

TechnologyMarketing inmind

Embracing the Changing Landscape of B2B Technology Marketing

Exclusive insights and analysis for B2B technology marketers in the UK

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Assessing The Priorities in B2B Technology Marketing



Vanessa Cheal,
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As technology marketing professionals, we rarely get time to reflect. Almost every day brings with it new technologies to engage with, products to launch and channels to harness – and let's be honest: we wouldn't have it any other way.

But reflection should not be a luxury. In fact, some of the most valuable lessons for the future come from taking the time to look at what's just gone before – which is exactly what this report does.

As part of our Technology Marketing in Mind programme (p.24), we partnered with Circle Research to survey over 100 senior B2B technology marketing professionals about their experiences over the last 12–18 months, and their priorities over the next year or two. The findings make for some intriguing reading: for instance, we all knew that there had been a shift towards lead generation in the tough economic times, but I think many readers may be surprised to see just how pronounced that shift was. The majority of us are probably now so engaged on projects around the cloud that it seems hard to believe that, barely 18 months ago, it simply wasn't on the radar.

But while these findings themselves provide a useful benchmark for other professionals, I think the real value of this report comes as we look towards the future: what areas are organisations focused on in the next two years, and what do they most need to improve to achieve their marketing objectives?

It won't ruin the surprise if I tell you that social media is at the heart of this, but there are some other developments that may be more surprising: the return of brand marketing and an increased emphasis on bespoke events to name but two.

Both of these developments fit clearly with a broader trend, identified as the single biggest improvement priority by half of our respondents: an increased emphasis on building and maintaining customer relationships. Marketers habitually talk about understanding the customer; now, it seems, there's a recognition that perhaps the industry is not as diligent about doing this as we might like to think and it needs urgent attention. Personally, I believe this can only be a good thing.

Vanessa Cheal
Managing Director,
Marketing Options International

A Changing Landscape: A Changing Mindset



Andrew Dalglish,
Managing Director -
Circle Research

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Peer-to-peer. That's what I love about the Technology Marketing in Mind initiative. No pontificating. No self-serving agendas. Just technology marketers in similar circumstances being open about the challenges they face and how they're approaching them.

As the programme's research partner, our role is as catalyst. To facilitate the discussion and then share its key strands with a wider audience so as to prompt further debate. In doing so I was struck by one recurring theme: change. Of course, the technology sector is defined by constant innovation. Now though, the marketer not only has to simplify the complex and make the novel seem familiar, but they need to adapt these skills to a new environment.

The marketers we surveyed, more than 100 of them from leading players in the technology sector, told us about the need to adopt a different mindset in challenging economic times. A mindset where marketing is always focussed on making a clear contribution to the bottom line. A mindset defined by an entrepreneurial approach – agility, opportunism and a closer, more integrated relationship with sales.

They told us about a shift in the balance of power driven by the rise of social media. The democratisation of information means that the technology marketer now has less control. They need to engage rather than broadcast. They need to interact with prospective buyers earlier in the sales cycle when preferences are unconsciously being formed. They need to be brave and share a relevant, valuable opinion with a content hungry audience.

They told us, in a raised voice, about the growing noise their messages need to compete with. Buyers now listen to many more channels, are inundated by communications in all aspects of their life and have shorter attention spans. From a 'broadcast' perspective, the information floodgates have opened and barriers to entry have fallen. All this conspires to create a sometimes overwhelming cacophony. The solution? Standing apart through creativity and interruptive channel strategies.

Change is afoot then. However, the video series that accompanies this report reminds us that whilst we must adapt, the marketer's raison d'etre and core principles remain constant. I hope you enjoy our contribution to the debate.

Andrew Dalglish,
Managing Director,
Circle Research

Part 1
Challenges and Priorities

Challenges and Priorities

"It's exhausting, and it's relentless, the pace of change. And we're used to that with technology, but the fact that also the things that we're doing, the tools that we're using, the marketing approaches that are right, they're changing too. Just keeping pace is the hardest thing right now."



Allister Frost, Head of Digital Marketing - Microsoft Ltd.

No standing still: eighteen months of shifting marketing objectives

For an overwhelming majority of B2B technology marketing professionals, the past 12–18 months have been a time of turmoil. Some 81% of respondents to our survey reported that during that time, their core objectives have changed 'to some degree', or in 22% of those cases, 'significantly'.

Even allowing for the fact that the technology sector is always characterised by continuous innovation, intense competition and frequent market consolidation, this seems to have been a period of intense flux, which naturally affects the kinds of activities that marketers can undertake.

There can be no doubt either that shifting objectives make the marketer's task more complex. Long-term campaigns and in-depth planning are harder to justify, while supporting the business through ever-longer sales cycles becomes increasingly challenging.

Inside Insight: Personalised marketing for key accounts

"The stats have always shown that retention and upselling is a more reliable route to revenue than winning new business, but over the last year we've really witnessed an increased emphasis on relationship marketing within key accounts. One key factor in this is that personalising campaigns and content is now cheaper and easier than ever – giving marketers an opportunity to really target relevant individuals within their key accounts with relevant content at relevant times."



