

The Right Mix:

A B2B Marketing Allocation Guide for 2011





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Introduction

To break through the clutter, measured advertising expenditures have grown by 50% since 1992 but there has not been an equal rise in revenue for most companies, which are struggling to maintain (let alone grow) their brands.

One of our most challenging decisions as marketers is deciding how to allocate our marketing budget, also known as the marketing spending mix. This decision used to be fairly simple because we had fewer options.

Then came the Internet.

Then came social media.

The number of marketing tactics has exploded. The old saying, *"I know half my marketing is ineffective, I just don't know which half,"* has never rung more true for many of us.

So the question is: how do we select the right marketing tactics? And once we've made our selections, how do we decide what amount of money and resources to dedicate to each of those tactics?

That's the focus of this eBook.

If you're a marketing guru with years of experience under your belt, feel free to skip ahead to [page 14](#), where we begin our analysis of specific marketing tactics. If, on the other hand, you feel that you'd benefit from a quick overview of the marketing tactics that are now available, the marketing and buying processes themselves, and the differences between B2B and B2C marketing, then read on!



A Tactics Bonanza

Twenty years ago, big companies used one advertising spot on three television networks to reach 80% of the US population; now they need up to 20 messaging and media programs to get the same reach. — McKinsey Research

The marketing spending mix is different for every business. How a start-up allocates its marketing budget is far different from how an established company does so. How an established market leader allocates is far different from an established company with falling market share. The outcomes and benefits of social media are not the same as direct email, which are not the same as exhibiting at a tradeshow. The combinations are endless and so are the choices.

Overwhelmed? You're not alone. A recent McKinsey report revealed the biggest concern of CMOs is the increasing complexity of marketing due to the explosion of customer segments, products, media vehicles and distribution channels.

There is no precise blueprint for success but having a deeper understanding of marketing's ever-evolving "moving parts" significantly increases your chances of success. This is both a science and an art. And not everything can or should be measured.





Let's talk tactics for a moment. We now have a *wealth* of marketing tactics to consider including:

	Broadcast advertising		Podcasting		Print advertising
	Outdoor advertising		Original content		Pay-per-click advertising
	Speaking		Telemarketing		Award Competitions
	Direct Marketing: e-mail		Lead Nurturing		Blogging
	Trade Show Exhibiting		Sponsorships		Webinars
	PR / Media relations		Display advertising		Search Engine Optimization
	Search-optimized/ social press releases		Direct Marketing: print		Social Media



Obviously, not every tactic is relevant to every B2B company. Each tactic, however, can play a unique and important role in moving buyers through the buying process, so we must carefully evaluate each one's potential when it comes to creating measurable lead generation opportunities and helping us build our brand and key relationships.

Use this three-step process to make your evaluations:

- 1 Develop a solid understanding of each marketing tactic – what it achieves, how it is executed, how to measure it and its relationship to other tactics.
- 2 Understand the unique role each tactic plays in your customer's buying process.
- 3 Overlay this information with your company's marketing goals to determine how to allocate your marketing budget.



The Marketing Process: A Quick Review

Unfortunately, few companies these days seem to have the discipline necessary to plant the seeds of comprehensive, integrated marketing campaigns. Even fewer have the patience to wait for these seeds to bear fruit. Our C-suites want results NOW. But that's not how effective marketing works.

Over the last decade, HRmarketer has helped thousands of human resource vendors improve their marketing and grow their business. From this experience, we've developed our "Marketing Process Model," a four-stage process for gaining increased publicity, Web site traffic and leads – and for improving search engine optimization (SEO).

Our model begins with preparation and planning, then it moves into execution and measurement, and then the process repeats. The best marketers have this process down to a science. This eBook drills down into the execution segment of the model and helps you understand and select the right tactics to move buyers through the buying cycle.

Before diving into the specific marketing tactics, let's examine each stage of the Marketing Process Model.



For a more comprehensive look at these four steps, download our free eBook, [How to Reach and Engage Human Resource Buyers and Convert Them to Leads.](#)



1. Prepare

In theatre, a lot of preparation must be done before you pull the curtain and begin the show. You wouldn't dare start the show with an unfinished script, incomplete stage set, or actors who haven't rehearsed their lines. Marketing is no different. Why would you begin an aggressive coming-out marketing campaign if your web site and messaging are incomplete ... your social networking accounts have yet to be set-up ... or you have no established processes for developing content or handling incoming leads?

2. Plan

The planning stage is a necessary prerequisite in order to select and execute your marketing tactics. This stage is all about research. Learn the answers to key questions such as: What events do your buyers attend? What trade publications, eNewsletters, and blogs do they read? What social networking (e.g., Twitter) services do they use? What types of podcasts and webcasts do they tend to prefer? Who are the journalists and bloggers that cover your industry? What topics are important to your buyers? What are their pain points?

3. Execute

This stage is all about "getting it done." The key is to stay active. Always be doing something. Marketing should NOT be stopped and started, primarily because there's a lag time between campaigns and sales. Suspending your marketing efforts simply



increases this lag time and creates serious gaps in your prospect pipeline. One of the most important characteristics of successful marketing is persistence. In fact, most marketing experts agree that a prospect has to be exposed to your message at least six or seven times before it sinks in.

4. Measure

To determine the effectiveness of your overall marketing, establish a set of measurable goals. Be sure that you are able to measure your web site traffic, online visibility, keyword rankings and lead generation rates. You'll then want to determine how to measure each specific marketing campaign investment. One word of caution: don't overdo it! We'll discuss the dangers of over-analyzing later.

Now, Correct and Repeat!

One former CEO of a major pharmaceutical firm would tell his managers, "Do something, even if it's wrong!" This man hated complacency. He understood the danger of inactivity and encouraged his people to execute their ideas. Equally important, he freed them from the fear of doing something wrong. This not only ensured that his team moved with speed but it also nurtured their creativity and drive to succeed. As marketers, we'd all do well to follow this leader's advice. So ... analyze your tactics, measure your results, and make continuous adjustments. Then execute again, and again, and again. Don't let up and don't be afraid to fail.



The Buying Process: Unclog Those Arteries!

