and then AI, could most benefit the business areas or strategic business priorities. Without many of the core foundational elements above, it will be hard to move from the enthusiastic 'proof of concept' phase to 'scaling' to drive business value.

4. With that in mind, how can marketers actually implement AI to improve their business performance? This may be completely new to many marketers, so where do they start?

In building any data strategy, there's a four-stage process:

1. Understanding the business drivers: aligning the goals of the business with the data activities, and communicating with the business to identify the long list of 'ideas'.

2. Analysis and prioritisation: creating an agreed set of prioritised opportunities that are then investigated further, with evidence built from existing sources or through 'proof of concepts'.

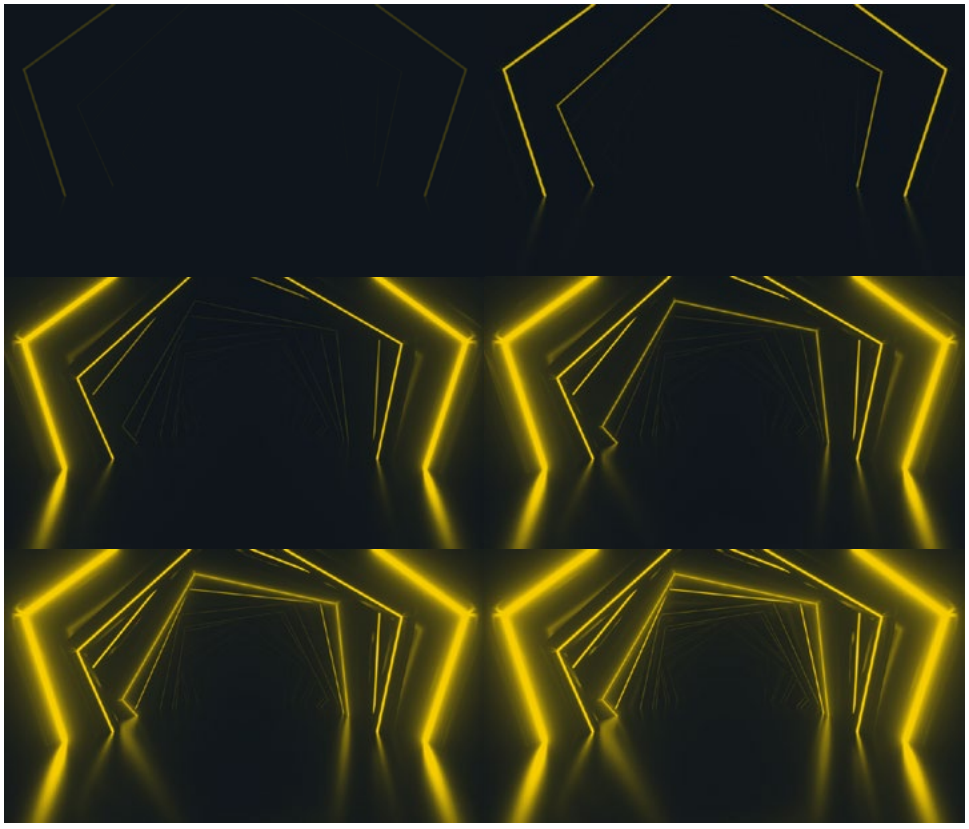
3. Assessing the current state: the ability to deliver these is assessed from a data, process, skills, technical and organisational perspective.

4. Data/AI strategy: the above analysis is then built into a recommendation or business case.

The first stage is to identify business issues or opportunities where AI could provide a superior solution. According to McKinsey's 2020 AI survey, the largest AI-driven revenue increases come from pricing and promotion, customer-service analytics, sales and demand forecasting, and inventory and parts optimisation. From a marketing perspective, start by looking at the customer experience, retention and acquisition activity and see how data insights, and potentially AI, could improve your current performance.

Royal Mail has employed AI in many areas, including building models to refine customer segmentation and to predict customer churn. Pitney Bowes uses AI to increase the ROI of its prospecting activity. Amazon and Netflix built their businesses using the power of recommendation engines. If you have a digital route to market, this AI technology can now be purchased as a 'software as a service' (SaaS) offering for a few thousand pounds per year. Chatbots to support your customer service team are a similar price point, with both being reasonably simple to integrate with your existing data and digital platforms. More and more of these SaaS solutions will become available, reducing the cost and increasing the ease of access and implementation of these advanced technologies.

Amazon and Netflix built their businesses using the power of recommendation engines. If you have a digital route to market, this AI technology can now be purchased as a 'software as a service' (SaaS) offering for a few thousand pounds per year



5. What's the best way of integrating AI into an existing martech stack?

Because AI technologies typically support individual tasks rather than entire processes, scale-up almost always requires integration with existing systems and processes.

It's really dependent on the AI solution to determine how it needs to be integrated. This should be assessed by the relevant technical experts in the planning or pilot phase of the project. If the application depends on special technology that is difficult or costly to source, that could impact scale-up.

6. What pitfalls should marketers look out for when using AI to improve their business performance?

The key to delivering significant AI driven results is being able to scale initiatives. To achieve this, you will need a supportive organisational structure, including senior executive sponsorship, foundational data capabilities to allow the data to be accessed and trusted, and employee adoption of your insights. Without these enablers, it becomes very hard to make an impact on business performance.

Five tips to help you succeed are:

- Don't disappear into the woodwork, and then suddenly appear with a solution looking for a problem. AI solutions typically need to be developed or adapted in close collaboration with business users to address real business needs and enable adoption, scale and real value creation.
- Start with the datasets that are easy to get and provide value. Go for the 80% solution first, or the 'common sense' approach. Successful programmes start with the data that are easily accessible in one system, or in systems that are already communicating well with each other. And try to deliver some value in the first three months.
- Make sure that the insights you want to make available are convenient to access and easy to understand for the business. As AI increases its responsibility in the decision-making process, it's important to provide explanations of the reasoning behind the decision. According to research from BCS, the Chartered Institute for IT, 53% of UK adults have no faith in any organisation to use algorithms to make judgements about them.[3]
- Skills availability is a top barrier to achieving success in AI. If you don't have the required skills and knowledge, look at short-cutting the process by bringing in third-party expertise to work with your teams. Speed to market, or speed to scale, are one of your big risks to overcome.
- Wherever your data is flowing, make sure it meets your corporate security and compliance requirements and that you have the appropriate controls in place. Evidencable assessments of this are a good best practice approach.

7. How quickly can marketers expect to see ROI? Does AI take time to work its magic, or can it start showing results immediately?

To successfully scale, companies will generally need defined data processes, owners with clear data accountability and established leadership support with dedicated AI champions. Creating this structure and governance doesn't happen overnight.

But you need to start somewhere, and with any data activity, you should challenge yourself to create some value within the first three months.

The McKinsey 2020 AI survey observed: "It's also clear that we're still in the early days of AI use in business, with less than a quarter of respondents seeing significant bottom-line impact. This isn't surprising. Achieving impact at scale is still elusive for many companies, not only because of the technical challenges, but also because of the organisational changes required."

How soon significant benefits come through will depend on the opportunity you are pursuing, but

the Covid-19 challenge has shown how fast companies can change and implement new ways of working when they have to.

8. What advice do you have for any marketers thinking about using AI? Is it always a good move?

The key is to understanding whether AI will benefit your business performance is to initially answer the following questions for each of the project 'ideas':

- How well does a project idea align to the business strategy (strategic alignment)?
- What is the positive value impact for your business (value)?
- How difficult and costly will it be to implement the proposed AI solution (cost)?
- Would the benefits from launching the AI solution be worth the effort (opportunity size)?
- Would the business or customer be exposed to risk if the activity didn't happen (risk)?

If an opportunity exists, establish the basic data foundations, start small, fail fast and consider how you'll scale. Building a 'data culture' where data is at the centre of 'the collective conversations of an enterprise' will almost certainly improve business performance and is key to building a data-driven business. Whether that requires AI will depend on your specific business opportunity.

In general, if you're a large company, or need to access a lot of data, you should be exploring the potential to use AI to drive your performance, as there will be so many opportunities.

If you're an SME with lower data volumes, there's the potential to create game changing advances for your business. Your key question is 'what game do you want to change?'

Overall, the journey won't be simple, but with the right planning and development, AI should drive a new level of work satisfaction, productivity and prosperity.

Sources

1. *'AI: Built to Scale', Accenture, (November 2019).*
2. *'The State of AI in 2020', McKinsey Digital, (June 2020).*
3. *The Public's Trust of Computer Algorithms survey conducted by YouGov for BCS, the Chartered Institute for IT, (September 2020).*
4. *DAVENPORT, T. H. and RONANKI, R., 'Artificial Intelligence for the Real World. Don't Start With Moon Shots', Harvard Business Review, (January–February 2018).*

"A community of your peers, new insight and training can be a very powerful thing. We realised that, in order to drive our business and global marketing team forward, that we would benefit from an international professional membership, which Propolis with B2B Marketing gives us. Now more than ever, the need to come together as a community of B2B marketers seemed not just relevant but necessary. I am personally looking forward to seeing our global marketing team really exploit this membership and gain new perspectives as a result."

CATHERINE DUTTON
VP, marketing, financial services and insurance, Atos

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HOW TO BUILD AN AWARD-WINNING TEAM DURING COVID-19

B2B Marketing's **Joel Harrison** recently spoke with Maria Jennings, director of marketing and brand, PwC UK, about PwC's recent win for 'Marketing team of the year'. They talked about how to communicate effectively with your team during the pandemic, and the reason they bagged the coveted award at the B2B Marketing Awards in November last year



Joel Harrison,
editor-in-chief,
B2B Marketing



Maria Jennings,
director of marketing
and brand, PwC UK



JH: Let's talk about your award win. How important is team culture in a marketing team –beyond just having a great team?