Laurie Hide, Senior Account Manager - Marketing Options International

The ongoing impact of tough economic times

Of course, there are eminently understandable reasons behind the changing priorities for marketing teams – not least the tough economic environment, which is an obvious contributory factor to many of the changes that professionals reported[1]. Figure 1 illustrates five key areas:

- 24% of respondents stated that they had been obliged to **prioritise tactical lead generation campaigns** over more strategic brand awareness or brand engagement activities
- 19% highlighted the fact they had been **under more pressure to demonstrate ROI**
- 14% said that their marketing activities had needed to **become more agile and flexible**
- 14% told us their focus had shifted towards **relationship building with key accounts** – underlining not only the increasing importance of retaining such accounts to B2B technology companies, but also an emerging need to target marketing strategies more specifically on addressing the needs of individual organisations.

[1]In an open-ended question, respondents were asked to describe in their own words how their objectives had changed. The answers were categorised by Circle Research's analysts, with each answer falling into only one category.

"In the next 12-18 months, technology marketing needs to become very specific. You need to be targeting groups of 50, groups of 30, groups of 10, and honing messages to those groups. That requires not a segmentation strategy, but a fundamentally different approach to how you do marketing."



Andrew Barraclough, Director of Field Marketing, EMEA - Progress Software



Figure 1

The increasing impact of the cloud

Alongside the economic factors, there's also been a significant technological shift that has impacted on many respondents: the rapid evolution of cloud computing cited by 21% of respondents. **Over the last 12–18 months, the cloud has become increasingly mainstream**, as evidenced by the numbers of software vendors that have moved from selling software licences to selling software as a service. Naturally, this requires a different marketing approach and in many cases a move to new target markets. For example, the cloud is putting many enterprise-scale tools and applications within reach of SMEs, who previously would not have been able to afford the full application, or have the expertise to manage it.

Marketers themselves are also embracing cloud-based tools to plan and execute marketing campaigns, and at the same time **realising the importance of cloud-optimised marketing strategies** such as social media, paid search and search engine optimisation for the delivery of short and long-term results.

Inside Insight: Capitalising on the cloud

"I'm sure I'm not the only one who can't recall a meeting where the cloud didn't get a mention – it's on every marketer's radar right now, and rightly so. The challenge we see, however, is in framing the benefits of the cloud for customers: in some ways, the more the industry shouts "cloud" the more confused customers get! So one thing we've been working on is to position services and applications based on their benefits, rather than the fact that they're delivered via the cloud."



James Browne, Account Director - Marketing Options International

Signs of recovery – and the return of brand marketing

The apparent resurgence of brand marketing is one of the most interesting trends emerging from the survey. We asked marketers what their objectives are for 2012, and in stark contrast to the previous 12 months, discovered that **they expect to place as much emphasis on brand-related programmes (25%) as on lead generation (25%),** see Figure 2.

"Brands can no longer just talk at you. They have to be part of a conversation; that's a marketing conversation, a sales conversation and a customer service conversation. If brands don't engage in that dialogue then you effectively lose space and potentially goodwill, over time at least, with those companies who do want to engage in conversation."



Jonathan Brayshaw, Global Leader, Digital Communications and Social Business - Psion PLC

Q: What are your most important marketing objectives for the coming 12 month period?

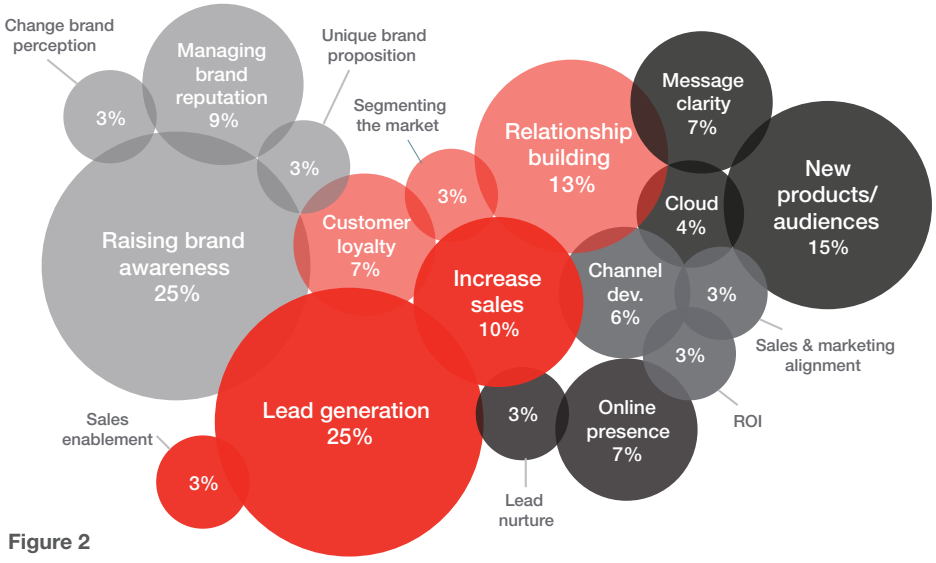


Figure 2

This may be partly because the tactical focus on lead generation in the last couple of years has resulted in a weakening of overall market awareness. However, there's another vital factor here: the emergence of social media channels which provide an affordable means of promoting the brand more frequently and to a wider audience base.

Managing brands in a social media age

But as many have already discovered, the social media world also brings new risks for a brand, as it provides a direct engagement with customers and end users. In recognition of this, **9% of respondents placed 'managing brand reputation' as a major priority for 2012** – indicating that marketing professionals are well aware of the risks involved with this new channel as well as the opportunities. We look into these further in part 2 of this report.