When deciding which tactics fit into your marketing plan and how much money and resources to allocate to each, it helps to take a step back to review the B2B buying process – sometimes called the purchase decision funnel – and the role of each marketing tactic. Here is a simplified version of this process:

Awareness → Interest → Information Search → Evaluation → Purchase → Post-Purchase Evaluation

Awareness

A prospect must become aware that you exist before anything else can happen. Your marketing messages and calls to action (CTA) have to grab the prospect's attention. The problem is your prospects are bombarded every day by a multitude of marketing messages. Somehow, you have to find a way to be heard over all of that "noise," and repetition is an essential first step. Repetition also helps you maintain contact with prospects who don't need your product or service at the moment but eventually might.

The **Rule of Seven** is an old marketing adage that says **a prospect needs to see or hear your marketing message at least seven times before they take action** and buy from you. So be aggressive (repetitive) and never rely on only one marketing method. The results of that direct marketing campaign might not be stellar right off the bat but be patient and persistent and you might be pleasantly surprised a few months down the road.



Interest

It's not enough to merely grab your prospects' attention. You must also persuade them that your product/service addresses their pain points or serves their needs. This requires effective calls-to-action. It is at this stage of the buying process where you truly generate "leads." Lead generating campaigns build awareness but they go a step further by encouraging prospects to engage with and respond to your key messages.

Information Search/Evaluation

After prospects decide they need a particular solution, they begin to gather information – often doing so online. The Internet dramatically improves your buyers' ability to find information and alternatives. HRmarketer's research confirms that HR decision makers turn to the Internet *first* when beginning their information searches. They chose the Web even over their peers! Visibility and credibility, therefore, are absolutely essential. The more you are present online and the stronger your reputation as a thought leader, the better you will fair at this stage. So SEO, content and social media play important roles here.

Purchase

When your prospect has decided what alternative they will go with – because it offers the best-perceived combination of goal achievement and minimization of risk – they buy.



Post-Purchase Evaluation

The final phase of the buying process is the customer's evaluation of whether a purchase accomplished its objective. This ultimately determines whether they become advocates of your brand. Remember, their satisfaction is based on perceived results relative to their expectations. Although you don't have direct control over the post-purchase evaluation, you DO have control over the critical elements affecting it. Smooth implementation, timely sales follow-ups, and effective account service all have a tremendous positive impact on the post-purchase evaluation. The more attentive you remain after the sale is made, the more favorable the review is likely to be.



The Clogged Artery Effect

You cannot force people to change their behavior and quickly jump from awareness to purchase. But you can *facilitate* behavior change by building awareness, informing and educating, and establishing trust and credibility. This leads to meaningful conversations and, eventually, sales.

Most marketing fails because of bottlenecks that occur along the purchasing process. This is the "clogged artery" effect.

And most bottlenecks occur for one of two reasons: 1) inadequate funding of marketing tactics that support the flow of buyers along the buying process or 2) poor marketing or sales processes (e.g., insufficient or non-existent lead nurturing programs).



The B2B Buyer vs. B2C Buyer

Before we examine the role of each marketing tactic in the buying process, let's review some key differences between B2B and B2C marketing. This is important because most marketing literature is focused on B2C; unfortunately, many of the principles covered by this literature simply don't apply to B2B marketing.

B2B buyers are not spending their money on watches they don't need. And no HR executive I know is going to go online to purchase a six-figure talent acquisition system because of a promotional video featuring the latest Hollywood star or a 25% off coupon.

B2B buyers are spending their money more carefully than ever. Each purchase must solve a real business problem. In many cases, the dollars at stake are so precious that a poor purchase can be a career-ending event. As a result, business buyers use more rational thought when making purchasing decisions. They're motivated by saving money, increasing productivity, reducing risk, or raising profitability rather than by desire, style and prestige. This is not to say that a professionally developed brand is not important for a B2B business. It is. But putting excessive marketing dollars into building brand awareness does not guarantee success in B2B.

Although the goal of B2B marketing is to convert prospects into customers, the process is longer and more involved. For instance, once a lead is generated, B2B marketers need to focus on marketing tactics that foster relationships and nurture prospects throughout the buying process. Sometimes marketers must engage with multiple influencers across a variety of departments like IT or Finance. Other times marketers need to "educate" prospects who might not fully understand what they're



buying. Each marketing challenge is a separate touch point in the long, integrated process of the sales cycle.

Unlike the B2C market, most B2B companies won't ever secure widespread national media exposure no matter how creative their marketing and PR. And outspending the competition doesn't guarantee profitable awareness. Bottom line ... B2B and B2C marketing are different animals.

B2C	B2B
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shorter sales cycle • Transaction oriented • Buyer spending their own money • Higher likelihood of emotional or impulse buying • Large target market • Single step buying process • Brand identity created through repetition and imagery • Merchandising and point of purchase activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longer sales cycles (few impulse purchases) • Buyer(s) not spending their own money • Relationship driven (lead nurturing very important) • Small, focused target market • Multi-step buying process • Brand identity created on personal relationship • Buying decision based on business value and brand



Common B2B Marketing Tactics and Their Roles in the Buying Process



Low Impact



High Impact

We've written entire white papers on each of the following tactics. In this eBook, our intention is to briefly discuss each marketing tactic and its role in the buying process.

	Awareness	Interest	Information Search/Evaluation	Purchase	Post Purchase Validity
Broadcast Advertising					
Print Advertising					
Outdoor Advertising					
Display Advertising					
Pay-Per-Click Advertising					
Direct Marketing: Print					
Direct Marketing: e-Mail					
Sponsorships					
Speaking					



	Awareness	Interest	Information Search/ Evaluation	Purchase	Post Purchase Validity
Trade Show Exhibiting					
PR / Media relations					
Awards					
Blogging					
Podcasting					
Webinars					
Social Media					
Search Engine Optimization (SEO)					
Original content / Content Marketing					
Lead Nurturing					
Telemarketing					



Broadcast advertising (TV, Radio)

Awareness → Interest → Information Search → Evaluation → Purchase → Post Purchase

Generally speaking, broadcast advertising is radio and television, which tend to reach a wider audience than print media. The primary role of broadcast advertising is to persuade consumers about the benefits of a product. Like other forms of advertising, broadcast advertising must be aired multiple times before it actually sinks into the minds of consumers. So frequency is still key, and this can be an expensive proposition. Frankly, the target audience for most B2B companies is too may benefit from this tactic, depending on the type of product they sell, its price point and the size of the targeted buyer group.