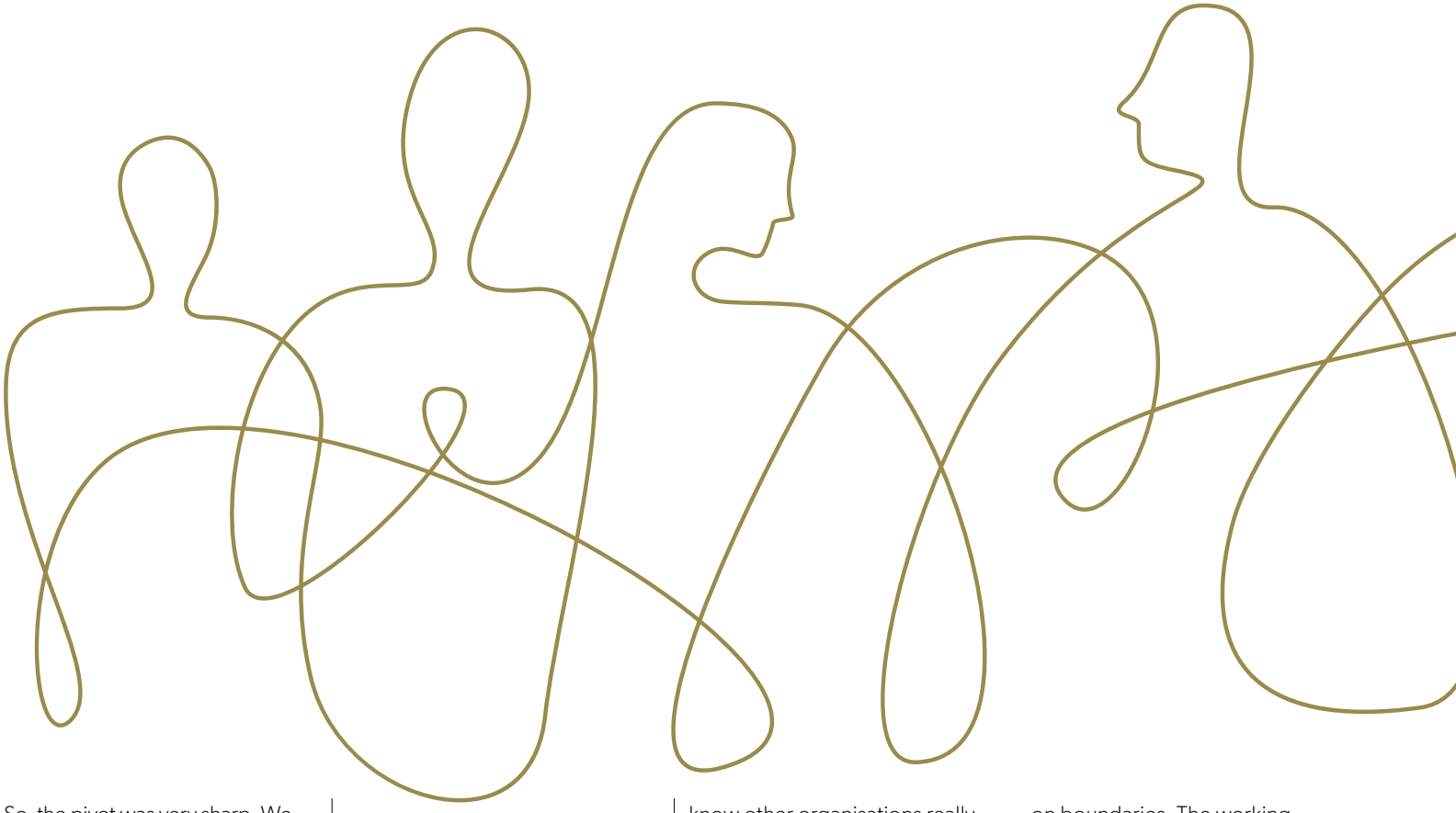
MJ: That overall win changed what had been a tough year for so many because that 'Marketing team of the year' award was for everyone. It wasn't for one particular project team – all of whom were deserving winners. It was for each and every person in marketing for every bit of contribution and every bit of hard graft from all those people.

It was for all of them, and there was such a sense of pride from everybody. We do rally around a bit of social. We prepped for that, used the images you sent, and tuned in because it was a big deal for us, and, actually, you doing it virtually was really great because we had over 100 people watch.

On the night, if we had gone to an actual in-person event, we would have bought a couple of tables and had probably 20 people there, so, this way, everybody got to get involved and everybody made an effort.

How have you found Covid-19 has been impacting your team, your relationship with them and the support you need to offer to operate as a team leader?

I think that, as a marketing function, we had to pivot very quickly, and we had to respond to something we'd never seen before. The business was working out where it needed to be, and how it helped our clients, and, therefore, our role became very different. All of a sudden, we had to pause what we were doing and, in some cases, rethink where our effort and investment needed to be, and what skills we needed to deliver. Very quickly, we were trying to help the organisation and our clients to survive. And, ultimately, our clients were in survival mode as well.



So, the pivot was very sharp. We moved people from roles into a Covid-19 response team – all of whom worked brilliantly. With the camaraderie and team work, there was an excellent opportunity to look at what the priorities were, so, therefore: what did we start, what did we pause, and what carried on in the background, because we knew we would need it again when we came out of the pandemic. The way I saw the team and function pivot at speed around a whole new set of goals was to their credit.

It sounds like you've got quite a close team, but how did you have to adjust the way you engaged them?

Yeah, I mean there's a marketing function at PwC with 115 people across many regions in the UK, and we were used to working virtually. In fact, it was kind of in our DNA already.

We had 20,000 people working from home, and this was pretty phenomenal actually. I know other organisations really struggled with that because it wasn't really part of their makeup, so, for us, as a marketing function, working virtually was no big deal.

I guess the big deal was that, for some people, being in the office is a really good thing. Some people might be in a shared house, or might be alone, and actually getting into the office used to be their escape. So, we very quickly as a leadership team got our arms around people – metaphorically. We were checking in on people, hosted a lot of quizzes and did Zoom happy hours, so we added a bit of fun into what was quite an unnerving and uncertain time for many, and we upped the ante around communication.

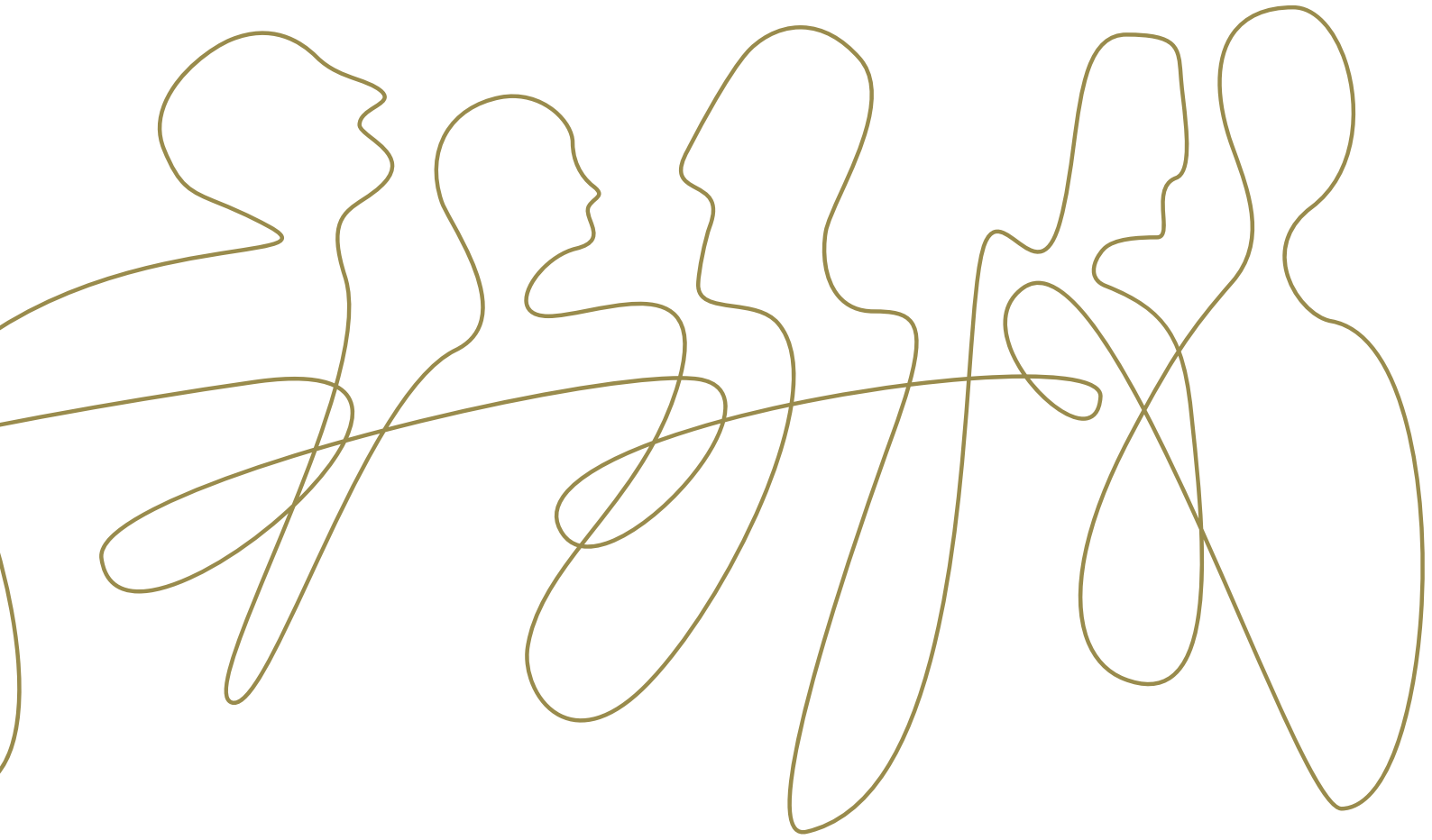
There's a marketing function at PwC with 115 people across many regions in the UK, and we were used to working virtually. In fact, it was kind of in our DNA already

What kinds of challenges presented themselves and how did you respond to those scenarios?

I think for me, the biggest challenge was being really clear on boundaries. The working day got longer. People were putting meetings into the diary for 8 o'clock in the morning without checking to see if that was okay with people because they assumed you'd be up at your laptop by then. Meetings went very late into the day again for the same reason. The day just got longer in the absence of a permit.

But, while you might still be checking your emails and getting up to speed on things, you've got a little bit of a break in between getting to the office and leaving the office. I have had to personally challenge myself around that because I would find myself at 6 o'clock bashing away at the computer, and then my little boy comes to me and says: "Mummy, can I have a story?" So, it really is about making sure you have those boundaries, and I think everybody in marketing has struggled with that a lot.

So, as a leadership team, but for me personally as well, I've been saying "Hey, it's okay to



say no to a meeting. It's okay to say 'I don't want to do that on video. I'm going to go walk the dog and can we have a chat on the phone?' When was the last time you called somebody? We tend to do everything on Zoom. I've introduced doing a walk and talk in some of my meetings rather than on video, so I think the day got longer, we had fewer boundaries, and actually a lot of people struggled with that.

As this becomes longer term, find your boundaries, find your red line and be clear on that. Do a brilliant job, still but within the boundaries that you work, and don't feel bad for the days that you can't work.

One of the things about that, assuming we revert back to something resembling normalcy, is how we feel about this situation because some of the expectations probably will remain. I'm not asking you to tell me what the answer is because I don't think anybody knows at this point, but it's a kind of fluid scenario isn't it?

Yeah, I think so. I think, fundamentally, the way in which we work has changed forever. I think that those organisations that had very firm views on employees not working from home will have changed their styles. And I think what's really great about when you trust your employees to work from home when appropriate, is that they can still deliver. They can do really great things, and that's not just us from marketing.

We had examples at PwC where we were doing amazing client work virtually that we never would have done without being on the client side. I'm not saying that we won't need to go back to some of the ways that we worked before, but I do think there will be more flexibility for more people in terms of how they work. We were very lucky at PwC. We have everyday flexibility, which means you do your work – you know how your day allows you to work. And I think that that just means that, for more organisations and therefore more people, flexibility can become a new norm.

If there's somebody reading now who really wants to run an award-winning team in the future (perhaps they're running a team, or they want to run a team but they want to be recognised the way PwC has been), what's the one bit of advice you'd give to them?

Yeah, I think my view is that leadership is not about titles, or positions or flowcharts. It is about one individual influencing another individual investor, and the knock on effect that that has.

First, I would say to people, think about your relationship. Think about your network. Think about the dialogue you have with your team and with your stakeholders because that's ultimately how you become credible and how you show leadership, because people follow that.