Other key objectives identified for 2012 include marketing new products and engaging with new audiences (cited by 15% of respondents) and relationship building (13%). But despite this, it was notable that many of the activities associated with relationship building – such as lead nurture, sales and marketing alignment and sales enablement, all of which are typically deemed to be weak in the technology sector – are not being prioritised.

Inside Insight: Tweeting to build a brand

"For smaller vendors, SaaS offers a real opportunity to widen the customer base and start selling to SMEs in particular. But many such vendors simply don't have the brand recognition in that space, or the budget to indulge in a big campaign. That's where social media can be of real value, offering a low-cost opportunity to build a brand image and reputation as a thought leader. For example, a well-managed Twitter account which draws attention to the big issues of the day and offers intelligent comments on them can quickly win you friends in all kinds of places."



Guy Dorrell, Senior Social Media & SEO Manager - Marketing Options International

"There is a whole long list of things you can measure marketing with. The big mistake organisations make is to have too many metrics. The best things to do is roll down to three metrics that work with both the sales and marketing teams... and to spend as little other time on metrics as you can because it can grind the marketing team to a halt."



Lisa Hutt,
VP EMEA Marketing - Concur Technologies

ROI becomes less of a priority than last year.

Surprisingly, **ROI emerged as far less of a priority for 2012 than it was in 2010 and 2011**, with only 3% of respondents citing it as a key objective for the next 12 months. It may be that marketers are currently developing more effective ways to measure and prove ROI through the use of new automation technologies, or it may also be true that techniques have been honed over recent months and demonstrating ROI is now seen as business-as-usual.

An alternative explanation, however, could lie in the coming resurgence of brand awareness activity, where ROI is notoriously hard to measure: are some marketers simply avoiding the challenge?

New challenges, same barriers to marketing success

Whatever the challenges ahead, some things stay very much the same. When asked what factors were likely to hold technology marketers back in achieving their 2012 objectives, **41% said that budgetary constraints are still the most** (see Figure 4). Four other barriers were cited as being significant:

- lack of internal marketing resource (29%)
- complexity of product/service propositions (28%)
- greater competitive noise (28%), and
- lengthening sales cycles (27%).

Q: Do you think any of the following are potential barriers to achieving these marketing objectives? For each please indicate whether it is likely to be of significant, some or limited hindrance.

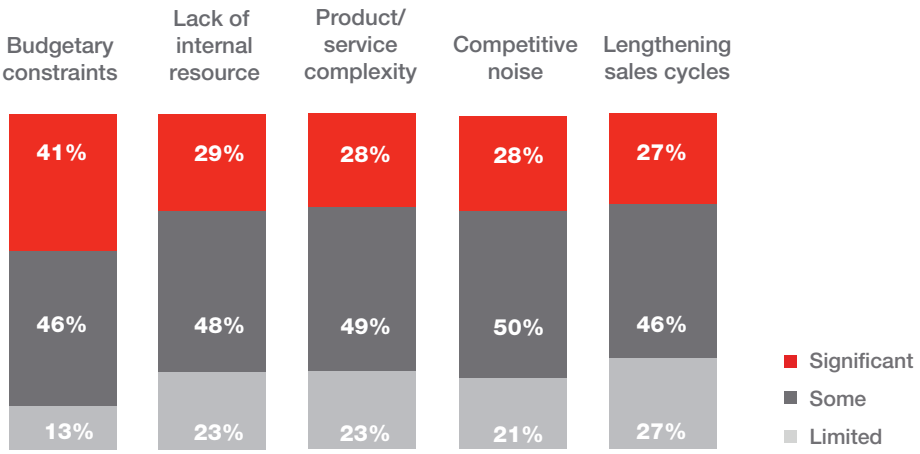


Figure 4

"Doing more with less is a massive barrier to success. Budgets are restricted, resources are limited and yet actually what the board expect marketers to deliver is far greater."



Lisa Archer
Marketing Consultant
- CompTIA

As a perennial problem in the B2B technology sector, it was no surprise to see that product complexity ranked highly here. Much of the difficulty lies in effectively communicating the benefits of high value, complex technologies to a business audience – which links to the increasingly lengthy sales cycles identified. The decision to buy – particularly for larger solutions – now typically involves multiple parties, with varying degrees of technical knowledge. Getting the marketing balance right is no small task.

The explosion in the use of social media is one of several factors creating an ever noisier marketplace. Technology marketers are going to have to find smart new ways to stand out from the crowd and win the increasingly heated battle for customers' attention.

Internally, lack of resources is an obvious barrier to achieving objectives, whether budgetary or not. But it's pleasing to hear that any gap in resources is not deemed to be due to lack of internal support for marketing: **In a separate question, 79% of tech marketers felt that others in their organisation were supportive or highly supportive of their role and the marketing department**. That's a respect that marketers in many other industries would envy.

Part 2

The Defining Trends for B2B Technology Marketing in The Next Two Years

The Defining Trends for B2B Technology Marketing in The Next Two Years

"If you are selling a SaaS solution, the issue will always be that customers can switch out if they want to. So it's vital that you focus on your customer service, your customer support and developing a product in a way that the customer doesn't even think about removing you. "



Ian Baxter, Marketing Director, EMEA - Saba Software

Knowing what your peers in B2B technology marketing are prioritising is undoubtedly interesting: but to help turn that insight into competitive advantage, it's essential to understand where and how others feel they need to improve to achieve their objectives.