Print advertising

Awareness → Interest → Information Search → Evaluation → Purchase → Post Purchase

Print advertising is a key to brand maintenance. For large companies with well-known brand status, print advertising is used to maintain brand dominance but it does little for lead generation. To use this tactic successfully, you must commit to it for a sustained period of time, as repetition is crucial. Unless you can commit to at least four to six print ads (1/4 page) per year in a single major monthly trade publication, don't waste your money.



Outdoor advertising

Awareness → Interest → Information Search → Evaluation → Purchase → Post Purchase

Outdoor or billboard advertising can be a great way to build awareness and interest in your business. And for local roadside businesses, billboard advertising can be an effective lead generator. In high traffic areas, thousands of people see your ad each day, although many may not be in your target audience. Billboard advertising tends to be expensive but it's a 24/7 medium. And it's hard for people to ignore your ads as easily as they can with other mediums.



Online Advertising: Display

Awareness → Interest → Information Search → Evaluation → Purchase → Post Purchase

Display advertising is not dead, despite the continued high-trajectory growth of search ads (pay-per-click ads such as AdWords). According to Nielson, in 4Q 2009 display-related online advertising earned almost \$2.3B, up 15% from 4Q2008. But not all online ads are equal. While display advertising can play a significant role in terms of B2C Interest and Purchase, in B2B it's primary use is to build awareness, so most B2B companies should be careful about allocating too much money to display advertising.



In B2C, display ads are increasingly used to influence Interest and Purchase, as the NUVIGIL ads on this page reflect. However, as mentioned earlier, B2B buyers are less likely to respond to free trials or coupon offers, so display advertising needs to be used for Awareness and brand maintenance.



Because display advertising in B2B is an awareness investment, don't measure its effectiveness solely on click-through rates. Your display banner ads may not generate a lot of measured interest (few clicks) but they can help move buyers through the buying process. In fact, research by Google draws a direct correlation between display banner ads and site traffic.



Search ads get a lot of credit for driving traffic/selling products – which they undoubtedly do – simply because they represent the last click before users take action. But the Google research shows that display ads (even those that don't have a CTA or cannot be "clicked") influence purchases by building longer-term interest. So simply counting clicks alone misses the overall value of display ad campaigns. Plus, the Google research draws a direct correlation between the use of display ads and the increased probability that users search for brand terms or navigate to brand sites in the future.



Online Advertising: Pay-per-click (via search engines and social networks)

Awareness → Interest → Information Search → Evaluation → Purchase → Post Purchase

While display ads deliver click-through rates of over just 0.2%, search ads deliver click-through rates of over 5%. Pay-per-click ads are placed in a prominent location on a content related website or, more commonly with search engines, at the top of the organic search results. These advertisements show up at the top of the page or next to the organic listing results.

Because the audience receiving these ads searched the very keywords your ads are built around, they are a more targeted audience and you are more likely to earn a better conversion rate. Pay-per-click ads also tend to be much less expensive than display ads and can be turned on and off at your discretion, so it's easy to experiment with them.

In B2B, search ads are a lead generation investment. The best use of pay-per-click ads typically involves a clear call to action, such as an offer for a white paper, free trial or demo.

If you are investing in AdWords, make sure you set-up Conversion Tracking codes so you can measure your ads' effectiveness.



Direct Marketing: Print

Awareness → Interest → Information Search → Evaluation → Purchase → Post Purchase

Traditionally, printed materials sent to prospects through the mail make up the most commonly used medium for direct marketing. The average “open” rate for printed direct mail pieces is nearly three times higher than it is for e-mail pieces.

Even so, print direct marketing is significantly more expensive than email marketing, so there has been a notable decline in print direct marketing. Still, digital printing costs have plummeted, which means a postcard mailing can be executed for as little as 35–85 cents per unit.

While direct e-mail marketing is better for lead generation via “content” offers (e.g., a free white paper download, for instance), print direct marketing is a great way to alert your target market to new products and services or other information that reinforces your brand.

▶ Not every executive uses email – but they all have a mailing address! Even in today’s online world, people rate “getting the mail” as a favorite of their list of daily activities. Combining direct mail with the Internet improves your reach.



Impact on email marketing success:
“Deliverability matters. An email not received is an email never sent – but paid for.”

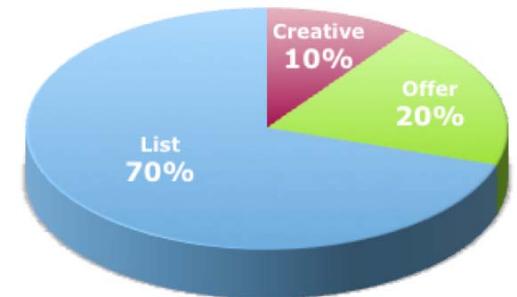
Direct Marketing: e-mail

Awareness → Interest → Information Search → Evaluation → Purchase → Post Purchase

While social media gets all the hype these days, email marketing should be a significant part of any company’s marketing investment. It’s a true workhorse when it comes to effective lead generation. This helps to explain why small and medium-sized businesses typically dedicate between 15% and 25% of their marketing budget to direct email marketing.

The key to maximizing your email marketing investment is properly prioritizing your recipient list, offer and creative. For any campaign, the single most important element is the list. Choose the right list.

The offer needs to contain a compelling call-to-action. Pay close attention to what you’re asking recipients to do and what you’re willing to offer them in return as an incentive. There’s an easy equation to estimate what the value of the incentive should be: multiply the probability of 1% of recipients eventually purchasing the product or service by the net value of that purchase. This gives you the maximum estimated value of your offer. Keep in mind that, in B2B, direct email campaigns with a





Most marketing executives cite email or search marketing as their company's top-performing marketing tactic.

content offer (download a white paper, etc.) will deliver much higher response rates than a promotional offer (request a demo or a call).

Interestingly, the creative is the element that so many marketers focus on – yet it makes the least difference to a successful email marketing campaign! In terms of design, content and technical development, your creative is important but only marginally when compared to your list and your offer. This might seem counter-intuitive but think of it this way: even the most gorgeous and cleverly conceived email will fail to generate awareness and interest if it's sent to a poorly targeted list of buyers. On the other hand, even the ugliest email riddled with spelling mistakes will succeed to some degree if it's sent to a perfectly targeted list and contains an irresistible offer.