I will commit to certain attributes with the leader that I hope that they will see in me regularly. That includes that I will listen to understand, not listen to respond. I think we often want to jump in and say we've got an answer on how to do that, but I'll listen to understand. The third thing is something I feel very strongly about. Simplify anything that feels complicated because, the simpler it is, the easier it is to digest and, therefore, you land your message in a really kind of clear way and provide clarity.

And then I guess the fourth thing is authenticity. Just be yourself. And, you know, I've had feedback in the past that I'm firm but fair, and that I'm inclusive but compassionate, so I don't think there's any harm in being direct, providing clarity and not beating around the bush. But, equally, being able to show that you can wrap your arms around people and provide the proverbial hub. So, authenticity is really key.



THE IMPORTANCE OF BRAND PURPOSE



Jill Pringle,
brand marketing consultant,
founder of Brand Symphony Marketing,
and author of The Brand Symphony

LinkedIn: JillPringleMarketing
Twitter: @JillPringle_FP

For all of the interest in brand purpose, there is an equal amount of misconception. **David Rowlands** spoke with Jill Pringle to delve into just why it's so important, why businesses should start putting purpose at the heart of all they do, and more

To be blunt, what is brand purpose and why is it so important?

The definition of purpose is 'the reason why something is done or exists'. So, your brand purpose is why your business exists. I can't think of anything more important!

For us as marketers, the 'why' is at the core of how we position businesses, differentiate ourselves and identify relevant audiences. It's also more motivating and engaging for customers and employees than expecting them to have a desire to simply help us make money.

To be equally blunt, I think the issue with 'brand purpose' is that we spend so much time debating what it is, rather than focusing on making sure that it's actually real and what drives us – not just an academic messaging exercise – and that our actions match what we say.

If an organisation doesn't currently have a brand purpose, how can they build one? Is it a case of 'too little, too late', or can brand purpose be cultivated at any point in an organisation's existence?

I suspect that all businesses have a purpose – a reason for existing – beyond their financial objectives. They just might not have articulated it clearly. Or, over time, they've lost focus of it. I often work with businesses who, as start-ups, had a clear purpose, but it's become diluted as they've grown – perhaps as the market has changed, or as the original founders have moved on.

What's implied in your question – and actually where a lot of the negativity towards brand purpose comes from – is that it implies the 'why' has to be something huge like 'save the planet' or 'reduce world hunger.' For most businesses, this simply isn't real.

I think the word 'cultivated' is important here. Lack of cultivation over time and across the business is common. So, a brand states a purpose, but the dots behind it – the day-to-day that customers and employees experience – bear no resemblance to it.

Ask yourself, why does this business really exist, why was it founded? Don't just ask what people need from you, but why that is. For your clients, you're probably part of solving a bigger problem, or enabling something meaningful. Reading *Start With Why* by Simon Sinek would be a good first step.

Brand purpose is sometimes criticised for being 'pink and fluffy', or even 'irrelevant'. What's the business case for brand purpose?

It's seen as 'pink and fluffy' as the stated brand purpose is often disconnected from the commercial goals. Someone in finance sets some commercial goals and then marketing try and shoehorn a purpose around that. Frankly, I've been there.

This is why Simon Sinek was such a revelation, because he was clear that if you start with your 'why' and build your commercial model around that, then that disconnect won't exist.

The business case for brand purpose is that human beings can connect with it emotionally. Employees are more likely to find meaning in their work so deliver more value and stay longer. The same engagement goes for customers.

Is brand purpose necessary for every organisation, and should some organisations steer clear of it altogether? Why?

I don't think any brand should exist without a purpose, I mean, why would you? I think purpose is something that B2B brands should invest more time in clarifying – because so many B2B businesses are people-based services – and so motivating people and giving them common goals is vital to success. People buy from people, right?

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The CMO should be the conscience of the organisation – the person around the board table who asks: 'Why are we doing that? It doesn't serve our purpose'

What organisations should steer clear of is a purpose which is about environmental sustainability if that is counter to what they do. I remember this debate back in the 90s within a print business. Taking steps to reduce the environmental footprint of that printing – both reducing the print by moving online and also carbon offsetting and being more recyclable – were all responsible strategies. But to have a brand purpose about being green would have been preposterous!

Some organisations' brand purpose can be perceived as 'fake' or 'deceptive', and actually have the opposite effect to that intended! What pitfalls do these organisations fall into, and how can other marketers avoid making the same mistakes?

Advice in two words: be honest. If you don't cure world hunger, don't pretend you do, because people really aren't stupid.

My second piece of advice is to make sure that you use your brand purpose to guide what you do and, if you can't, then you either have the wrong purpose or the wrong commercial model to make it happen.

Using it means a lot of stakeholder management to get it off the ground and then some ongoing conflict. The CMO should be the conscience of the organisation – the person around the board table who asks: "Why are we doing that? It doesn't serve our purpose." I'm a big fan of the Hedgehog concept in Jim Collins' book, *Good to Great*, where he gives examples of companies who let certain opportunities for revenue go, because they don't fit with their purpose.

Hard to do, but a test of whether you really mean it.

How can brand purpose be assessed, analysed and improved? Is it all too ethereal, or are there hard facts marketers can use to refine their brand purpose?

It's hard to assess if it's not connected with how you actually do business and make money – if it's a side project to tick a box.

It should be the reason behind your product/service choices, as well as your marcomms, and that in itself will make it easier to measure impact.

Your brand purpose should be a thread through all of your marketing activity and, if it can't be – because it doesn't help you win more business – then your brand purpose is probably wrong. So, I would definitely look at measures of how much people engage with the purpose-led messages, products and activities versus any that currently don't as a starting point.

I guess that how to measure seems more obvious for charities or arts organisations – where their existence is based on solving some sort of social problem and/or educating the world on it. Ironically, one of their challenges is that people who donate to the cause complain if 100% of it doesn't go to the front-line cause, and I see charities having to justify that 10p of £1 donated pays their staff or 5p is spent on marketing to get the next £1. I wonder what might happen if commercial organisations put that much scrutiny on what proportion of their revenue comes from purpose-led buyers and how much of that they re-invest in the next one. Maybe there's a smarter ROI model here that we can learn from charities?

If your answers haven't answered the critics already, what do you say to any marketer who rejects brand purpose?

Look to nature. Everything has a purpose in the ecosystem and things that don't add any value or have a real purpose tend to die out.

How do you see brand purpose evolving in the future? Has the pandemic perhaps catalysed the need for companies to be seen as more than just a business?

I think the pandemic has intensified the need for real human connection and meaning, so yes, I think it will evolve. I hope it will evolve to be something every business has at the core of what they do – not just being 'seen' to have one.

I think the pandemic has also accelerated a trend we were already seeing from millennials. Increasingly, they want to work for companies who have a purpose, who are honest about who they are and what they do. They are also prepared to call-out businesses who put profit above their stated purpose and serving people.

HOW TO BUILD A WORLD-CLASS ABM CAMPAIGN

At the B2B Marketing Awards 2020, Transmission won Gold for 'Best use of account-based marketing'. **David Rowlands** caught up with David Reid to learn how

GROWTH



David Reid,
client services director,
Transmission

Each year, the B2B Marketing Awards celebrates the best in the business and – just as importantly – is a good excuse to have a drink and a laugh. Mercifully, the 2020 awards show was held virtually, and so everyone was spared any potential drunken embarrassment.

Fortunately, the calibre of entries remained absolutely phenomenal, and so all those who made the shortlist can be extremely proud of a job well done, let alone the winners.

I spoke with David Reid, client services director at Transmission, to find out more. Transmission won Gold in 'Best use of account-based marketing' for its campaign for HP Apollo.

Tell us a bit about your campaign for HP Apollo. What was the goal, and how did you set out to achieve it?

As one of the biggest IT suppliers on the planet, it's not hard for HP Inc to get on the RFP lists of large enterprises. The challenge is not to win a seat at the table, it's to be more successful while you're there. This insight, ultimately, was the brief.

HP knew their customers had an understanding or awareness of their products and solutions. They didn't want or need thousands of MQLs or even SQLs. What they wanted was an approach that enabled them to understand their customer better, communicate the right message to them, respond to what they were most interested in at any given point of the customer lifecycle, and help sales be more successful. It needed a campaign that would deliver tangible value, helping HP's sales and marketing teams to get real insights into target accounts over the long-term, so that when RFPs were in play, prospects were already emotionally connected with the commercial and technical value that the company had to offer.

Transmission decided that, in order do to this properly, we needed to rip up the rulebook and develop a completely new ABM framework that would be always on, crafting messaging and targeting based on real-time data and insights on a weekly basis.

This meant different content, different targeting and different tactics for any given account, depending on where they were in a five-year RFP cycle. It resulted in a programme that reinvented the way HP Inc does B2B marketing.

Although it's an ongoing campaign, what results have you seen to date?

We have seen results, although the ultimate goal is pretty binary: did HP win the business or not? That isn't something we will be able to share in this interview, but we can discuss how it has performed from a marketing sense. For that, we are using a 'four Cs' framework to measure success: coverage, contacts, context and conversion. The reality is that insights will become richer over a period of three years plus. However, the results for the first few quarters of activity were regarded as a huge success, so we use these as a benchmark.

The campaign consistently reached 51% of companies on the target account list, and engaged with 30%. We created 1362 net new contacts, many of whom were from businesses approaching an RFP.