We asked respondents to pinpoint where they felt they most needed to improve and invest, and eight broad areas emerged as top priorities. Over the next pages, we look at each of these in turn.

Priority areas for improvement

1. Getting closer to customers
2. Raising brand awareness
3. Increasing the quality of leads
4. Recognising the value of content marketing
5. Selecting new vs traditional marketing channels
6. Measuring marketing impact
7. Strengthening sales and marketing alignment
8. Embracing new technologies

1. Getting closer to customers

Relationship-building emerged as the number one area of improvement for today's UK B2B technology marketers, with 50% of respondents citing it as a major focal point (see Figure 5). Related issues, such as gaining greater customer insight and improving loyalty were also high on the list: less than one in eight felt that their loyalty programmes need no further improvement.

While the economic climate is a clear reason for this – with customer retention crucial – there are other factors at play. Long-term software licences and maintenance contracts are beginning to give way to a more flexible cloud-based model where customers can switch vendors more easily: this places a new emphasis on maintaining customer relationships and building loyalty.

Inside Insight: Segmentation vs Personalisation

"Given that 50% of marketers say they urgently need to improve lead quality, the low level of focus on segmentation may indicate a missed opportunity to use customer data to target the market more effectively. There's not always scope for full personalisation, so intelligent segmentation can form the basis for sending out the right messages to the right people."



Zara Shareef, Senior Account Executive - Marketing Options International

Understandably, improving the quality of customer data was also seen as an important enabler here. But curiously, using this information to segment the market better seems less of a consideration: only 26% said they would place a 'significant' focus on improving customer segmentation in 2012. This is a surprising result given that 49% of respondents said they need to improve lead quality significantly (see p.15), but is perhaps indicative of marketing moving to a 'pull' approach, rather than a 'push' approach to defined market segments.

Q: Please indicate whether you feel your organisation needs to make significant, some or no real improvements in relation to customer understanding and insight

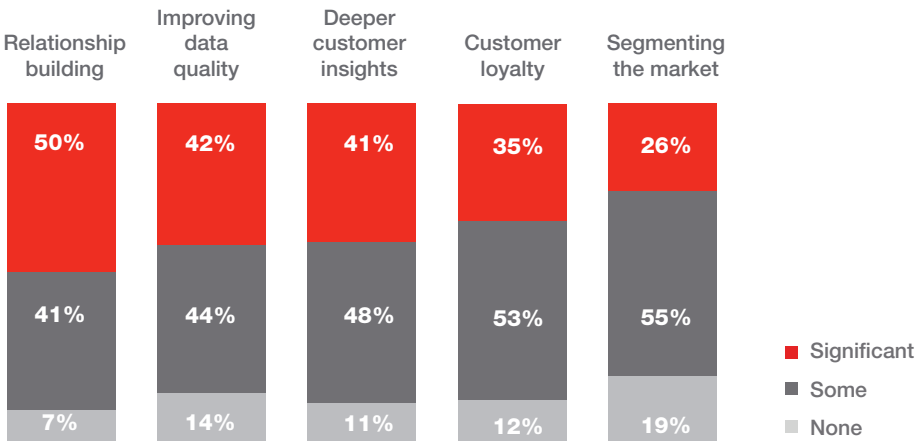


Figure 5

2. Raising brand awareness

Brand marketing is set to make a comeback in 2012, with **50% of respondents saying they needed to make 'significant' improvements in terms of raising brand awareness** and a further 41% saying they need to make 'some' improvements in this area (see Figure 6).

The renewed focus on brand may reflect the fact that brand awareness activities have taken a back seat in the past 12 –18 months, as marketers prioritised more tactical lead generation campaigns. Though this is entirely understandable, it may have led to mindshare diminishing. Increasing noise in the marketplace is also making brand awareness an increasingly pressing concern, particularly for smaller technology companies struggling to compete with the dominant IT superbrands and their (comparatively) large marketing budgets.

In the past however, brand awareness activities – such as print and broadcast advertising and sponsorship deals – have been an expensive luxury, for small companies especially. But social media has levelled the playing field, providing new opportunities for free or low-cost brand positioning activities.

Inside Insight: ROI on a brand campaign

"We all know that ROI on a brand campaign is hard to demonstrate in pure financial terms: knowing a brand, and even liking a brand, doesn't necessarily translate into sales. But there are an increasing number of tools available to help measure the impact of awareness campaigns, from social media feedback to online activity, as well as dedicated surveys."



Emma Hayfield, Senior Account Executive - Marketing Options International

"We trust our employees to behave to the standard that we would expect. Knowing the fact that they are online and being a representative of the brand or ambassador of the company will influence the way they behave, and if they want to have a different sort of behaviour, then they should do that with a different ID. With trust, the risk is small."



Pete Jakob, Brand Manager UK and Ireland - IBM

While social channels are still relatively new for many B2B technology marketers, our respondents believe that from 2012 it will play a more strategic role across the marketing mix as confidence in using different social channels and measuring social activities deepens. Most obviously, it allows long-term interaction with the brand as a whole, and provides a new way to make the brand come alive. On a social channel, you can demonstrate a sense of humour, for instance, that may not be appropriate in other media; more importantly, you can also be more responsive – offering instant opinion and reaction to hot topics.

Q: Please indicate whether you feel your organisation needs to make significant, some or no real improvements in relation to brand marketing.