Bottom line, we recommend at least one direct email marketing campaign per quarter.



Effective Direct Marketing

The list	There are many sources from which you can buy targeted e-mail lists. Send your campaigns to a list of at least 5,000 people once per quarter. Expect to spend between \$0.25 and \$0.50 per e-mail.
The offer	Direct e-mails with a compelling content “offer” in the form of a free downloadable white paper or research report are significantly more likely to generate a response than promotional offers. Save the promotional offers for your print campaigns.
The e-mail subject line	Keep it short. Study your own behavior when it comes to which e-mails you open. Don’t sell what’s inside; tell what’s inside. If possible, test versions of your subject line to get an objective view of what actually works.
The HTML creative template	First, your campaign creative should match your Web site identity in terms of look and feel. Second, in most cases, it should contain a single clear call-to-action. Conventional wisdom dictates that you don’t offer a free white paper download and a demo, for example. (Of course, bucking conventional wisdom can be smart marketing. Just know that you’re doing it!) Finally, the hyperlinks in the HTML provide the mechanism for tracking volume and the specific source of clicks.
The landing page on your Web site	The branding should match your HTML creative, which matches your overall identity on your Web site. It’s the Congruence Principle. The look, feel and tone of all of these items should be in sync with and reinforce one another, right down to the graphics and images, which should reflect the value of your offer.
The lead acquisition form	Many CRM applications provide custom code to integrate the fields on a Web form to fields in the company CRM. Other form scripts can generate an email. When considering fields to include in the form, collect the prospect’s e-mail at a bare minimum. Keep in mind, however, that the greater number of fields you include, the less likely a prospect will be to complete the form. Web forms intended to qualify a lead will invariably reduce overall your response rate. So choose your strategy accordingly.
The lead	The best time to follow-up on a Web lead is within 24 hours. A lot depends on the nature of your sales process, but the simple things like ensuring the sales team is ready to act on new leads are often missed. No form can replace the discovery and qualification process of a sales discussion and your sales team has a short window of opportunity to capitalize on the interest expressed by your prospects.



Sponsorships

Awareness → Interest → Information Search → Evaluation → Purchase → Post Purchase

Sponsorships can help improve your company's image and credibility by supporting events that your target market finds attractive. They can also help you develop closer and better relationships with existing and potential customers. Sponsorships can deliver other unique benefits and perks including giving you preferred access to event/webinar attendee lists as well as opportunities to "host" sessions at industry events (which enable you to discuss your products in a more intimate forum). The most common sponsorships in B2B are events, analyst reports and webinars.



Speaking

Awareness → Interest → Information Search → Evaluation → Purchase → Post Purchase

Most major conference organizers accept speaking proposals from HR practitioners and vendors, so long as the presentations aren't promotional. Speaking opportunities are an invaluable means for positioning yourself as a trusted thought/opinion leader, which can generate excellent qualified sales opportunities. To get started with this tactic, use services such as HRmarketer.com to identify the most appropriate opportunities, to develop a standard speaking proposal (topic description, presenters, learning objectives, etc.) and to submit your proposals.



Trade Show Exhibiting

Awareness → Interest → Information Search → Evaluation → Purchase → Post Purchase

Trade shows have always presented a conundrum for marketers. Logic dictates that if you don't exhibit at key industry events, buyers may view you as less credible. If you do exhibit, you may find it difficult to quantify the ROI (unless you score heaps of great leads!). So... should you exhibit or not?

In our experience, regardless of the type of product or service you market, you should attend at least one or two key events per year. This will help you maintain credibility and an industry presence. Your presence at trade shows also helps to generate leads. We also highly recommend that senior marketing and/or company executives attend these events since they offer executives a unique opportunity to talk to buyers face-to-face, better understand their pain points, study competitors, and attend sessions to keep current with the discourse of their industry. However, sales professionals – NOT marketers – should always staff your exhibit.

When deciding how to allocate your marketing and PR budget, realize that a relatively small percentage of your buyers attend any given trade show – and even fewer will come into contact with you at an event. So, if your annual marketing budget is \$100,000, think twice before spending one-quarter of it to reach just 50 qualified buyers (that's a cost of more than \$400 per qualified lead). You might be



better served by investing in more white papers, search-optimized press releases or a direct e-mail campaign.

When you do exhibit, consider implementing other marketing tactics related to the event. For example, you could conduct a direct mail campaign prior to the event, inviting attendees to your exhibit; you could advertise in the conference program guide, a sponsor's magazine or another publication that is distributed at the event; you could place a promotional "door drop" item in attendees' hotel rooms (if permitted) during the event; or you could conduct a follow-up direct mail campaign using the event's attendee list.



PR / Media relations

Awareness → Interest → Information Search → Evaluation → Purchase → Post Purchase

Considering the growing reliance on Internet-based marketing, why worry about traditional media at all? Because it's still very important; after all, journalists can be powerful champions for your organization. At the very least, the attention and awareness they can help to generate are well worth your effort.

The first step toward effective media relations is to identify your most important journalists and then build targeted distribution lists. The hardest work you'll do in this arena is to develop relationships with your key journalists.



[The Importance of Media Relations to Your Marketing Plan](#)



Work at becoming a resource for them, someone who can give them the information, insights and interviews they need to create their stories. It takes months (and even years) of effort to accomplish this... but stick with it. It works.

Keep in mind that media relations are *most effective* for awareness and brand building, so don't expect to use it alone for lead generation.

Awards

Awareness → Interest → Information Search → Evaluation → Purchase → Post Purchase

Many vendors pursue industry awards in order to gain credibility and visibility among buyers and to increase public perception of their product or service as a "safe choice." Publishers, conference organizers and industry associations produce award competitions. You should consider applying for a few awards every year, especially given the minimal amount of time and money many of them require.