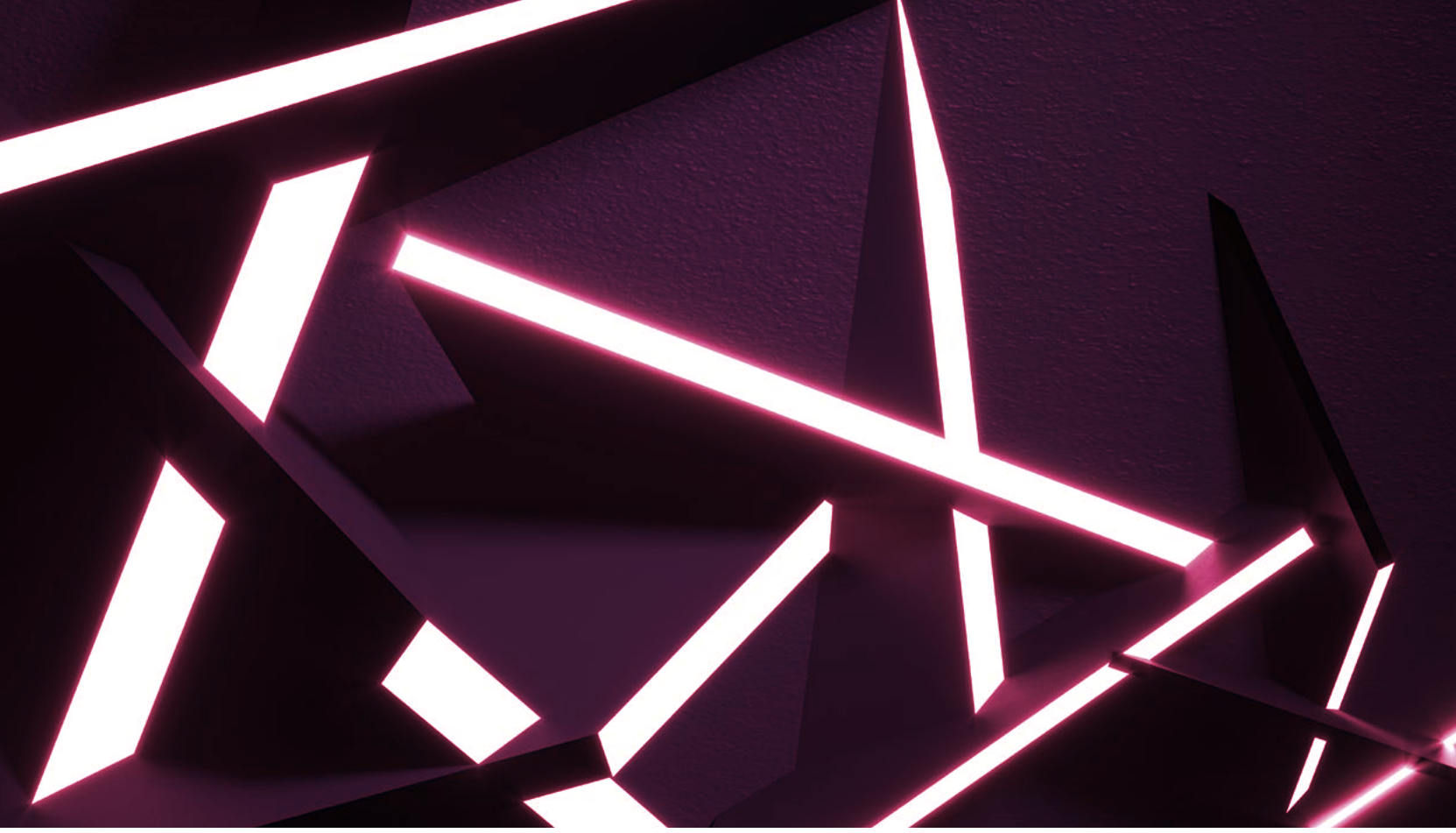
As part of the strategy, we are aligning messaging and content based on a number of factors, but a key one is the time to RFP. The closer the customer gets to an RFP, the more focused we are on solutions-led content; the further away, we drive more thought leadership and topical content. So far, we've seen that 75% of engaged accounts have engaged with or have consumed content that fit within HP's key pillars. Again, this is a long-term play, so, while initial results have been excellent, we consistently monitor performance and look for areas we can improve on or innovate in to add more value.

ABM isn't just about marketing – sales is equally important. How did you ensure sales and marketing were aligned, and that sales were given the information and collateral they required?

Collaboration is the most important part of ABM. Sales were critical to the engineering of the framework – they were the first people we spoke to. The premise to segment accounts by stage of the buying cycle came from interviewing sales. By understanding where the team was most successful at building relationships with prospective customers and when they could influence buying decisions, we were able to arm them with the right kind of marketing material for each stage of that journey.

So, the sales team could see we weren't looking to do 'another campaign' here – we really wanted to transform the communication of HP's core proposition, products and services to customers and we needed their help. With their help, we could then help them. This is sounding all a bit self-help guru now, but you get the picture!

As an ongoing programme, sharing results and getting feedback from sales on any progress made is crucial. It's a two-way street, of course, and there will



be some traffic lights stopping you, but perseverance in communication is vital. Once you win an account or sales meet a VP, the penny drops and suddenly everyone wants a piece of the action. We saw this when we were doing deep dive account analysis on priority accounts – we were able to provide them with intelligence it would normally take months to unearth.

How did you leverage data and insights to identify the right accounts? How can other marketers do this effectively?

Typically, we find a lot of the most useful insights in programmes like Apollo exist already, so we first looked at what insight sales could give us. On top of that, we used install data (which was critical) and then intent data to help prioritise activation.

I don't think there is a silver bullet to using data or insights – we knew what we wanted to discover and looked into the sources that could help us best. If I started again, I would build a CDP to create more meaningful insights over time. I would say to anyone developing an ABM programme or new strategy – look inhouse first, pull as many resources together in terms of sales, data science, etc. Then look at third party sources to enrich your data and insights.

Once the accounts had been identified, how did you use account mapping and profiling to identify the right individuals? What lessons can marketers learn from this?

Persona research really helped us understand the role of each influencer and decision-maker throughout the buying cycle. Everyone wants to meet the CIO, but sometimes it's not necessary. We ensured that we kept an eye on what we were trying to achieve: being more successful at the RFP table. We used tools such as LinkedIn Sales Navigator, ZoomInfo or DiscoverOrg to find the contacts and align them to the account map, which enabled us to prioritise the message prospects received and what outcomes we were looking to achieve from our activity.

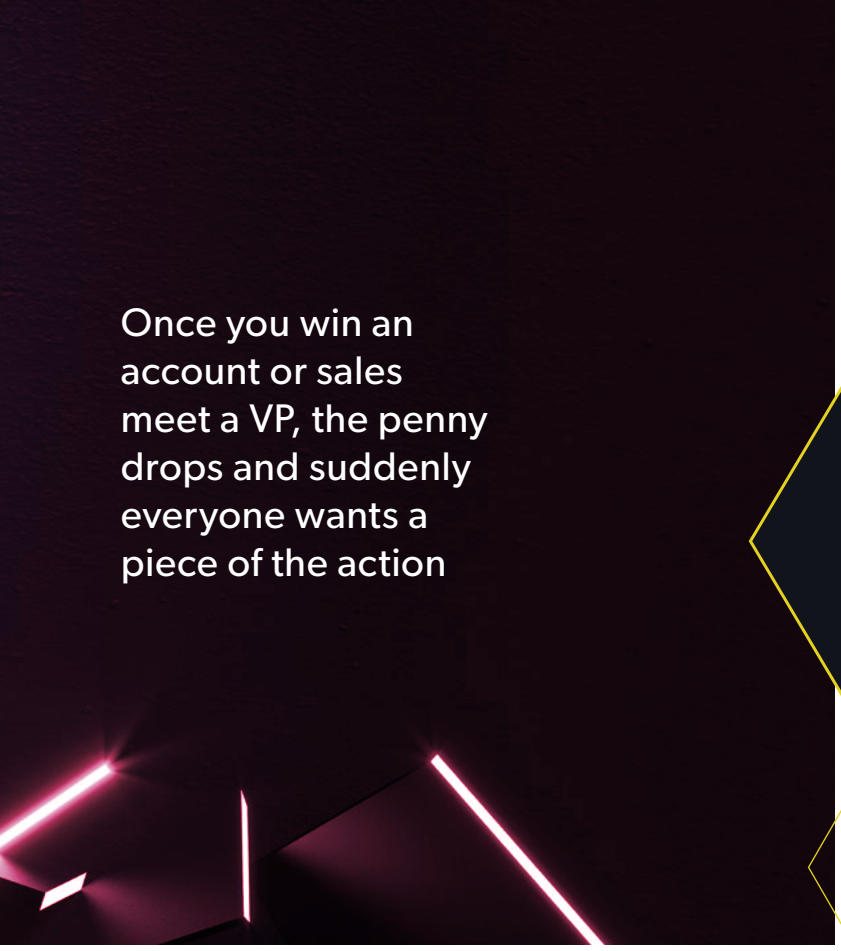
Most of our audience are in the early stages of implementing ABM in their organisations. What advice do you have for marketers who want to reach a stage where they can create world-class ABM campaigns?

I don't think it's anything out of the ordinary to be honest – define your goals, set objectives, be clear on what outcomes you want to create and be willing to test and learn. I think anyone looking at building an ABM programme will need support from their business in order to be successful – a planning session will go a long way in helping define your plan, and you should invite as many customer-facing functions as possible to discuss your plans.

It is also worth looking into what martech you could leverage. Whilst there are a lot of vendors out there, selecting the right tools to help you understand your audience, their behaviour from your programme and unearth deeper insights will be very useful in the long run.

Finally, ABM is very much a change in mindset from the old model of how sales and marketing interact with one another. What pitfalls should marketers look out for when implementing an ABM campaign?

1. Define the boundaries early on. You are spending marketing budget on these accounts to help sales. In turn, this helps the business you both work for. You shouldn't need to spell it out, but both departments are working towards the



Once you win an account or sales meet a VP, the penny drops and suddenly everyone wants a piece of the action

same goal. So, be open on what you are trying to achieve and what you can provide to sales, and, in return, what you need from them to help you be successful.

2. **Don't aim for too much and too little.** What I mean by this is that leads are still important, but they need context around them. How can you package up your insights, intelligence and leads for sales to use the next time they pick up the phone?

3. **Be open.** Show sales what you are looking to create and what you can create. Also, allow them to have a say (ok, no one wants to do a brochure, but try and dig deeper to what that might mean to them).

4. **Be agile.** Your ABM campaign probably won't go to plan at first. So, build out your perimeters, and be ready to pivot. Also, expect the unexpected. It's great when you help land a whale of an account (we have had some great feedback recently from our clients), but sometimes things don't go your way, and it isn't always easy to understand why. For instance, the data, insights, sales alignment, messaging and creative was all on point – so why didn't it work? Ultimately, you have to go again and try something different.

"At B2B Marketing, we know that the informal community we've constructed around our activities has been critical to our success over the past 17 years – if you've ever been to the B2B Marketing Awards, Ignite, or the ABM Conference, you'll have felt that in action. Propolis now enables us to formalise and elevate that community, broadening and deepening the opportunity and potential. As such, it's a natural extension of what we've always done."

JOEL HARRISON
editor-in-chief, B2B Marketing

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LAST POST: *AN ODE TO A PUBLICATION THAT SHAPED AN INDUSTRY*

I can never forget the process of creating the first issue of *B2B Marketing* magazine – and not entirely for the right reasons. It wasn't an easy delivery. My business partner James Farmer and I had been plotting and planning our new venture for a couple of years, but we hadn't launched yet. We had no office, no readers, no visibility, no content – not much going for us. I was working from the living room of a shared house in a part of London that I didn't (and still don't!) much like. James was serving out the end of his notice period at Butterworths, so I was working alone.