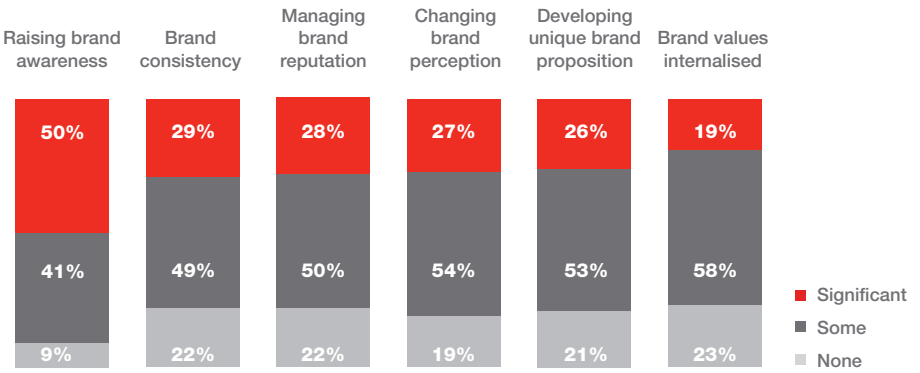


Figure 6

Of course, the downside is that social media brings with it a host of new risks in terms of managing brand reputation and perception. When every employee, partner and customer can potentially be involved in online discussion about a brand, the controls that brand managers have long exercised become redundant. When a single ill-judged employee posting, or a single complaint from a vocal customer, can gain massive coverage and create significant brand damage, the stakes are transformed. It's no surprise then that the fact that **more than three quarters of respondents said they needed to make 'significant' or 'some' improvements across the board in relation to their brand management activities**.

Inside Insight: The internal brand

"One thing I expect to see more of in the next couple of years is companies putting more emphasis on building brand awareness internally, and making sure that staff are not controlled, but empowered to use social media. Even staff passionately defending their employer online could easily end up stirring up a storm, unwittingly, by saying the wrong thing in the wrong way. It's not something that brand police can control, so the emphasis should be on empowerment instead. "



Matt Gigg, Account Director - Marketing Options International

"Once a company in a market is mature enough and you get a high volume of leads flowing through, you almost lose credibility with the sales department if you are handing over too much, especially if they are not qualified enough… this is where lead scoring is essential."



Sylvia Jensen, EMEA Marketing Director - Eloqua

3. Increasing the quality of leads

It's no surprise that lead generation remains a critical activity in 2012. **However, while 36% confirmed that they do need to generate more leads, more than one-fifth (21%) said they don't need to improve lead volumes at all**.

As Figure 7 demonstrates, the survey has indicated a shifting emphasis, away from simply increasing the numbers towards a stronger focus on lead quality. **Almost half (49%) of respondents said they need to significantly improve the quality of leads generated**, with only 7% saying lead quality doesn't need improving.

Interestingly, many respondents feel that poor conversion rates are caused more by the type of leads themselves than with any internal ability to qualify them, with only 29% said they need to make significant improvements to the accuracy of their lead scoring.

Q: Please indicate whether you feel your organisation needs to make significant, some or no real improvements in relation to lead generation

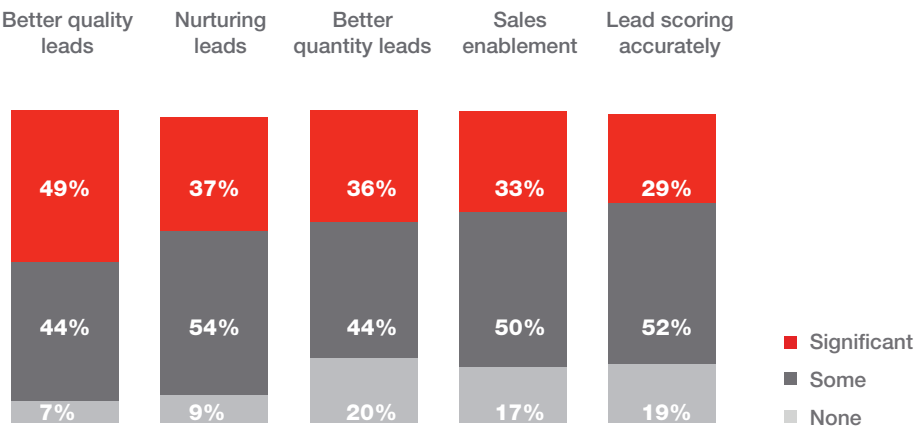


Figure 7

Inside Insight: Pre-sales relationship marketing

"One of the challenges B2B technology marketers are currently wrestling with is how to keep communicating with prospects during that long sales cycle. I believe we're going to see a new era of relationship marketing, which offers highly targeted content and updates to decision-makers within key accounts to help nurture relationships and take the pressure of sales."



Matthew Stevens, Account Manager - Marketing Options International

The missing link here, perhaps, is lead nurturing and sales enablement – something that is ever more important as buying cycles continue to lengthen. For example, 91% of respondents identified lead nurturing as an area that needed either 'significant' or 'some' improvement, underlining how much of a challenge lead conversation is for the technology industry.

"Make sure your content is bona-fide thought-leadership, not opinion farming where your regurgitating snippets and sound bites from other analyst reports, research etc. If you're not adding any insight to it they you should question why do it in the first place."