Search-optimized/social press releases

Awareness → Interest → Information Search → Evaluation → Purchase → Post Purchase

Not long ago, companies were at the mercy of the news media when it came to press release pick-ups. Traditional PR tactics called for writing and distributing a release solely to secure media placements, and few people would see the releases



[Making Sense of Your Press Release Distribution Options](#)

other than reporters and editors. In other words, journalists were the “gatekeepers” who decided which messages were worthy of print. But that’s no longer the case, thanks to the Internet. Marketers can now bypass traditional media outlets to accomplish goals such as search engine visibility, demand generation and brand support. Today’s weapon of choice is the search optimized press release – a release that’s distributed online and includes news images, video and embedded hyperlinked keywords that direct readers to a Web site or landing page. Remember, search engines love inbound links, so consider issuing at least one search-optimized release per month.

Blogging



Awareness → Interest → Information Search → Evaluation → Purchase → Post Purchase

Blogging, like all social media, is about brand building, thought leadership and relationship building. A company blog is especially useful for communicating your views and pushing content to your prospects, all in a format that allows you to reveal more of your personality.

Many bogs are written by a single designated blogger to maintain a consistent voice and point of view. Others, such as Southwest Airlines’ blog, are written by a group of employees; these types of blogs can provide a wider perspective on the workings of an organization and reveal its culture through a diversity of voices.



Word of Mouse ...

The Internet makes it possible for customers to share their experiences (positive or negative) with thousands of others with minimal effort. Post purchase opinions remain online indefinitely and contribute to your brand reputation. Marketing needs to be diligent about monitoring social media that mentions their brand.



The one thing you do NOT want to do is hire a ghost blogger. People who read blogs are looking for expert content from an authentic source. If word leaks that your blog isn't really yours, the brand damage could be significant.

In addition to establishing your organization's blog presence, you also want to participate in the larger "blogosphere" conversation. Read your industry's blogs regularly and leave your comments – along with links back to your own blog. This demonstrates thought leadership and creates greater visibility for your company. The more often people see your blogger's/organization's name – and the more places they see it – the more likely it is they'll remember you when buying time comes around.

Consider at least one blog post per week and be sure to sync your blog to your other social media properties (Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn pages, for example).

Podcasting

Awareness → Interest → Information Search → Evaluation → Purchase → Post Purchase

Podcasts are another great, inexpensive way to get your messages out. They most often take the form of an interview and can be scripted to ensure that all major points are discussed – or for those who aren't comfortable behind a microphone. They make a great complement to a white paper or research report, enabling you to showcase the key content and why listeners should download the offerings.



Remember that your listeners are searching for valuable information or interesting insights, not a lecture or a sales pitch. They want useful information in bite-sized pieces so that they can move on with their busy day. Aim for 20 minutes at most. Like webinars, podcasts can be posted and archived on a company Web site. And you can post podcasts on iTunes, where listeners can subscribe to your weekly or monthly installments.

Webinars



“Developing pre-completed forms and personalized landing pages have demonstrated **4X increase in response rates.**”

Awareness → Interest → Information Search → Evaluation → Purchase → Post Purchase

Have a solution for a hot-button topic or a new perspective on a perennially popular subject? A webinar is an effective, low-cost way to broadcast your expertise. Services such as GoToWebinar, WebEx and others offer quality webinar services and they keep your costs to a minimum by enabling you to create and present your own content (most often through PowerPoint slides).

In addition to featuring presenters from your own organization, you can host a webinar featuring one or more external experts (e.g., from client and partner companies) whose subject matter dovetails with your own organization’s area of expertise. Some of the most engaging webinars feature both internal and external presenters. We recommend hosting at least one webinar per quarter.



Add some exclusivity to your follow up messaging and increase response rates.
“I see you weren’t able to make it to the webinar, but I wanted to reach out to you personally with a few important highlights.”

Since many organizations still haven’t dipped their toes into the webinar pool, our discussion here bears some additional attention – specifically in the areas of maximizing attendance and your potential for lead generation. To do so, employ these four essential strategies:

1. Planning

Develop an “editorial calendar” for your webinars, planning out a series of topics that will be broadcast at pre-determined dates. This enables you to effectively promote, pre-register participants and build consistency into your webinar series. It’s also important to develop topics that add intellectual value for participants. Remember, your marketing objective is NOT an hour-long sales pitch. You want to build your credibility and reputation for thought-leadership. By repeatedly providing attendees with insights and information they can use to strengthen their own businesses, you’ll be solidifying your position as a trusted – and needed – resource.

Also pay special attention to the attendee list. Design your webinar to speak directly to ideal buyers’ specific pains. Again, you’re not trying to sell prospects – at least not yet. However, tailor your presentation to how you could benefit me, my industry, my business pain, and you don’t need a sales pitch. I’m a more informed buyer or influencer.

2. Promotion

We recommend promoting the webinar with at least two direct email marketing campaigns, a search-optimized press release and through social networking. All



promotions should link to a landing/registration page where the form submissions populate automatically in your CRM.

3. Presentation

Develop a professional presentation, steering well-clear of cheesy slide transitions and death-by-content. As a rule of thumb:

- Open by stating presenter(s) name(s) and titles, what will be covered and why attendees should care.
- Mention at the outset that the presentation/recording will be made available for download afterwards.
- If there will be a Q&A or interactive portion, be sure to mention that too.
- Presentations should be a dozen slides at a maximum (including the title slide).
- Bulleted fonts should be simple and never smaller than 18 points.
- Graphics should be clean and simple.
- Your presentation should be one hour or less (including Q&A).

At the end of your presentation, be sure to briefly promote your next webinar, giving the tentative time and date.



4. Follow-up

The final stage in quality webinar execution is also the most neglected: follow-up. It is critical that you reach out to attendees after every webinar to give them a copy or recording of the presentation and get their feedback. You also should provide presentation copies/recordings to your other key audiences. And don't let all of your hard work go to waste; consider posting your webinars to your company web site. It's a great way to strengthen your image as a thought leader and industry expert. Finally, consider turning your webinars into syndicated content (details in our Syndicated Content article coming soon).



Social Media (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.)

Awareness → Interest → Information Search → Evaluation → Purchase → Post Purchase

Word of mouth is still a major factor in driving your web site traffic, and social media technologies give buyers the tools to spread the word quickly. You must actively manage and influence the information flow around your brand.

A strong brand is important to both the B2B and the B2C markets but for different reasons. With B2C, a strong brand can encourage the consumer to buy (sometimes at a premium price) and remain loyal. In B2B markets, a brand will only help you be considered, not necessarily chosen.