Because we officially didn't exist, and we were worried about 'spoilers' from Haymarket or Centaur, we had tried to stay below the radar and not let anyone know what we were doing until the first issue was ready. That's all very well except when you're trying to create a magazine! You need input, stories, contributions, suggestions, support, recognition and encouragement. I had none of those things. Because there was no B2B marketing industry, I had no contact book of people to call on for articles, just a few names pulled out of

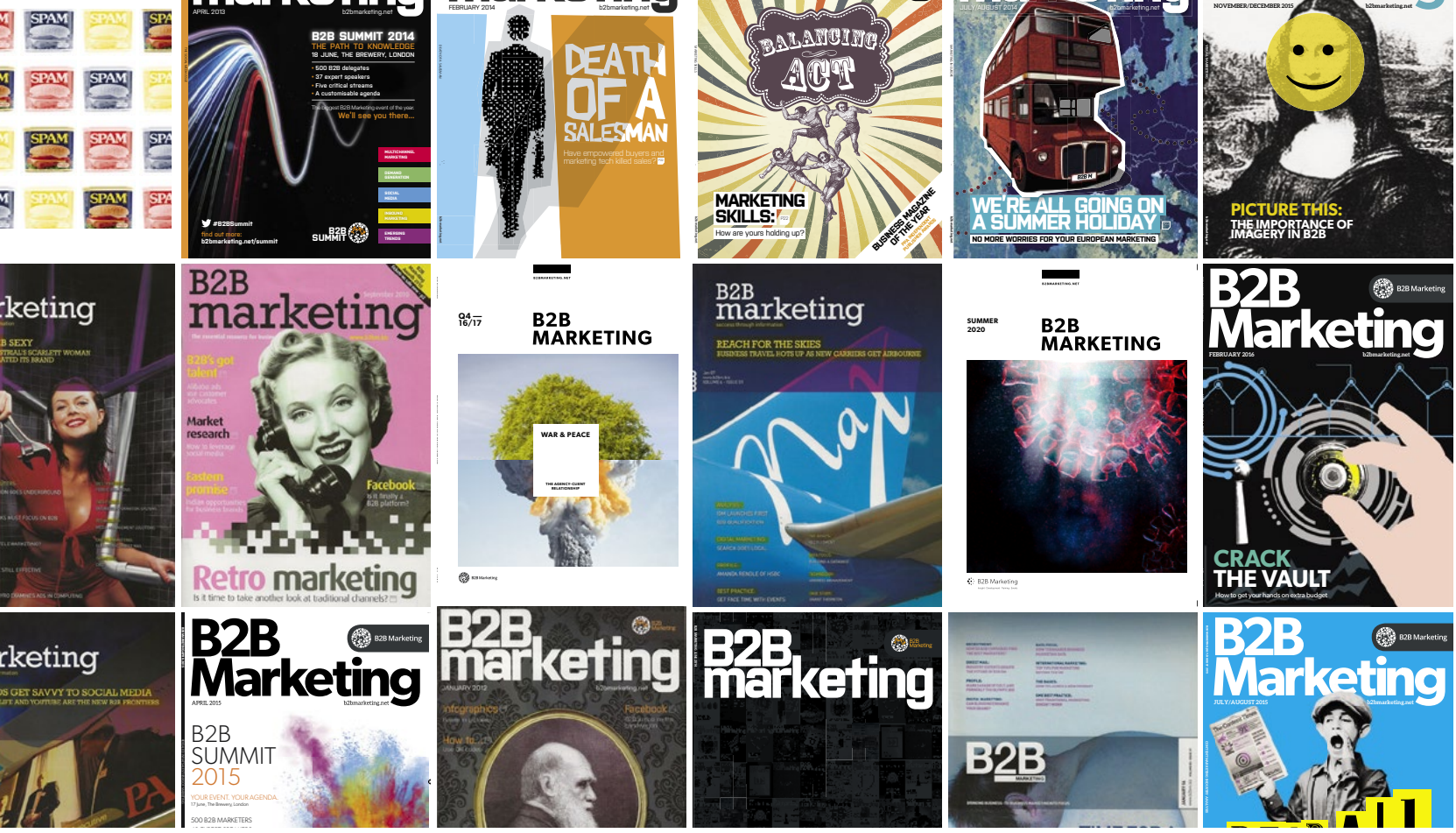


The creation of *B2B Marketing* magazine literally created an industry. On the occasion of the publication of its final edition, **Joel Harrison** looks back on its inception, its development since, and assesses how far the industry has changed since those pioneering times

We had no office, no readers, no visibility, no content

'other' marketing magazines who had expressed an interest in B2B.

So, somehow, I needed to create a magazine out of… thin air. This challenge of starting with nothing and coming up with a vibrant, informed and engaging body of work was always the thing that interested me most about publishing. But, in this instance, given the constraints, it appeared almost insurmountable. In previous jobs, I'd already put together hundreds of magazine or newsletter editions, but always as part of a team, with a schedule and processes around me. For *B2B Marketing*, I had none of these things. I remember walking around the park close to my home, in the balmy May evenings of 2004, in an effort to de-stress, and thinking: 'I'm not sure I can do this. I think this might actually kill me.'





Joel Harrison,
editor-in-chief,
B2B Marketing

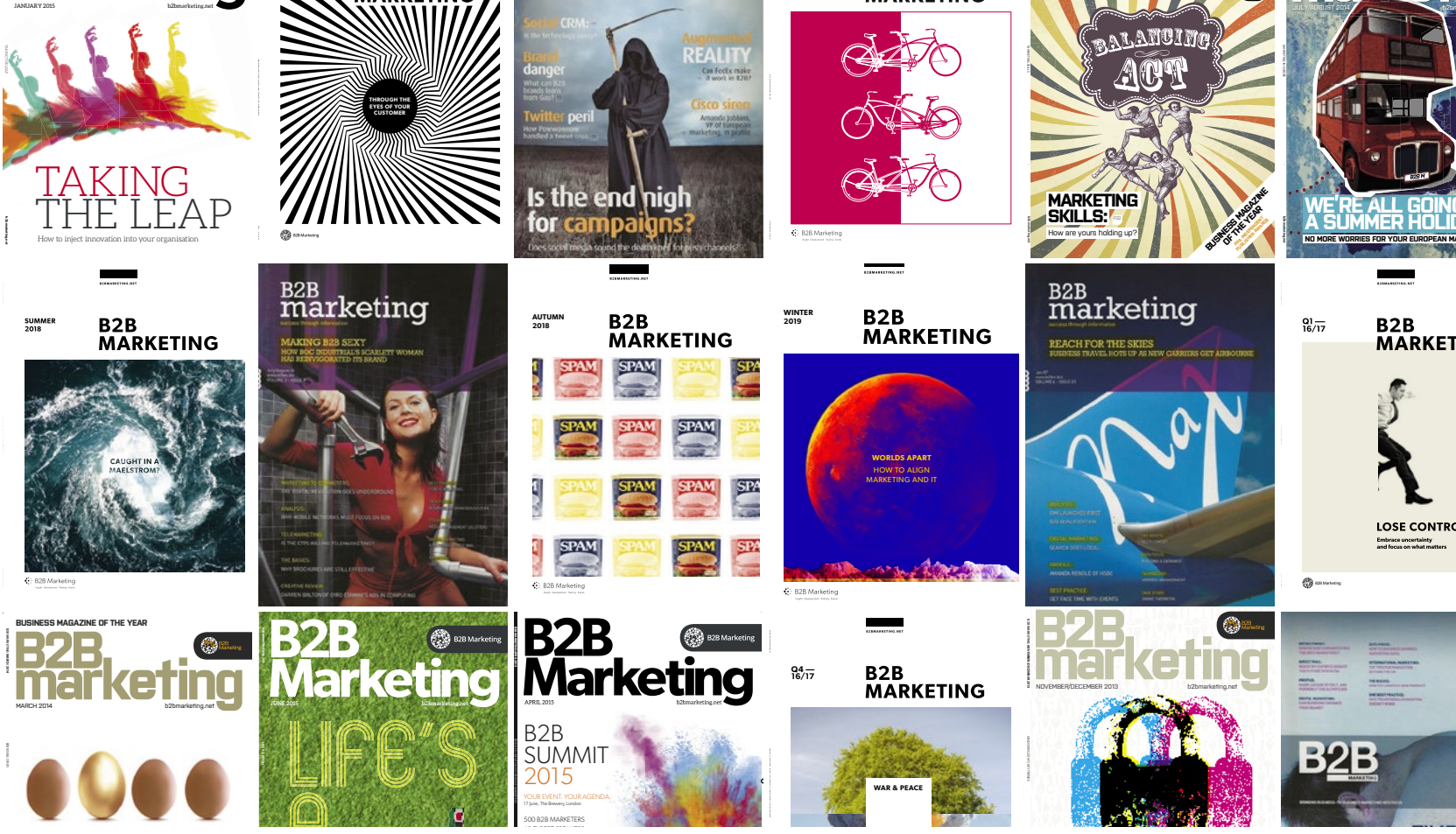
But I did do it. We did it. We put out the first edition, then the second, then the third. We built the connections, found the advertisers, mailed the subscribers, and little-by-little, step-by-step, we turned an idea into a product, and a product into a company. It was never easy, but, over time, we made a difference.

The cornerstone of B2B?

From the vantage point of today, it's very hard to remember or imagine what B2B was like as an industry or profession back in 2004. Probably the most succinct way you could describe it was 'small'. Or, perhaps more accurately, insignificant. It didn't exist in any meaningful way. Sure, the IDM had run their first B2B-specific conference earlier that year (due to the sterling efforts of Shane Redding, in particular), and a B2B qualification. But no-one in their right mind described themselves as a B2B marketer. There was no powerful supply-side of vendors and agencies advocating and promoting their products and services. And too many of those in marketing at large B2B firms were there because they weren't really good enough at anything else. To say that it was the 'poor relation' to B2C actually does a disservice to B2C. There was simply no comparison.

To say that B2B was the 'poor relation' to B2C actually does a disservice to B2C. There was simply no comparison

I don't think it's an exaggeration to say that *B2B Marketing* magazine was the single biggest reason why that changed. Of course, it didn't do it by itself, and it didn't happen overnight, but it was the catalyst for everything that came afterwards, and the spark that ignited the vibrant industry that we know and love today.



Again, you need to transport yourself out of 2021 to understand what media and information consumption looked like 17 years ago. Email was in its infancy, DM was great but expensive, as were trade shows, and broadcast was simply out-of-reach for most business sectors. Most significantly, the internet was unrecognisable from what it is today. Magazines were pretty much everything. Not only were they convenient and relevant, but they had prestige – they signalled that something mattered, that it had arrived. In that context, I believe *B2B Marketing* magazine really created the world of B2B. And for that, we owe it a lot.

Seismic shifts in B2B

Of course, times change, and nothing is permanent. It seems obvious now that print media was always living on borrowed time. Over the years, there have been a number of transformational moments for the B2B marketing industry – 2007/2008, and the credit crunch, in combination with the arrival of marketing automation (in the UK, at least), was the first, putting martech and digital delivery at the heart of the industry for the first time. The second was partly the reaction against that former trend, in the form of the arrival of ABM, and an understanding of a shift in buyer behaviour and a need for a more qualitative, insight-driven approach.

It seems obvious now that print media was always living on borrowed time

I believe we're going through the third such change now, with huge technological potential unleashed into action by the pandemic, and the behaviour of buyers and sellers transformed as a consequence. And continuing to transform – there's little sign of change slowing down, let alone a rolling back. That's been the catalyst for our own reinvention at B2B Marketing, and the launch of Propolis (our real-time, 24/7 interactive community of engaged and expert B2B marketers), which will be the core of our business in this new age of B2B marketing.

But that means it is time at last to bid farewell to the ship that we sailed out in, and which launched this whole amazing world that we all live in day-to-day. For that reason, this is the last issue of *B2B Marketing* magazine. For me at least, that's sad news. But what is great news is that, whilst I created the first issue almost entirely in isolation, this last one has been created (almost entirely not by me, I hasten to point out!) in completely the opposite context. A world that is rich, vibrant, engaging, exciting, enthusiastic, creative, numerate, responsive… and so much more besides, but best of all, set for a glorious future. B2B does just get better and better, but the best is yet to come – and you'll find this on Propolis. Whether you picked the magazine up once at a conference, or read it religiously for nearly two decades, thanks for reading, and here's to the next 17 years.