Gary Gould, Cloud and Data Centre, Marketing Lead - Cisco Systems

4. Recognising the value of content marketing

One of the defining trends the research identified is a renewed emphasis on compelling and value-added content. In Figure 8 we see that respondents expect to take more thought-leadership orientated approach, so that they can stand out from the crowd and communicate brand and product propositions in ways that are educational, digestible and useful for prospective buyers. Content marketing is also an important vehicle to help nurture leads during a long sales cycle.

It's not surprising, therefore that most marketers say they need to improve their content-oriented activities at least to some extent in 2012 – and there are two vital strands to this:

- **39% of respondents said they need to improve the way that their new content is marketed**
- **38% said they needed to increase content quantity** – emphasising the multiple roles that quality content can play from keeping contacts warm to building the brand image.

When it comes to quality, there's a clear divide: 33% feel they need to make significant improvements, but 17% are confident that their content is already of high enough quality to inform and engage prospects and move them further down the sales funnel.

Inside Insight: Creative content is key

"I wasn't surprised at all that the majority of respondents said that they would like to adopt more creative approaches to producing content: it echoes entirely the discussions we're having with our clients. While by no means dead, in the coming months we would expect to see more traditional content formats such as white papers and product datasheets being complemented by (or being repurposed into) more engaging and creative content including video, ebooks and interactive demos."



Kylie West, Senior Account Manager - Marketing Options International

Q: Please indicate whether you feel your organisation needs to make significant, some or no real improvements in relation to the use of marketing channels and content

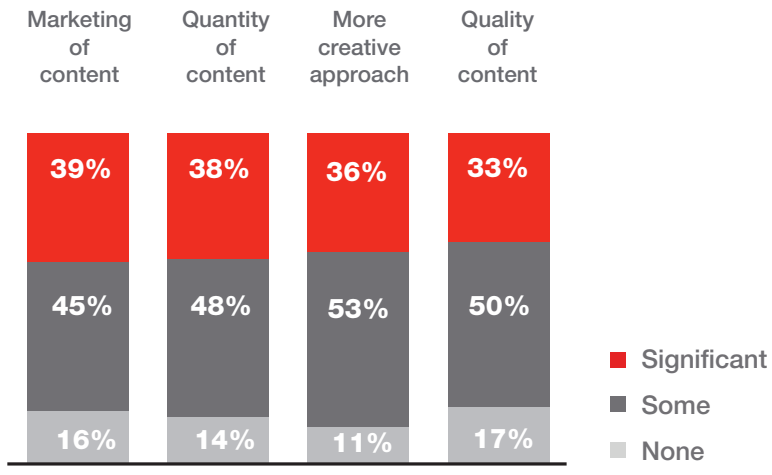


Figure 8

The challenge for marketers in 2012, then, is to produce more of this high-quality content, market it more effectively, and find creative uses for it that will help them to cut through the noise in the marketplace and get their message across.

"Events are really important today because of the changing nature of the IT landscape. Things are moving so fast and changing so quickly, people need that face-to-face interaction, they need the ability to go up and ask a presenter a question and understand it from their own perspective, which you don't get from any other form of communication."



Charlene Marsh, Integrated Marketing Communications Manager - Microsoft Ltd.

Inside Insight: Relationship building needs the personal touch

"The strong focus on bespoke events will help B2B tech marketers achieve their stated goal of strengthening customer relationships – nothing is better for relationship-building than meeting face-to-face and truly engaging with customers on a one-to-one basis."



Hannah Guyatt, Senior Event Manager - Marketing Options International

But at the same time, to make sure the budget is spent in the most effective way, it's important to ask what is driving this emphasis on content. One possible answer is the move from push to pull marketing, with technology buyers increasingly researching products online themselves before engaging with a vendor. It may also be the result of buyers' attention fragmenting across multiple devices and social media platforms, requiring marketers to come up with more creative ways to get their content noticed.

5. Selecting new vs traditional marketing channels

In a sector so renowned for embracing change, it might be expected that digital channels have displaced more traditional approaches. But our survey shows that this is far from the case: rather than jumping on the latest digital bandwagon, marketers are carefully weighing up the pros and cons of each channel and opting for a balanced mix between old and new.

Figure 9 confirms that **bespoke events are making a comeback, with 44% of respondents citing them as an area for significant investment**. This reflects the strong relationship-building opportunities offered by face-to-face contact; what's more, bespoke events offer an opportunity to capture buyers' attention for long enough to explain the benefits and differentiators of a complex product or set of products.

But this doesn't mean marketers are eschewing virtual events: 31% plan to invest heavily here in 2012 too. We expect to see more synergy between physical and virtual events, as marketers add virtual elements to face-to-face events – meaning they can attract audiences that are geographically dispersed or don't have time to leave their desk.

But there are several areas where the newer channels are increasingly replacing older ones. For example, the findings confirm that **social media is approaching maturity in B2B technology marketing, with 26% planning to invest in it heavily** and 46% planning to invest to some extent.

Other significant factors cited as impacting marketing activities over the next two or three years are cloud computing and, interestingly, mobile marketing. Currently, levels of investment in mobile marketing are very low in the B2B technology sector, with most success stories to be found in B2C.

It could be that B2B technology marketers are waiting to see what techniques and approaches they can adapt from consumer-focused campaigns to suit an audience of B2B technology buyers – creating an interesting parallel with where social media was two years ago.

We're also witnessing an accelerating shift away from print channels, with only 7% of respondents planning to allocate significant budget to print advertising and 5% to physical direct mail in 2011–2012. This may be due to cost concerns, the comparative difficulty of measuring ROI from print as opposed to online, or the belief that print is old-hat in an industry that lives at the cutting edge of technological innovation: whatever the cause, it's a trend that is too clearly defined to be ignored.