Two of the most important brand attributes for B2B companies are credibility and trust, and the best way to build them is through thought leadership (e.g., sharing useful information through white papers, bylined articles, opinion pieces, blogs, webinars and social media). If you (or your company's leaders) can build a reputation as a thought leader and a subject matter expert, your company will be viewed the same way.



Twitter

In their simplest form, here are the "The Five Steps of Twitter Success:"

1. **Follow** others in your industry.
2. **Reply** to tweets to gain visibility and establish a voice.
3. **Retweet** about key issues and topics.
4. **Share** with others who will find tweets particularly helpful.
5. **Repeat** again and again.

And don't forget to tweet your own horn. Tweet the availability of your insightful new research or white paper, for example. And use Twitter as a tool for framing yourself as a thought leader by connecting your followers to great content from other industry sources. This is a great way to build business and your personal brand and to develop relationships with prospects and influencers. It also helps to strengthen your customer relationships.



LinkedIn

As with Twitter, you can post announcements of your new content (keep it non-promotional) by using LinkedIn's "Share an Update" feature. Again, the benefits include business and personal brand-building, relationship-development with prospects and influencers, and stronger customer relationships. And LinkedIn can be an invaluable prospecting tool for your sales department.



Facebook

A company Facebook page is another excellent way to build relationships and share information. It can also help to "put a face" on your company. Like Twitter and LinkedIn, Facebook should be used to disseminate useful information (company news and events, awards won, the release of white papers and research, webinars, free downloads, etc.).



Read our eBook [*Conversation Starters – Social Media Marketing in the HR Marketplace*](#) for a step-by-step guide to using social networking in B2B.

Additional Thoughts about Social Media

Most B2B companies that we work with sense that they need to have a blog and be active on LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook ... yet they cannot accurately measure the ROI of these efforts. Nor can they identify actual business closed as a result of their social media efforts. So they give up or never really get started. On the opposite end of the spectrum are the companies that have a false sense of social media, believing it will deliver unprecedented numbers of leads. So they spend most of their marketing budget on social media.



Both camps are mistaken because they don't really understand the role of social media in the buying process/sales cycle.

Social media helps us raise awareness about our companies, strengthen our brands, and monitor what others say about our products and services. It helps us position our organizations – and our company leaders – as trusted subject matter experts and thought leaders. Equally important, social media helps us improve relationships with customers, the business press and other key audiences. And that's crucial because B2B is all about relationship-building. Used properly, social media plays an important role in moving prospects through the buying process, from awareness to purchase.

Given all of these reasons, it would be a huge mistake to ignore social media in your marketing plan. But so is allocating too many resources to social media at the expense of other, more traditional marketing and PR tactics. Why? Because social media isn't an effective lead generating tactic. Fewer than one in five marketers who use social media say it is highly effective for lead generation. You can be the most widely followed individual on Twitter but that won't grow your sales pipeline.

Also keep in mind that social media isn't a lead generating marketing tactic, which means you shouldn't try to measure it like one. You'll only be disappointed if you do. The truth is it's extremely difficult to measure the results of your social media efforts. In fact, some studies have shown that the most effective social media tactics can be the least measurable. (Unfortunately, our recent [HRmarketing Trends Report Survey](#) shows that, in 2009, 82 percent of companies didn't measure the



ROI of social media but 69% intended to do so in 2010. There are going to be some mighty disappointed people.)

Our advice? Get in the game anyway. Blog. Tweet. Be more active on LinkedIn. Build a company Facebook page. Experiment, educate yourself, and experiment some more. Learn about social media and make it part of your branding initiatives. In fact, make it a part of your business culture to the degree that your company's senior leaders and internal experts have their own online presences. The sooner you start, the faster you'll find the right fit for social media fits in your marketing efforts. And the longer you wait, the more you're falling behind.



Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

Awareness → Interest → Information Search → Evaluation → Purchase → Post Purchase

Without doubt, the Web is one of the primary resources buyers now use to research and locate the products and services they intend to purchase. Even if buyers learn about your company offline, they will likely go online to learn more about it. As a result, you must have a marketing-oriented Web site that engages visitors (i.e., your sales prospects) and converts them to sales leads. And your web site must be search-engine-optimized.

Great SEO starts with selecting the right keywords. This is the most important component to your SEO efforts so don't settle for only the most obvious keywords. Adding less common keywords taps into search marketing's "long tail" – the



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[SEO and "Marketing" Web Sites – Internet Best Practices for Human Resource Vendors](#)



thousands of low-cost keywords that collectively appeal to a large audience although they might generate few independent searches.

Once you have your keywords, your SEO efforts will consist of both "on-page" and "off-page" factors that influence your ranking. On-page factors consist of things like page formatting, <TITLE> tags and <BODY> copy while off-page factors include link popularity and directory listings. You are in control of your SEO so if you do not have the internal expertise to search-optimize your site, hire an outside firm – it's too important not to give it priority attention.

Original content (e.g., white papers)

Awareness → Interest → Information Search → Evaluation → Purchase → Post Purchase

In today's wired world, your web site is your primary lead acquisition source. It should invite prospects in, engage them and motivate them to give you their contact information in exchange for something of value. This "something" is content: original white papers, articles, research reports, newsletters, etc.

In B2B marketing content is king because your buyers need information (and information sources) they can trust to help them do their jobs more efficiently, solve their business needs and compete more effectively in the marketplace. To do so, they turn to the Internet. But your buyers rarely navigate the Web by entering a specific URL or Web address; instead, they use keywords and search terms that are related to the products and services they need. This is precisely why it's so crucial



[Using Original Content to Generate Online Visibility, Web Site Traffic and Sales Leads](#)

that you continually post original content to your web site that contains common (and not-so-common) keywords and search terms. The more you do, the easier it is for prospects to find you.

Content marketing

To market your original content, follow the process outlined below. We've used a white paper as the example but this process is extremely effective for all types of content. Every single step in this process can potentially bring you prospects, media attention and opportunities to strengthen your presence as an industry leader. And DON'T overlook the importance of the last step in the process, recycling. Too many organizations put an incredible amount of effort into a white paper or thought-leadership article, post it to their Web site, and then simply let it languish. That's a huge mistake! Leverage your hard work wisely by using each paper and article in a variety of ways.