OPTIMISING YOUR MARTECH STACK



TO REACH YOUR FULL POTENTIAL

In 2021, we're in a complex martech environment in B2B marketing. Editor-in-chief **Joel Harrison** spoke to three martech leaders about how B2B brands can ensure they're building and optimising the right stack. Our martech leaders included Tessa Barron, VP of marketing at ON24, Emily Gravel, marketing automation manager at VMware Carbon Black, and Lee Hackett, CEO at BluprintX



Tessa Baron,
VP marketing,
ON24



Emily Gravel,
marketing automation manager,
VMware Carbon Black



Lee Hackett,
CEO,
BluprintX

JH: So, to kick things off first with Emily, something we've probably all seen is Scott Brinker's Marketing Technology Landscape Supergraphic. At this point, it has become so granular and pixelated that it actually shows the landscapes are getting larger and more and more complex. Consequently, it means the stack is getting bigger and increasingly complex too. Should it mean that? What do you think?

EG: No. Just because there's tech out there, that doesn't mean that we should be using it. One of the biggest things that we're realising in this transfer over is the importance of the ability for the person to actually use the tool. So, obviously we get shiny object syndrome and say: 'Wow, this is a really cool tool. Let's use it.'

But when you go into the implementation phase of it, when the marketer is actually using the tool, you're finding out it's not useful or as effective as they were pitched. So, just because you want it, doesn't necessarily mean you should have it – it's like what you teach your kids.

At Get Stacked last year, I was talking about the different types of stacks that you can have. And this is a pure case of either having an over-utilised stack, which is the one that you're trying to plug and play for everything, or you're overextended, and you have way too many things to handle. So, in the light of just marketing operations in general, there's only so many things that one person or one team can pay attention to.

So, if you start opening up the gates and connecting all these things, you're opening up vulnerabilities or opening up opportunities for things to fail. In my opinion, keeping it concise and clean makes it a lot better, more strategic and easier to use.

JH: Tessa, can you reflect on this too? What do you think?

TB: Yeah, I mean I like to follow a 90:10 rule. 90% is your tried and true, it's what works. It's what you know runs simply, efficiently and effectively, and you've been able to measure it and hopefully optimise it over time.

And then 10% is for experimentation. So, when I see Scott Brinker's Martech Landscape, I see more opportunity for experimentation within that 10%. But it's also an understanding that, just because there's more options, that doesn't mean that my go-to-market strategy has suddenly changed. I think we forget that the tech does not define your strategy – your strategy defines the tech, so start there. Then just realise that you've got a much larger menu to choose from. Ultimately, your end goal needs to stay true to your business. Experimentation is good, but not to the point of distraction.

JH: Okay Lee, can I reflect this back to you, perhaps in a slightly different iteration of the question? I mean, as someone who is selling martech into companies, does this incredible landscape make it easier for you to create more opportunities, or actually does it make it more confusing and complex, and you actually want to focus people in on a kind of set number of solutions?

LH: I think it caused a lot of confusion, almost like a kid in a candy store. And there's so much choice, so you have to ask yourself: what do you do, how do you do it, and what value is this adding?

And also, we see this a lot with our clients, particularly with CMOs – they want to find out what their competitors are doing, so you've got that kind of driver, and it's more of a question of 'what am I missing out on?'

I think the way we approach it is: complexity is the enemy of execution. So, if

we can keep that simple and really understand what is the level of impact and level of effort, then you'll know what it's going to take to get this martech implemented and deployed, and the impact that it's going to have.

So, if a business could just get that bit right and use policies like 'one in and one out' to stop building up this enormous library of tech that doesn't get used, that's always going to be a winner.

JH: Yeah, and that kind of leads quite nicely to my next question! It's felt to me that, maybe in the last few years, even though things have accelerated and changed, there's been a bit of a gold rush in terms of technologies.

There's people investing more and more. You're seeing Gartner producing more numbers around the map. There's people spending more on technology and it's kind of now rivalling resourcing and advertising. It feels like that kind of gold rush is over, and we've come to a more mature state and we're becoming more responsible. Do you see the same thing, or do you see something completely different?

LH: A bit different. I think the money is still there and the appetite to invest is still there, but the bar is a lot higher in regards to proving the effectiveness of the technology and the investment. And actually derisking the deployment and the adoption.

I think it's just much more of a higher bar, but the appetite is there, and I don't see that waning at all. I think companies will continue to look to digital and technology to become more efficient to do these kinds of things. I think it's just a real focus now on a higher bar of effectiveness.

JH: Okay, so this is not necessarily spending any less, but just validating that spend a lot better and making sure they go through all the processes to get it right. So, can I reflect that then to Tessa – what's your take? Have you seen the same thing that Lee is seeing? How is it with your clients and then perhaps your use of martech from other vendors?

TB: Well, I think that people are questioning every technology and saying: 'How can I get more out of that investment?' And, just going back to your original mention of Gartner, I always find it so interesting that they talk about the percentage of revenues spent on martech.

Well, if the martech is doing its job, theoretically, the percentage would go down because your revenue is going up. And then your spend on the technology would either stay the same, or go down, because if it's doing its job right, you should be ultimately creating more growth and, hopefully, that hits a point of no exponential return.

You get past that point of capital investment and then you're off to the races. And I think that people are starting to expect that because they can measure every single action, and they can understand and quantify and compare what they're getting from this investment. And I think that that has not caused people to spend less, but spend better – and they should. It's that hype that is created from Gartner that, when you take a step back, you realise, wait, the point is not to spend more; it's to spend less and to be generating more revenue.'

JH: Yeah, that's a really good point. Let's reflect those points onto Emily. We talk about getting the best out of existing technology, and marketing automation is something you've specialised in. It's a classic example of a technology where people only scratch the surface of its functionality, and then scrap it and say 'we want something else entirely.'

So, I guess you'd probably say we're still seeing people trying to leverage existing investment rather than necessarily invest more. Is that true?

EG: Yes, I think that it's very clear when you get a new piece of technology like we talked about. It needs to be strategy first, technology second. So, a lot of the time, we'll bring in tech to be the band-aid first, and then we'll figure out if it can be used for something else.

A lot of the times when I was doing consulting work, I would go into companies and they would be using Eloqua and I'd say: 'Okay, well, this is something that you can do inside of Eloqua. You don't need to have a third vendor; you don't need to hire somebody else externally to do this.'

So, the biggest thing too is you can get all these shiny objects and these great tools and technology, but if you implement it and you don't have somebody that knows the tech and knows how to use it every day in your team, it's just going to sit there or, worse, it's just going to become unruly.

TB: People, process and then technology, not the other way around – that's something to keep as a rule!

To watch the full webinar, check out: bit.ly/martechwebinar

"People, process and then technology, not the other way around – that's something to keep as a rule!"

MARKETING OPERATIONS AND PROCESS



REINTRODUCING PHYSICAL EVENTS WITH CHRIS WICKSON

With the vaccine rollout underway, **Kavita Singh** spoke with Chris Wickson, general manager, EMEA, at Integrate, about what 2021 might have in store for physical, hybrid and virtual events

EXECUTION AND CAMPAIGNS

Reintroducing physical events

Physical events are what most companies are familiar with, so it makes sense that they might be itching to get back to them – especially with the vaccine now being administered.

In August 2020, Integrate conducted a research study with 500 senior B2B marketers across the US and UK to uncover the impact of coronavirus on event strategies last year and how this would shape 2021 plans.

80% of B2B marketers were expected to run or participate in hybrid events in 2021. Of the 80% of marketers, 32% suggested they'd return in Q1, with another 29% in Q2. Chris Wickson says they're currently living in a particularly fast-paced environment as he reflects on some of the results.

He says: "The thing that stuck out to me was that there was a real confidence when in-person events would be returning. People were by predicting Q4, but we also had a significant number of people predicting Q1 and Q2 for 2021. I think the reality is that it's pointing toward the second half of this year from safely being able to get back to in-person."

So, how do we re-introduce them, and what can we do in the meantime?

Chris mentions that there are events happening in other parts of the world, such as the US and Asia, and they are setting the precedent for safely running physical events.

Chris says: "I think there will be a lot of waiting, watching to see what the big organisers do, seeing how other people are tackling it, and learning, much like in 2020 with virtual events – which is looking around

Hopefully by June, we'll have a better idea of when we can see full steam ahead, or we might just have to create backup plans just in case



Chris Wickson,
general manager, EMEA,
Integrate

and seeing what other people are doing for what works and what doesn't work."

According to a Marriott Bonvoy survey, about 50% of event organisers across the Asia Pacific region (excluding China) are planning on hosting physical events.

While this might be good news for event planners, visiting several venues in person might not be an option for safety reasons. The Marriott International properties are now offering virtual solutions for event planners who are unable or prefer to not travel. Through these solutions, event planners will not have to be onsite to get an idea of the properties and meeting facilities.

For marketing the event, it is essential that, during the planning process of a physical event, companies address any Covid-19 concerns. The survey showed a major concern for hygiene at the venue, calling for stringent safety requirements.

For the 2021 3rd Asia Pacific Information Technology Conference, which is a physical event held earlier this year, the company announced that they would be holding an online session for those not comfortable attending in person.

Some safety regulations for in-person attendees included:

- Masks and hand sanitisers being made available on request for attendees.
- Regular temperature checks at the venue.
- Staff being required to wear masks.

With the current state of Covid-19, most marketers in the UK will have to simply observe what others do with physical events now.

Chris says: "There will be a lot of contingency planning as well. As we go through the year, they are going to have to switch from in-person to virtual in a relatively short period of notice. These next few months with the vaccine rollout are going to be so critical to how people plan for the second half of the year. Hopefully by June, we'll have a better idea of when we can see full steam ahead, or we might just have to create backup plans just in case."

Introducing hybrid events

A hybrid event is an event that takes place partially in-person, while simultaneously being live streamed to a wider audience. At a recent B2B Marketing roundtable about the state of events, there was an overwhelming sentiment about hybrid events – while marketers are certainly

intrigued by hybrid events, they're also reluctant to take the plunge because it's such a foreign concept.

Chris says: "It is a really daunting task for marketers and organisers to get their heads around. You're effectively organising two events in one and potentially doubling the costs, and there's a lot more heavy lifting on the technology side of things to make it work, and no one really has the experience of running a successful hybrid event in their true form."

Chris advises marketers to plan with the objectives and strategy in mind. All of the important elements of your events, including the target audience, sponsors and budget, still stand. So, be sure to make that the priority, and then you can focus on a vendor to supplement your event needs.

Chris says: "One of my pieces of advice would be to keep close to the tech side of things – the choice of platform will be critical, so stay up to date with the content they're putting out. It gives you a chance to see how companies are using those vendors in different ways. After all, no one has the answer, but it's going to parallel a lot to how we handled virtual events in 2020."

Besides the technology aspects, Chris cites budgeting to be a potential challenge as well. Back in 2020, Integrate's research also predicted an increase in budgeting, but, looking back now, Chris admits that they were a bit 'bullish' on those numbers.

He continues: "From my anecdotal conversation with marketers, people are now being a lot more cautious and probably keeping their cards close to their chest when it comes to how they plan for event budgets for this year."

