RESET 2021_

the marketing pod



A B2B MARKETER'S GUIDE TO REFRESHING PLANS FOR AN ALTERED WORLD

MAKE THE MOST OF 2021_

2020 was a strange and stressful year. The ongoing upheaval and uncertainty caused by Covid-19 meant even the most seasoned marketers were more likely to skip the strategic thinking and go straight to tactics; hoping for quick wins when forming longer term plans felt difficult.

Now we've arrived in 2021 and while things feel no more settled, the time has come to wave goodbye to making do with fast-tactics and design plans that can deliver - no matter what 2021 throws at us.

In this quick guide you'll discover our top tips for creating agile 'two speed' strategies, to make sure your business can respond quickly to whatever's happening in your customers' worlds. We'll also share the three steps we believe are key to resetting marketing plans and delivering real results in the year ahead.



WHY RESET?_

The social restrictions, shifting business priorities and altered work patterns brought about by Covid-19 mean that the needs, pain points and behaviour of B2B customers have changed. Right now, we're all in a state of professional and personal flux - and what comes next is also uncertain. For some B2B brands, marketplaces have barely been affected. Some will recover and look almost the same as they did before, once we start to return to some semblance of normal life. Others will find that the ground has moved dramatically beneath their feet. But whether it's a small side-step or a seismic shift, the world that brands are operating in will never be quite the same again.

That's not to say that 2020 and all that came with it hasn't provided some brands with new opportunities. Many brilliant B2B organisations have continued to thrive and grow during the pandemic. It simply means that tried-and tested-techniques might not achieve quite the same results they did before, while channels that your business didn't have success with previously might suddenly provide more opportunity.

So whether you need to make big changes or simply step things up a gear to meet demanding targets, now is the time to think about how you can get the most out of 2021. It's going to be crucial to take a step back and reassess the things you think you know; about your marketplace, your value proposition, the tactics you use and even your products. But if that sounds like a big task, don't worry - we have a few ideas to make it less cumbersome.

Take a step back and reassess the things you think you know

THE BIG RESET IN NUMBERS_

Your competitors are already making the changes they need to succeed.

According to new research by Marketing Week and Econsultancy[1], the coronavirus crisis is reshaping customer journeys and sparking action across businesses of all types and sizes.

35% are reallocating budget from acquisition to retention.

47% are changing advertising and content to make their messaging more relevant.

51% say their business is shifting messaging to emphasise digital products and services.

56% say that Covid-19 has caused radical or significant changes to the customer journey.

1 MarketingWeek, 30th April 2020

THE LONG AND SHORT OF IT_

Over the past 12 months, change has become the only real constant - meaning that even some of the best laid plans failed to come to fruition. But B2B marketers have shown their resilience, and as we move into 2021 it's time to take what we learned last year and create marketing strategies that can deliver no matter what's happening.

A two-speed approach may provide the answer.

Long-term goals that are closely aligned to wider business objectives remain crucial, as does keeping brand purpose central to every marketing decision. This will help to lay the firm foundations you need to shape a winning customer experience and will keep your sales pipelines healthy. A well defined long-term plan will make it easier to decide how to best communicate with your marketplace, and will help you identify the areas you want to focus on for investment and innovation. It will also give you the confidence to adapt and adjust should you need to.

So if 2020 was the year you threw your long-term plans out of the window, it's time to put them back where they belong: at the heart of everything you do.

Once your long-term goals are defined (and documented), it's time to make sure your plans are built to be flexible and that your people and processes are agile enough to adjust course as opportunities arise and customer needs change. On their own, short-term tactics will only ever deliver short-lived success, but the ability to quickly respond to disruption with activity that complements your overarching objectives is invaluable in today's uncertain marketplace. Being able to do this will depend on the team, tools and data you have at your disposal - which brings us on to our top tips for 2021...



5 TOP TIPS FOR 2021 SUCCESS_

1. Keep in touch

It's always important to have a good process in place for customer feedback and to conduct detailed research any time big changes take place in your marketplace. Right now, keeping in touch is crucial - but it's also much more complex than usual. B2B customers are very likely to be displaced, with routines and workplaces that look very different to the norm; they are also less likely to be able to predict what budgets might look like or what actions they might be taking for their business in the coming months.

Our advice would be to make contact more frequently, but keep it quick and 'light touch', with questions focused on the immediate issues they're facing. This will give you the information you need to ensure you're addressing their key pain points with the products you promote to them and the messages you use to do so.



2. Stay close to your data

With so much communication and activity necessarily moved online, the data you collect on your customers is more valuable than ever. It will help you gain a clear and completely up-to-date picture on how they are behaving and how best to reach them, filling the gaps that customer feedback can't. This is where it becomes crucial to have analytics tools that come with a user-friendly interface and can draw everything together to deliver insights in a format that makes sense to your business.

So now is the time to review your martech stack, to ensure customer data flows seamlessly throughout your business - speak to an objective specialist if you don't have the expertise to do this in house. Next, be sure to train key team members to use your digital tools and to give them the time they need to stay close to your data. Your investment in this area could deliver significant rewards; it will allow you to redirect spend for maximum impact and will mean every action you take can be more targeted and more meaningful.

3. Adopt agile working practices

While 'agile' has become a business buzzword over recent years, it's a concept which is often still misunderstood. Far from being unstructured or chaotic, agile working practices actually require well-defined goals and a clear, shared framework. Within that framework, marketing teams build speed and efficiency through regular reviews, which allow them to assess progress and pivot activity if required. Each 'scrum' gives them a renewed purpose and a clear objective to go after in the next 'sprint'.