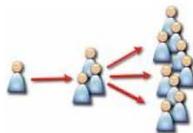


Create



- White Paper

Promote



- Load to web site (if registration form required, sync with CRM)
- Announce availability with direct email campaign(s)
- Announce availability with search-optimized press release(s)
- Send to industry thought leaders, analysts and bloggers – encourage discussion.
- Send to key journalists highlighting the newsworthiness of the content
- Discuss the content on your own blog
- “Share” via Facebook, Twitter, Youtube (if video) and other social networking sites.
- Link to content from your company’s Facebook “page”
- Add a link to content from your email signature (and get employees to do same)

Recycle



- Articles: Convert white paper to article and shop around as a byline placement in key industry trades
- Webcasts: Organize a webcast (maybe bring in a joint presenter like an HR executive) to discuss content
- Podcasts: Create a podcast about the content.
- Videos: If appropriate, create videos snippets about the content

Reload



Lead Nurturing: The Most Overlooked Marketing Tactic

Awareness → Interest → Information Search → Evaluation → Purchase → Post Purchase

Lead nurturing begins when an anonymous prospect (a first-time visitor to your web site, for example) becomes a known lead by giving you her/his contact information. Blasting out an e-newsletter to your prospect database every month is NOT lead nurturing.

Some companies do a great job of generating leads but they're not nearly as effective at converting those leads into buyers. Quite often, the fault isn't theirs. The fact is ... most new leads aren't ready to buy. (How could they be? They probably don't have any idea what separates you from your competitors or why your product is especially suited to their needs.) Ultimately, many of these leads get ignored or, worse, snatched up by competitors.

According to Brian Carroll, CEO of InTouch and author of *Lead Generation for the Complex Sale*, up to 95 percent of qualified prospects on your Web site are there to research and are not yet ready to talk with a sales rep. But as many as 70 percent of them will eventually buy a product from you or your competitors.

So how do you convert leads into sales?

Here's what Marketo, Inc., a lead nurturing software company, has to say in its *Definitive Guide to Lead Nurturing*:



“... marketers should invest in lead nurturing – the process of building relationships with qualified prospects regardless of their timing to buy, with the goal of earning their business when they are ready. Building a relationship with a prospect is the same as with any long- term relationship – you can’t force someone to commit (to a purchase, in this case) – but you also cannot afford to lose individuals because their willingness to buy doesn’t match your readiness to sell.”

In fact, evidence suggests that nurtured prospects have shorter sales cycles than prospects who were not nurtured.

What is lead nurturing?

It’s the disciplined process of identifying genuinely viable customers and courting them until they’re ready to buy. We use the term “courting” for a reason. Courtship, in days gone by, implied that an appropriate period of wooing would take place and that no physical contact would be made between the couple until their actual marriage. For marketers, the point here is that you shouldn’t try to force your leads to make a purchase without putting in an appropriate amount of time and effort. Lead nurturing is a critical marketing tactic that involves staying in touch with viable prospects by communicating targeted and relevant information to them throughout the buying process.

One relatively inexpensive way to nurture leads is through parallel direct marketing campaigns. Treat your “warm leads” (prospects who have already engaged with you) differently by sending them more personalized campaigns, preferably on subjects they have opted into.

HRmarketer clients that have lead nurturing programs in place (or a system for qualifying the leads we generate) have a significantly higher close ratio than clients who don’t.



For example, create your content download forms so that they allow prospects to opt-in to receive non-promotional information about particular topics of interest.

What doesn't count as lead nurturing?

Sending prospects an occasional newsletter ... blasting them with generic pieces of content ... issuing sporadic email campaigns ... or randomly following-up with leads every three months to ask if they're ready to buy.

When does lead nurturing end?

Lead nurturing ends only when the sale is made. At this point, you shift into servicing and supporting the customer and identifying up-sell or share-of-customer opportunities. A graphic representation of the process may look something like this:



Your ongoing marketing tactics have a long tail and still play a role in the service, support, retention and up-selling of customers.



The four key attributes of good telemarketers are professionalism, presentation, persuasion and persistence.

Telemarketing

Awareness → Interest → Information Search → Evaluation → Purchase → Post Purchase

In B2B, outbound telemarketing is about prospecting and scheduling appointments for sales – and, in some cases, closing deals. Companies building awareness for a new type of product or service might pair telemarketing with their content marketing program. Before a Webinar, for example, they might reach registrants to poll their interests and knowledge on the topic. After the Webinar, they might phone registrants to learn whether the Webinar sparked interest in further discussions with the sales team.

For other companies, telemarketing becomes a numbers game aimed at finding the proverbial “needle in the haystack” – that one person in the marketplace ready to abandon the status quo.

Third-party B2B telemarketing companies often have one major advantage: scale. Due to their staff numbers, they can make hundreds of calls in a relatively short time – something you probably can’t do. If you have the budget, you might want to consider hiring one of these firms for an appropriately large project.



Now, Get in the Zone!

When allocating your marketing dollars be careful not to overspend on one particular tactic. McKinsey refers to this as getting into the “zone of effectiveness” and defines it as “the optimal brand building investment above critical mass and below diminishing returns.”

A few years ago the CEO of an established but relatively unknown HR vendor asked us how we’d spend a \$40,000 per month marketing budget. Given his company’s size and its marketing and PR goals, we recommended that he spend half this amount and reevaluate after a few months. He didn’t like this suggestion. In fact, he felt it meant that we weren’t listening to his needs. On the contrary, we listened very carefully and we fully understood what he wanted to accomplish. But in the niche HR marketplace, we knew that there would be diminishing returns at his desired level of investment. In other words, he’d be wasting money that would be better spent elsewhere.

The same caution should be applied to the use of each specific marketing tactic. Take PR, for instance. Which is more important: to secure a media placement in a small niche publication with a circulation of a few thousand ... or to get mentioned in an article in *The Wall Street Journal*?

Depends.

What will it cost to secure that one-time placement in *The Journal*? Most PR firms capable of securing you such a placement don’t come cheap. And for this kind of



visibility to have a real impact, you'll need similar placements consistently over an extended period of time.

Even if you can afford the PR, is it worth it? That's the key question. And, for most B2B companies, the answer is no because the allocation is outside of their true "zone of effectiveness".

What about advertising? How much awareness does your company really need? Some companies can compete with much lower levels of awareness than others.