If marketers are planning for a hybrid event, there is potential for expenses to be even higher than a purely physical event.

"I think it's a bit of a myth that running a virtual event will be significantly cheaper than an in-person event. I think the costs often just move around. If you want to run a really good high quality virtual event, then the costs from venues and all those costs go into production and a vendor."

Virtual events have such a broad spectrum. You can refer to a Zoom call as an event, or you can run a high quality virtual event with pre-recorded content, mixed with live content. With so many moving parts to the online event, it comes down to striking the right balance between the two. It's important not to go all in on the in-person element and then to treat the virtual part as an afterthought, or vice versa.

"I think it's a bit of a myth that running a virtual event will be significantly cheaper than an in-person event. I think the costs often just move around"

Continuing virtual events

Then there's virtual events, which might be the safe, more conservative approach to events, but an appropriate one nevertheless. Whether or not you're considering a physical or hybrid event, virtual events will serve as the backup plan regardless.

Chris says: "I wish we were saying otherwise, but it feels like it would be a punchy move to plan for a purely physical event, and it would end up adding to the workload if they have to swap that last minute. Coming back to last year, we have a better idea of how to do virtual events now."

2020 was all about virtual events finding their footing, and now that they have, there is room for growth. Some challenges that organisers have cited have included: turning attendees into leads, increasing engagement, and recreating networking opportunities.

While many have invested in virtual expo halls and booths, Chris says he has yet to hear about an event where this was successfully done. In addition, burnout was starting to appear in audiences. By Q4 of last year, engagement levels were starting to drop due to Zoom fatigue.

Chris advises: "I think one thing to consider is how you're building that community before, during and after events. [Virtual event platform] Bizzabo did this really well as an example. They set up a Slack space, so, as soon as you registered for the conference, you were invited to their Slack channel and, in the weeks building up to the event, there was a big community of peers, engaging and sharing their content in one space."

Another piece of advice is to work towards content in shorter formats made available on demand quickly. With the B2B buying process becoming more complex, more buyers are clamouring over shorter, more digestible content in their own time.

The future of events

Regardless of what you're planning for, it's important to stay agile and flexible for the time being as the event space continues to look uncertain.

Chris says: "I think we are still in this area of uncertainty that hangs over, but I do think there has been a lot of learnings from the virtual events front. I also think there is this overriding desire amongst marketers, buyers and vendors to get back to in-person events when we can, so, hopefully, that will put us ahead in the second half of the year."


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HAS B2B ECOMMERCE FINALLY COME OF AGE?

If 2020 was all about being tactical to survive, how can B2B organisations apply these learnings to their 2021–2022 strategy? In this interview, Shane Redding explains why she thinks ecommerce will be a key strategic theme for many



Shane Redding,
strategy and evolution
Hive expert,
B2B Marketing

Shane *is the Hive expert for strategy and evolution, but this feature sits in our CX Hive.*

Last year, the cliché went: 'if you weren't digitally transitioning before, then you certainly are now.' Specifically, how did B2B ecommerce evolve last year?

Many businesses were forced to rethink their channels last year, especially those relying on stores and face-to-face sales teams. Some smaller, agile businesses were quick to exploit the opportunity of selling on third-party marketplaces, such as eBay and Amazon, not only to serve their existing B2B customers, but to reach new markets for their products. So, plastic sheeting manufacturers, who had large commercial contracts, were suddenly selling to the local hairdressers and restaurants. Personal protective equipment (PPE) was another category to boom – from companies previously specialising in selling to the NHS, to the wider business (and consumer) market. Existing third-party marketplaces have been a quick and convenient way for many smaller B2B companies to access ecommerce, but many larger enterprises were also forced to evaluate if they could use them to dispose of excess stock.

There is one B2B ecommerce site that already dominates – Chinese juggernaut Alibaba, which is one of the biggest B2B and B2C ecommerce companies in the world. It sells products in 40 different industries in total. It also serves more than 18 million buyers and sellers in 240 countries and territories.

There was much discussion around how Covid-19 accelerated digital strategy and, whilst few organisations set up a fully transactional ecommerce site from scratch in 2020, many did widen their payment methods, accepting credit card payments for larger items, even if it was not via the corporate website. Other agile businesses realised that it was difficult with a dispersed virtual workforce to get the necessary financial sign-off to set up large commercial contracts, so set up new secure DocuSign processes to help their customers.

And how will ecommerce continue to evolve in 2021 and beyond? Was 2020 an anomaly, or will these trends continue?

I believe there will be a huge focus on efficiency and effectiveness this year, and that ecommerce will be prioritised by many businesses who have previously said it wouldn't work for them. It will no longer be an anomaly, but become the norm. Why? Put simply, our customers want it, and as soon as your competitors offer it, then it becomes irrelevant to say it's not necessary.

Amazon is investing heavily in promoting its Amazon business offering and, in the UK, we are lucky to have a wealth of expertise, from agencies to consultants, to help you successfully trade. For many, this is a better option than building their own ecommerce platform, as it provides the reach that only huge marketing budgets could otherwise achieve.

Ecommerce in B2B may be redefined in the future as much more than the one-click Amazon website model. It may live up to its true definition of 'commercial transactions conducted electronically on the internet' as we see the IoT impacting and moving to 'always on' ordering/resupply of B2B consumables one machine to another, whether that's printer cartridges, tyres for your HGV fleet, or concrete for your just-in-time building site.

Is there a clear advantage of introducing ecommerce in a B2B organisation?

Yes, there are many benefits, from scale, to efficiencies, to the ability to reach

With ecommerce, comes the ability to become truly insight-driven from the data that you collect. This, more than anything, provides real competitive advantage, and is why consumer organisations that are leaders in ecommerce are able to anticipate and exploit new consumer trends so quickly

new markets, and to selling to the long tail cost effectively. But the one I am personally most excited by is that, with ecommerce, comes the ability to become truly insight-driven from the data that you collect. This, more than anything, provides real competitive advantage, and is why consumer organisations that are leaders in ecommerce are able to anticipate and exploit new consumer trends so quickly. This is an advantage currently only realised by a few B2B organisations in sectors such as payment processors (Visa/MasterCard), tech (Hubspot/Salesforce), mobile (O2/Vodafone), media (*Financial Times*/*Economist*), or industrial supplies (RS Components/Grainger), who have excellent ecommerce capabilities. There are some other unusual suspects, such as Massey Ferguson, who also excels in this field.

With more and more of the buyer journey happening on buyers' terms, is a shift towards increased use of ecommerce an inevitability? What can marketers do to prepare?

Yes! Have a clear strategy, learn from the best and be prepared to test and learn, as well recruit new skills and expert suppliers.

Marketers are, after all, just normal people, and are well versed in ordering consumer products online. What lessons can marketers take from the B2C world when building B2B ecommerce?

Simply put – make it easy! UX/CX is everything, and it is not just the ecommerce website, but understanding the entire customer journey from end to end. Even if you have an amazing ecommerce website, if your customer support is still not digital, you will fail. This is where many organisations go wrong – they take the 'lipstick on a pig' approach, rather than rethinking the entire strategy.

And what can B2B marketers do better than their B2C counterparts? Is there anything marketers can do in B2B ecommerce, which just doesn't work in B2C?

It will be interesting to see, but my prediction is that B2B ecommerce done right may help embed much better customer retention rates.

Is there a danger that you can lose 'the human touch' by conducting more and more of your business online? How can marketers ensure this doesn't happen?

Yes, by ensuring that you continually monitor your CX and fix any pain points fast. Too often in B2B, this is interpreted as 'we must have a customer call centre', but if your digital offering is amazing and your query answered instantly and issue resolved, then we don't care if it's done by a human, or bot. When we do need the human touch is usually when the bot can't cope with the non-standard, unforeseen query, but artificial intelligence (AI) and more data will gradually change that. Does that mean there is no place for humans in B2B ecommerce? Of course not, but it will focus people on delivering the high value, consultative part, not the transactional end.

Last, but not least, with 2021 underway, what advice do you have for marketers considering introducing ecommerce for the first time?

Start your research now, take an agile approach, test and learn, talk to those already doing it and have a clear business strategy.

PROPOLIS

PROPOLIS
pro·puh·luhs

Definition in ancient Greek:
Pro – first
Polis – community

Also: An aromatic glue produced by honeybees in their hive

What's in a name? We like the idea of gluing various parts of our industry together to create a marketing community that is buzzing with knowledge and ideas.

The word Propolis is derived from ancient Greek. 'Pro' means 'first', 'in front of', or 'forward', and 'polis' means 'community' or 'city'. So combined, this makes this our first B2B community!

But if that's not enough, thousands of years ago, ancient civilizations used propolis for its medicinal properties. Greeks and Assyrians put it on wounds to fight infection and help the healing process.

We think the name captures all that we are trying to achieve, with this new B2B community, and we hope you agree and will join us on this journey.

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KEEPING UP WITH THE *TRANSFORMATION* AGENDA

With the rollout of vaccines now underway, 2021 will likely see at least some return to 'normal', but one thing is certain: we will continue to transform and innovate. We asked several senior marketers: 'How are you going to maintain the momentum of the 'transformation agenda' in 2021?' Here are their responses

STRATEGY AND EVOLUTION



Andrew Mahler,
CEO and founder,
The Mx Group

When 2020 began, digital transformation was already well underway for most of our clients, and we were working with them on digital initiatives across the buying cycle, from activation, to engagement, to lower funnel sales enablement, and even ecommerce. Covid-19 is compressing that cycle, and our clients are seeing more clearly the efficiencies and effectiveness that many of these initiatives have versus more traditional activities.

At this point, the genie is out of the bottle, and while a Covid-19 vaccine will make one-to-one interactions acceptable again, it will be difficult to ignore the value of digital tools and the fundamental changes that have already occurred in the B2B buyer journey.

Additionally, knowing that something like this could happen again, we expect the urgency to make progress against a mostly digital customer experience to continue at a good clip.

Beyond digital initiatives, as organisations begin to open-up to limited face-to-face interactions, we'll be working closely with our clients' sales and marketing teams to help make those meetings impactful. One way to do this is to ensure that marketing is closely partnering with internal subject matter experts to help build content, credibility and their brand, so prospects feel a connection with the people at the company and really want to meet with representatives when the time is right.



Annie Garvey,
VP, marketing,
WCG Clinical

Our transformation continues into 2021. We are still trying to find our new normal as 2020 quickly taught us we cannot be so heavily reliant on in-person events and our clients are experiencing 'webinar fatigue.' The silver bullet of lead generation that trade shows offered is long gone. We've found that smaller, more intimate, virtual networking type events have proven stronger engagement and stronger demand.

We are taking a fresh look at our reporting strategies to ensure the plumbing is in place for the various ways we need to slice the data for our internal audiences. We have also evaluated our martech stack to ensure it meets our expectations and budget caps, given the constant M&A in the space.

We are also transforming by actually going back to the basics. We are developing strongly integrated campaigns with clear objectives that tie into the business, as well as a solid understanding of our customer – from defining their customer journey to diving into their personas.

Our integrated campaigns will give us the flexibility and scalability for 2021 as a sense of normalcy returns, as we can add new content and new channels to the mix. We know that resources and time will continue to be constraints, so we're incorporating an approach to limiting random acts of marketing by ensuring that requests and new activities play into the larger landscape of hitting our business objectives and naturally fit into current marketing programmes.