Q: For each of the marketing activities below, please indicate whether you plan to allocate significant, some or limited/ no resources (time and money) over the coming 12–18 months.

	Significant	Some	Limited/ none
Bespoke events (e.g. roundtables)	44%	40%	16%
Content marketing	32%	53%	15%
Online events and webinars	31%	44%	25%
Email	29%	51%	20%
Social media engagement (e.g. blogs)	26%	46%	28%
PR	26%	50%	24%
Website development	25%	54%	21%
Telemarketing	24%	38%	38%
3rd party trade shows or conferences	22%	59%	19%
Online advertising	18%	43%	39%
Social media monitoring	15%	43%	42%
Search marketing (SEO)	14%	45%	41%
Video	13%	45%	42%
Brand identity (e.g. logo design)	11%	29%	60%
Corporate hospitality	8%	56%	36%
Print advertising	7%	43%	50%
Mobile marketing (e.g. apps, MMS)	6%	24%	70%
Direct mail	5%	36%	59%

Figure 9

6. Measuring marketing impact

As previously noted – few survey respondents described demonstrating ROI as a key objective for the coming years. However, there was a strong commitment amongst marketers to improving their ability to measure their activity and clearly show they are making a positive impact on the bottom line. Figure 10 illustrates this:

- 39% of respondents said they need to improve the measurement and analysis of their marketing activity
- 37% want to demonstrate a clearer Return On Marketing Investment (ROMI) reporting in 2011–2012.

"With every penny you spend, you have to have the view of saying 'if that was my money, would I spend it on that, is it going to deliver what I want it to do'. I actually think putting your hand up and saying 'I now don't think it is going to deliver that, let's not do it', is very powerful."



Helen Hardie, Marketing Manager, Infrastructure Services - Fujitsu Technology Solutions

Q: Please indicate whether you feel your organisation needs to make significant, some or no real improvements in relation to marketing management and operations

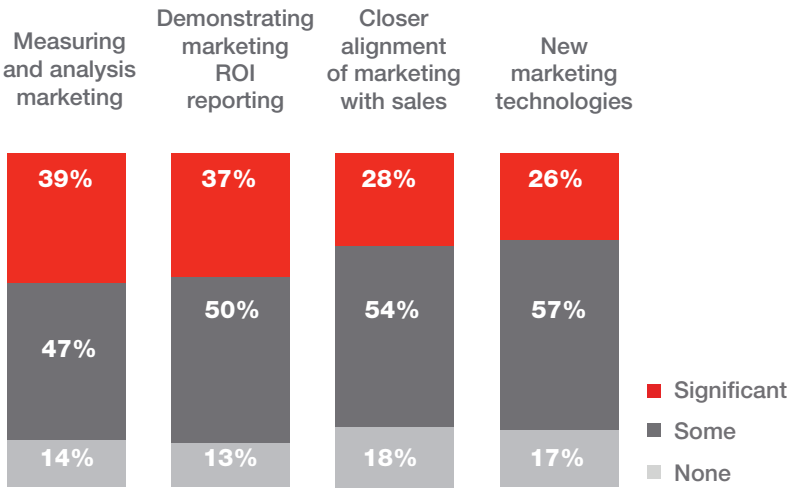


Figure 10

This suggests that the experiences of the last few years have left an indelible mark: B2B technology marketers themselves don't want to leave themselves exposed to any suggestions that they are not delivering value to the business, and equally want to know more about what works. With more and more tools available to support this, it's a trend that is set to continue.

Strengthening marketing and sales alignment

Although long seen as a problem in the B2B technology sector, which is traditionally sales-led, the need to align marketing more closely with sales did not emerge as a major concern. Only 28% of respondents see it as an urgent priority for 2012, and almost a fifth feel that no improvement is required.

While clearly there are opportunities for marketing and sales to work together more closely – for example, in ensuring that sales have the right content tools to support them during the lead nurturing process – the overall impression is of an increasing mutual understanding. As highlighted in part 1, marketers feel increasingly respected by their colleagues, which has not always been the case, and perhaps the increased emphasis placed on ROI over the last few years has helped underline just how much marketing contributes to business success.

"Sometimes we tend to leap like dragonflies from one new technology to another new technology… thinking whatever is the flavour of the month is going to solve everything. Marketers need to ask how the technology is going to enhance their marketing, rather than 'the technology will be the answer' because in my experience it rarely is."



Pete Jakob, Brand Manager UK and Ireland - IBM

7. Embracing new marketing technologies

One of the most surprising results of the survey is an apparent reluctance among B2B technology marketers to adopt new technologies for campaign management and delivery. (see Figure 11)

Although 26% said that adopting new technologies would be an important priority for 2011–2012, the majority do not appear to be planning any new investments. Older technologies such as CRM and email marketing platforms are now fairly embedded, but by 2012 most B2B technology marketers will still not be using social CRM, marketing automation or social media monitoring tools.

There may be several reasons for this apparent anomaly in an industry that – understandably – prides itself on being technologically advanced. First and foremost, there may not be the budget to invest in new tools. Older tools may have taken a long time to implement and adopt, meaning they are only just starting to deliver value and the business case for social media tools, in a world that is still getting to grips with social media, may be as yet hard to build. Perhaps too, marketers may be looking to their external agencies to invest in the new tools instead.