The "reach" you're buying with coverage in *The Wall Street Journal* or a large-circulation industry magazine might not be worth the money, especially if you can run an equivalent campaign in a smaller niche trade publication where 75 percent of the readership is in your target market.





The Right Mix: Putting it All Together

Allocating marketing resources is a complex decision that you have to make in a constantly evolving environment. The mix that works today might not work next year. And the emergence of new tactics creates new opportunities and challenges.

Many marketing managers continue to rely on outdated rules-of-thumb (the “percentage-of-sales” rule for advertising budgets, for example) to help them make their allocation decisions. More scientific approaches are based on a “bottom-up” methodology where a combination of reach and frequency determines the required allocation.

Unfortunately, there is no blueprint that you should follow, no guaranteed or proven methodology. You must determine what makes sense for your business. Whatever your approach, you should broaden your arsenal of marketing tactics and venture beyond the traditional vehicles of print advertising and tradeshows.

Following are a few examples of how different types of companies may allocate their marketing budgets versus what their ideal allocation might be. These suggestions are just that - suggestions. There is no proven formula. Remember, marketing is both a science and an art. These charts communicate a combination of suggested budget allocation and the importance of the respective categories to the objectives of the company type. Also remember that some really important marketing activities may not cost that much. For example, a person's monthly coffee budget is relatively small compared to other expenses but if they did not fund that activity it may not be a pretty picture.



**Marketing Allocation:
Early Stage Bootstrapped**



- Awareness
- Interest
- Information Search and Evaluation
- Purchase
- Post-Purchase

Early Stage Bootstrapped/Self-funded Companies

Companies that spend their founders' original investment capital and those that reinvest company profits into the business to support growth tend toward guerrilla marketing, trying anything and everything that doesn't cost too much. This can work but only to a degree and not for long.

Ideal mix

Invest in tactics that impact all stages along the purchase continuum with particular emphasis on tactics that impact interest and purchase. Tactics that generate awareness and interest at a reasonable cost including direct email marketing, search-optimized press releases and webinars.

Be sure to entice prospects with original content, a well optimized website, and online lead generation campaigns. Then focus on patiently and steadily nurturing leads.

Be sure to follow-up on all leads. Even if prospects aren't ready to purchase they will provide a wealth of information and market intelligence that will help you develop your product/service and build your business.



**Marketing Allocation:
Venture Funded**



- Awareness
- Interest
- Information Search and Evaluation
- Purchase
- Post-Purchase

Early Stage Venture-funded Companies

All too often, venture-funded companies go guard-rail to guard-rail when it comes to marketing. Under pressure to spend money and grow quickly, they buy lots of awareness via expensive media and PR campaigns. But when the growth doesn't happen the marketing budget – and staff – get slashed.

Ideal mix

This type of company should spend money on lead generation first, moving onto expensive media and PR campaigns only after establishing a strong foothold in the marketplace.

Unlike bootstrapped start-ups the venture backed firm has the ability to spend more on awareness – which they should, but not at the expense of other tactics that generate demand. The tactics that will pay the largest dividends will be aggressive direct marketing and webcasts.



**Marketing Allocation:
Established Brands**



- Awareness
- Interest
- Information Search and Evaluation
- Purchase
- Post-Purchase

Companies with Established Brands

When you've got Boardwalk, Park Place, all four Railroads and a pile of cash, start buying houses and hotels! The "houses and hotels" that defend and boost an established brand's position on the marketplace "board" include full-page color ads in industry trades and highly visible trade show sponsorships.

Ideal mix

In addition to print and online advertising, analyst and trade show sponsorships, established brands should utilize all relevant tactics to protect and grow their leadership position. Also continually focus on improving the execution of your campaigns and maximizing your ROI.



Don't Over-Analyze!

When making decisions people assume that more information is always better. It's not.

William James said "*The essence of genius is knowing what to overlook.*" He's exactly right. The human brain wasn't designed to deal with information overload. George Miller's famous essay, "The Magical Number of Seven," discussed how the human brain can handle only about seven pieces of data at any one moment. And in his groundbreaking book, "How We Decide," – a must-read for any marketer, Jonah Lehrer writes about the "anchoring effect:" the brain's spectacular inability to dismiss irrelevant information. Even so, a lot of software and analytic tools are predicated on the assumption that executives perform better when they have access to more data. It's just not true.

Marketing is all about data so, naturally, we tend to over-analyze. Don't! We also should guard against measuring our tactics in a silo. By itself, that display banner ad may not seem all that effective (it's only getting a few clicks). But it might have nudged someone along the buying process and contributed to increased web site traffic.



A Final Word

Marketing is an art and a science. Great marketing requires a deep understanding of each marketing tactic and how these tactics fit into the purchasing process. The better you understand each tactic, the better your chances of avoiding a mismatch between your marketing allocations and the touch points at which buyers are best influenced.

Today, the Marketing teams that are destined to succeed are those that can design campaigns for a number of channels and across multiple platforms – from social networks to search optimization to direct marketing. This requires sufficient budgets, a disciplined and steady stream of traffic-building programs, fresh content and appropriate performance metrics. It also requires that we embrace the technologies that make the spending of each dollar more efficient in the face of ever-growing complexities.

Most of all, it requires patience, a willingness to nurture, and a commitment to sustained engagement.

Good luck. And thanks for reading.



About HRmarketer

HRmarketer is owned by Fisher Vista LLC, a marketing software and services firm focusing exclusively on the human capital and healthcare markets. Since 2000, HRmarketer has worked with over 1,000 human resource and healthcare providers, helping them generate publicity, website traffic, sales leads and improved SEO. Our products include:

HRmarketer.com Software: Information Databases, News Distribution, Campaign Management, Measurement and Analytics. The human resource industry's premier online marketing platform helps you plan, manage, execute and measure your marketing and public relations for as little as \$292 per month.

HRmarketer Services: PR, Media Relations, SEO, Direct Marketing, Podcasts, Webcasts and more. Our full-service agency is one of the largest and most respected firms in the human resources industry.

HR List Rentals: Over 140,000 current opt-in e-mails of HR decision makers throughout the U.S.

Advertising & Lead Referral: We offer a variety of brand visibility advertising solutions and a Lead Referral program giving you a minimum of 30 qualified leads per week.