When you're accustomed to traditional marketing, switching to agile may seem daunting - but it's really not as complex as it may appear. It's all about streamlining your processes so that your team can do their best work, and you can see results in shorter timeframes than you thought possible. **That's why 42% of traditional marketers are planning to adopt agile ways of working this year[2].**

Achieving agility

Interested in becoming more agile?
Sign up to our newsletter to learn how to become more agile in just 6 weeks.

2 Hubspot, 3rd Annual State of Agile Marketing Report

Take the time to get to know your business and your audience again



4. Test new approaches

It's a frustrating time for businesses, and there seems to be so much we can't do right now. But why not flip this feeling on its head and see 2021 as an opportunity to try new things and be more creative? It's the perfect time to experiment with new platforms and formats, to trial new tools or even reshape your proposition. The key to making this work for your business is to test, measure and learn at every step. That way, even the things that don't deliver as you expect will provide valuable lessons for the future.

We're fierce proponents of A/B testing, particularly in such an evolving environment. By testing out different messages, creatives and channels you can quickly discover what works and what doesn't.

5. Take nothing for granted

Perhaps the most important tip of all in our altered world is to step back and take the time to get to know your business and your audience again. With so much having changed in the marketplace, it seems odd that businesses would assume that they can continue to rely on the branding exercises they did pre-pandemic (or pre-BLM, pre-storming of the Capitol, pre-Brexit...). If your business has set ambitious goals for the year ahead, it might feel tempting to steam ahead with activity or make big strategic decisions based on old information - but don't. Spending a little time revisiting your brand essentials now will lay the foundations you need for success and help you avoid wasting precious time and budget in 2021.

If you know you need to reset but are having trouble getting started, it can be helpful to break the process down into smaller stages. That's why we've created the 3 Step Reset (detailed on the following pages) which we hope can offer you some inspiration.

THE 3 STEP RESET_

REDEFINE

During this first step, you should seek to identify your key opportunities and redefine your market position.

This step is as useful to well established businesses who may feel disconnected from their customers as it is to new businesses that are carving out their place and seeking to differentiate themselves from the competition.

Completing it will ensure you can successfully execute new business plans and achieve new targets.

Ask for input from your 'front-line' staff and use this alongside customer data to fully understand and segment your target audience. This will help you to rationalise and optimise your product portfolio and redefine your market position.

Quick tip - Consider a virtual workshop to get input from team members who can't meet up in person - and document everything they say, so that it can be combined, distilled into useful insights and disseminated across the business.

REFRAME

During this second step you will develop new messaging and ensure you have a cohesive brand story on which to build integrated campaigns.

Now you know who your customers are, it's time to understand how to create marketing content that resonates with them. Based on what you learned during step one, you may need to develop new messaging from scratch, or you may be able to fine tune what you already have.

Brilliant content is the best way to boost your brand profile, especially while so many people are at home and online for more of their day. But remember, everyone is ramping up their digital marketing right now, so to stand out from your competitors your campaigns need to be creative and cohesive across multiple platforms. Think carefully about how you can reframe your brand proposition through storytelling - and always keep the focus on customer benefit rather than product features.

Quick tip - A messaging house is a good way to record your brand messages in a quick-read, visual format. Begin with your overarching proposition and define customer needs before thinking about how your products meet them.



RESTART

This exciting third step is where commercial and creative collide for smart execution. By the end of it, you should have a fully integrated plan and the tools to execute and measure it.

Using everything you have learned and developed during the previous two stages, it's now time to identify where to put your budget for optimum performance and to develop fully integrated on and offline campaigns.

Every business with a well-developed marketing function should have a useful martech stack to call on at this stage. Our own clients have access to our 360-degree analytics dashboard, which is tailored to enable them to see their campaigns in action and track performance across multiple channels, including Google analytics and all social media platforms, through one user-friendly interface. As well as making campaign planning easier, it helps them to understand what's working and what isn't and to reallocate efforts and budget as needed.

Quick tip - We really can't say this enough: even though your plans may need to change as 2021 unfolds, making a plan will help to keep you on track - giving you a structure to hold on to when the ground shifts beneath your feet.

HERE WHEN YOU NEED US_

The events of the past year have put pressure on marketing teams to deliver tangible results and demonstrate a clear ROI for senior management.

We've developed our 3 Step Reset programme to get B2B businesses on the fast track to success in 2021 and we can work closely with you to implement all three steps in only six short weeks.

What makes 3 Step Reset even better is that it's modular. So if you've already done some of the leg work, you only have to complete the steps you need. And then, when all of your preparation is done and your plans are made, we can either step back to let you take those plans forward, or stick around as your expert agency partner, to help you to bring in those all-important leads.



QUICK GUIDE TO THE 3 STEP RESET PROGRAMME

Your fast track to 2021 success



1 REDEFINE

By the end of this step you will have identified your key opportunities and redefined your market position.



2 REFRAME

By the end of this step you will have developed new messaging and have a cohesive brand story on which to build your integrated campaigns.



3 RESTART

By the end of this step you will be in possession of a fully integrated plan and have all the tools you need to optimise your activity.

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GET READY TO RESET_

If you'd like to know more about the 3 Step Reset programme or have any questions about the services The Marketing Pod can provide, please get in touch. With our five centres of excellence, we can help with everything from branding workshops, content creation and PR to digital marketing and design.

Talk to the team today:

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