Q: Which of the following marketing technologies do you currently or plan to use in the coming 12–18 months?

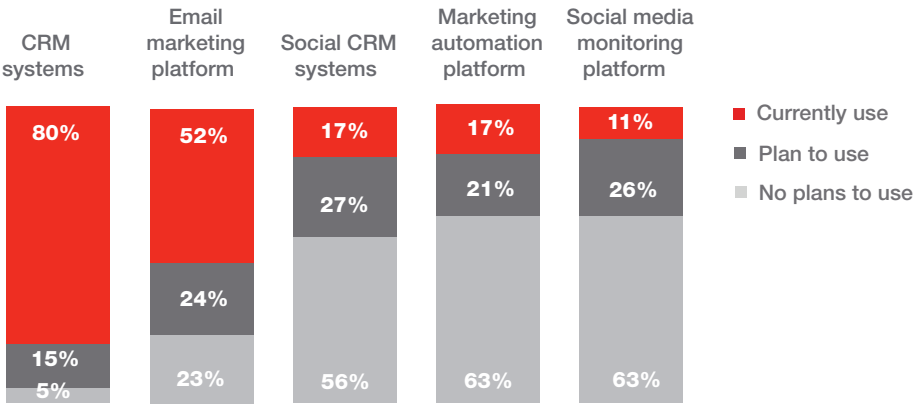


Figure 11

Part 3
Conclusion

Plus ça Change...

B2B technology marketers are living in a time of change, driven by factors including the difficult economic climate, a paradigm shift to cloud-based computing, and the emergence of new channels for content delivery and audience engagement.

Constant change is, however, a fact of life in this industry, which has always been propelled by the rapid pace of technological development. So while respondents said their priorities changed last year and will change again next year, it would be wrong to conclude that we are seeing a fundamental shift in how B2B technology marketing is conducted – in fact, in many ways, it's business as usual.

But we can still draw some interesting conclusions from how things are changing and how marketers are responding to those changes. 2010–2011 was all about lead generation, ROI and agility; changes probably driven by a tightening of belts during a difficult economic period. The fact that brand awareness and customer relationship activities are returning for 2011–2012 may point to a renewed optimism about the economic climate, even though we are by no means out of the woods yet.

Coming to terms with social media

Apart from the economy, the most significant factor affecting marketing strategy is the emergence of new marketing channels. Organisations in every sector – and technology companies are no exception – are trying to identify how they can best be harnessed for B2B marketing and our results suggest technology marketers are increasingly confident in how to use them. As a result, social media is approaching maturity and will take up a central role from 2012 onwards. Mobile, by contrast, is not yet being embraced by B2B technology marketers – probably due to its unproven benefits in the B2B space.

Even for marketers who have not yet fully embraced it, social media is still having an impact, by increasing the amount of noise in the marketplace and consequently reducing levels of attention from customers.

Focusing on relationships

It's in this context that relationship building soars in importance. Once you have your audience's attention, it is absolutely vital that you keep it, whether that's throughout a long sales cycle or an existing contract. Marketing will have a pivotal role to play in generating the upselling opportunities, raising awareness of new products and updates, and continue to see companies as innovators.

Perhaps this, more than economic recovery, is what is behind the revival of brand awareness activity in 2012 and the increased need to create truly compelling content.

Measuring the impact

Technology may also have a part to play in the fact that marketers are under greater pressure to demonstrate return on marketing investment. While this may have been driven in part by budget constraints, it could also be because ROMI is getting progressively easier to measure, thanks to the ease of monitoring digital campaigns. Marketing automation is still in its infancy, but as more marketers start to use it, analysing and reporting on ROI will become a staple of marketing life.

The picture that emerges for 2012 is one in which marketers will prioritise lead generation, brand awareness and customer relationships, using a judiciously selected mix of new and traditional channels. While a few have already started to embrace new marketing technologies to help with monitoring, measurement and execution, the majority have yet to adopt these new tools. For the moment at least, the most technologically up-to-date marketers may have the competitive edge.

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Methodology:

At the core of the Technology Marketing in Mind initiative was an online survey of 107 senior marketing decision makers. Given the specific topics covered by the survey, these individuals were vetted to ensure they had responsibility for marketing strategy within mid-large (100+ employees) IT and Technology firms deriving at least 25% of revenue from B2B sales. All interviews were conducted by Circle Research during June and July 2011.

About Technology Marketing In Mind:

Technology Marketing In Mind is a unique peer-to-peer information-sharing programme offering real-life opinions, insight and advice from some of the most experienced B2B technology marketers in the UK. Produced in partnership with the IDM, Technology Marketing In Mind aims to help marketers improve the impact of their campaigns and deliver stronger ROI. For more information and to view our exclusive new video series, visit **www.tmim.co.uk**

About Marketing Options International

Marketing Options International (MOI) is a specialist B2B technology marketing agency supporting some of the world's most admired B2B technology brands. With offices in London, San Francisco, Singapore and Sydney, its team of dedicated IT marketers delivers brand awareness, lead generation and relationship marketing programmes for clients across the globe, including Oracle, Fujitsu, Alcatel-Lucent, EMC, Cognizant and Steria. Find out more at **www.mointernational.com**

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Circle is the B2B market research specialist. We create fresh perspectives - deep insights into what makes buyers tick, what they think of you and your ideas, what will really set you apart. For more information visit **www.circle-research.com**