

Forum

B2B Advertising for BRICS Nations in the “Post-Marketing” Era

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In previous issues of this journal, we described the importance of developing factual, non-promotional “content” in the “post-marketing” era for business-to-business marketing programs, and covered in detail the process of developing effective content used as the basis for creating marketing programs that generate measurable sales response, especially when tied to online marketing programs.

The “post-marketing era” is defined by the desire among consumers in business markets to receive factual, objective information from companies who sell products of interest, as opposed to the conventional, promotionally-based methods which have been traditionally employed by these companies in their advertising and business marketing programs. This change has been brought about by the widespread use of the Internet by business consumers to conduct virtually unlimited research on companies and products of interest. By having the power to access a wide variety of information on business, industrial, and technical products, consumers in these business markets now prefer to receive product information that is more factual in nature, and which is more directed at helping the prospect solve their specific business problem.

Content-based marketing programs turn conventional B2B marketing upside down, humanizing the process of business marketing by providing business readers and viewers with the non-promotional content that adds value to their decision-making process and provides them with the solutions to their problems.

Companies are Now Publishers of Content

These radical changes in the way that buyers find, research, and buy products in B2B markets means that companies who market and sell products to these buyers will have to become publishers of objective content, and not only promoters of their company's products. This will require development of the highly specialized skills of information research, discovery, and prospect profiling, to evaluate the information required by each different type of prospect served by the company. This will also require companies to develop and produce this content, and to execute strategies that utilize marketing automation systems and other tools to effectively communicate the right content to the right prospect at the right time in the prospect's purchase decision-making process.

Content is now being developed and used by companies to show their potential buyers how their product is uniquely suited to help the buyer solve their particular problem. Where, in the past, companies would advertise to promote the benefits of their product and to establish a “brand image” in the mind of the business consumer, the most successful companies are now using content-based marketing programs to uniquely position the problem-solving aspects of their products to business consumers now ready to access the abundance of information now available online through their mobile devices.

The Voice of B2B Content-Based Advertising

When companies no longer use traditional promotional messages in advertising, what does an advertisement look like in a content-based marketing program in our new post-marketing era? Are conventional marketing media, such as trade publication advertising, direct mail, etc., still a viable part of a post-marketing lead generation program? Yes, conventional marketing media plays an important, but quite different, role, and advertising and other deliverables used in new form of business marketing are also radically different. Developing content-based marketing programs is a new type of B2B marketing, where companies use their “offline media”—print ads, mailings, trade shows, etc.—to link potential prospects to their content, using the Internet and social media. In our new post-marketing era,

conventional, offline marketing media, like print advertising and direct mail, is used mainly to link the company's audience to the company's content, and to draw these readers and viewers into a dialogue with the company's sales team, that, supported by ongoing lead development ("lead nurture") program, leads to opportunities to sell the company's product.

This new way of B2B marketing also requires a new approach to developing the ads and other physical deliverables in a company's marketing program, emphasizing the features and benefits of a company's content, not the shopworn, promotional marketing-speak that is already being ignored by business audiences.

Building Marketing Programs around Content

Content-based marketing programs are very different from traditional, promotionally-oriented business marketing programs: With a content-based marketing program, the marketing program is built around the content. The ad, mailing piece, Web page, etc.—describes and promotes the content, not necessarily the company's product.

Are companies selling the content, or the product? With a content-based marketing program, companies use their advertising to offer their content to potential buyers. Lack of promotional messaging may seem like a lost opportunity to sell the product, but the downstream product sales benefits are both immediate and measurable. If a company's content truly serves its market, its content-based marketing programs will meet a company's product sales goals by providing it with measurable sales response from the readers who access the company's content, and the higher level of engagement this content brings to the company's marketing effort in the ongoing communications between these prospects and the company's sales team, as these prospects are motivated to become buyers in the company's sales process. In this ongoing dialogue between a potential business buyer (prospect) and a company, a long-term "sales conversation" occurs, especially in sales of complex, expensive business products, which often require many months or longer for prospects to educate themselves on a product's benefits and make their final purchase decision. In these situations, a wide range of highly specialized content is used to educate these prospects on the problems that are solved by the company's product, and on how the company's product solves the potential business buyer's specific business issue.

Goals of Content-Based Marketing Programs Serving B2B Markets

The primary goal of content, distributed to potential buyers, is to position the selling company as a "thought leader." A company whose unique perspective on how it can solve the buyer's problem places it foremost in the buyer's mind as the best provider of this solution for the prospect. Through use of effective content, companies who are thought leaders in their industries achieve a distinct advantage and leadership position ahead of their competition in the buyer's mind, becoming the preferred provider of the solution offered by the company selling its product.

Adopting New B2B Sales and Marketing Strategies Helps BRICS Companies Build a Strong Economic Base for Steady Future Growth

The aggressive growth and expansion plans of companies in the BRICS nations will require equally aggressive development of world-class business processes and marketing programs to help these companies compete effectively in global B2B markets. This will also become increasingly important as these nations strive to develop and grow vigorous domestic markets for their products. Companies in the BRICS nations who are first to make the shift to this new content-based marketing paradigm will gain the biggest early benefit by selling to today's business buyers in the ways they want to buy from companies today and well into the future.