David McGuire,
creative director
Radix Communications

Some things are more important than momentum. As B2B content writers, 2020 gave us the challenge of keeping up with our clients, as they found new messages to help their audience adapt – while also coming to terms with a new way of working ourselves. But we've been doing that for almost a year. The initial adrenaline rush is long gone, and we have to recognise that some changes will be permanent.

Any transformation we consider now needs to focus on making sure our people are still OK – and that we're equipped to keep delivering the work our clients need most. When the world turns upside down, training and development are among the first places you might hit 'pause'. But that can only last so long. In this new, all-remote world, there's more content than ever – so the assets we write for clients need to work harder to stand out. And to deliver more and better work, we need to keep developing our team. So in 2021 we've changed our structure to make this happen.

We also mustn't stretch ourselves too thin. We give clients the most value when we have a chance to accrue a bit of knowledge and experience – so this year we're aiming to onboard fewer new accounts. And, actually, that fits well with our marketing plans. Lately, we've noticed our own content is most successful when we write with a specific reader in mind. And being more selective gives us freedom to zoom right in on the marketers we'd really love to work for.

Necessary transformation can also distract you from the changes you want to make. And, at Radix, we let 2020 drag us away from our desire to improve our social and environmental impact on the world.

We're not going to let that happen again. This year will see us take binding, legal steps to keep us focused on the things we most want to achieve as a business, and a group of people. Because ultimately, transformation for its own sake is useless; it needs to be for a reason. And remembering that reason is the most important change we're making in 2021.

Ultimately, transformation for its own sake is useless; it needs to be for a reason. And remembering that reason is the most important change we're making in 2021



Rossa Shanks,
CMO,
ISTARI

Change is the only constant in the world of business. Every year is a year of transformation as new technologies and possibilities emerge. Therefore, keeping up means constantly evolving. It's always best to embrace that reality to capitalise on the temporary competitive advantage it affords. However, there needs to be a natural ebb and flow to change implementation and transformation. You do need periods for your team to bed in before changing again. Otherwise, you never actually get to activate on the new foundations you've put in place and can spend most of your time on 'transformation' as opposed to the 'actual work' of a marketer, which is engaging and delighting customers.

There needs to be a natural ebb and flow to change implementation and transformation. You do need periods for your team to bed in before changing again

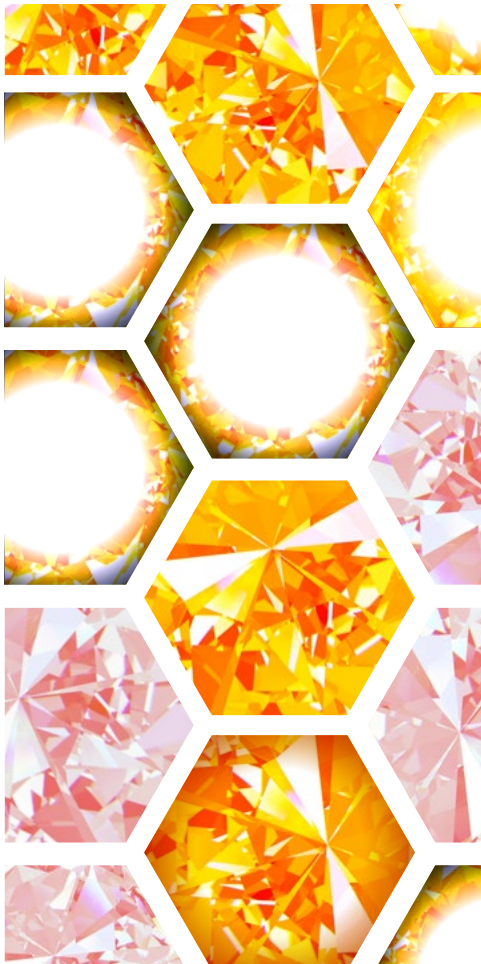
Maintaining momentum in my mind is as much about maintaining a positive culture of curiosity internally, an ethos of always believing the status quo can be improved upon. With the new year and vaccines being rolled out, I think there is a mistaken belief that everything is suddenly different and that we'll soon snap back to normal. This is optimistic. 2021 is going to look a lot like 2020 and organisations need to be aware of team burnout and the 'groundhog day' syndrome.

That's why maintaining momentum is as much about keeping the culture healthy as it is about getting the work done and adapting to keep apace. They are intrinsically linked. You cannot fulfil the potential of your team without the right culture. So try new things. It's a time for new traditions. One of the best things we started during my time as CMO at Dow Jones was the creation of a monthly fireside chat with an external CMO or business leader. We interviewed CMOs and business leaders at Slack, Asana, Uberflip, Highspot, Oracle, NewsCred and Drift, amongst many others. This 'brain food' reminds the team what can be achieved and provides a little bit of inspiration and respite from the ennui of WFH where you live Z2Z (Zoom 2 Zoom).

Another positive thing we did at Dow Jones was create a book club for business and marketing books. The lively discussions and intellectual stimulation from that helped maintain momentum and progress. So 2021 will be more of that playbook. Fewer transactional video calls. More inspiration. In a world of Zoom, let's not forget the spontaneity of a phone call in the present also, without a scheduled time attached. Sometimes, when the world is changing around us, we need the nostalgia of analogue things too.



Maintaining momentum is as much about keeping the culture healthy as it is about getting the work done and adapting to keep apace





B2B buying, an increasingly complex journey of problem finding, solution exploration, procurement interrogation, finance briefings, calls on zoom, kids in the room, google searches, webinar views, peer reviews, browsing the news, consultation, consolidation, reconsideration of the suggested findings, social media, whitepaper downloads, budget approval and risk removal, sales enter with targeted precision until finally... there's been a decision.

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Dr. Sarah Thomas,
global executive director, culture and engagement, Landor & Fitch

As we start to move into 2021, I don't think any of us anticipated that we would still be riding the Covid rollercoaster at this point. It's been a challenging time that has seen an unprecedented rate of change in our businesses and both customer and employee needs. Whether you wanted to be digitally transformed or not, it has been thrust upon us as a means of survival. Corporate cultures have been tested, change fatigue is real amongst employees and our values have shifted alongside our ways of working and behaviours.

So where do we focus in 2021 to maintain momentum? More than ever, the combination of brand, people and business strategy need to align. I would suggest that, to leap forward, you actually need take a moment to pause and reflect on your employee experience and organisational culture. Brand strategy, purpose (how you create value today and tomorrow), employer brand and culture underpin everything you do. An engaged, energised team that understands the strategy and is aligned around it can be a powerhouse to deliver innovation, a superior customer experience and market momentum.

As the market picks up and demand increases, people will be asking: 'How did you respond in the pandemic? What did you do for the greater good – and how did you treat your people?' It's an opportunity to ask what it feels like to work for your organisation and to shape what you would like that experience to be. This is a pivotal moment to redefine your organisational culture to support your business goals. More innovation, a more inclusive place to work, easier to do business with, better communication, more flexibility. The list goes on.

Employee experiences and values have shifted and providing an organisational culture and a business strategy that allows people to thrive is not only good for them, but good for business.

"It's easy to get lost in a cycle of 'we do it this way because...' A wider network is extremely valuable for the team and the business. I see it as massively important for the team to go out and get new ideas, new thinking, and hear how other people are approaching their challenges"

KATE SINCLAIR
partner, business development and marketing, LCP







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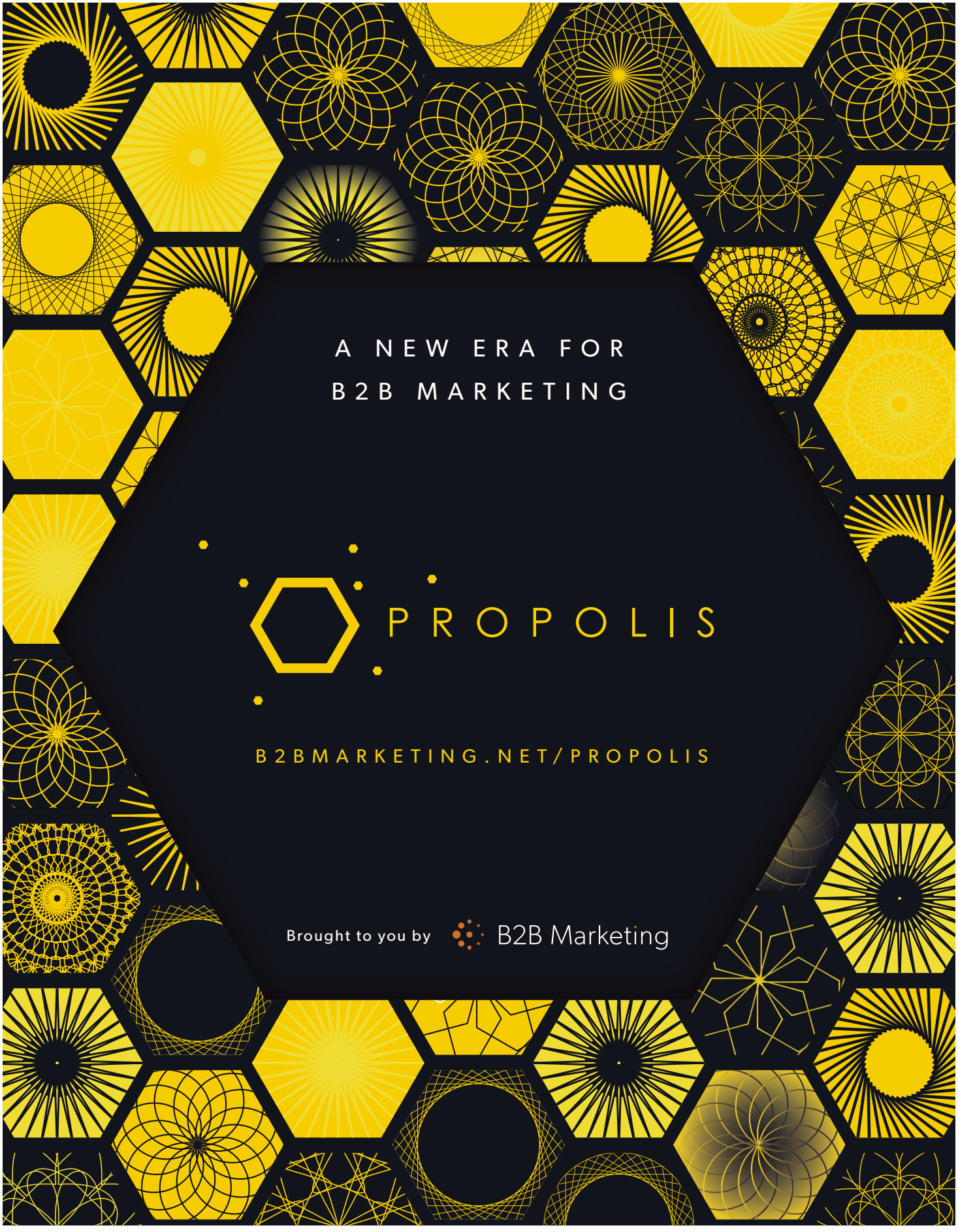
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