

# Top 12 Trends Technology Marketers Must Master

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As a marketer you're always in the hot seat to know what the next "new" thing will be. There's a constant pressure to be a step ahead and to find that "shiny new object" that will transform your marketing and fill your pipeline overnight.

While we've yet to figure out how to see into the future, we do constantly monitor the success of the full spectrum of marketing practices. We see emerging trends in B2B marketing that we will be deploying for our clients and offer them to help you make the most of your marketing.

As you read this, you'll see a few themes:

- Many trends signal the "bandwagon period is ending". Basically, those "new" things like social marketing and content marketing are now firmly part of our marketing arsenal. It's time to move beyond the basics as those tactics mature.
- Many of these trends are not new marketing practices at all. Some are tactics that only larger companies could support in the past but automation now allows small to medium technology firms to make them work.
- Finally, many of the trends are focused on how marketing organizations are changing the definition, structure and roles of their marketing organizations.

We hope this insight into the trends will spark some ideas and help you answer the "what's new" question. We are always watching for new developments and will tell you about them on our blog and in the newsletter. [Click here](#) to sign up for updates.





# #2

## Outbound still works.

Despite the continued death knell for email and other outbound tactics, the truth is they still work.

Today's marketers need to focus on creating powerful integrated campaigns with each strategy (inbound vs. outbound) doing what it does best. Inbound tactics such as social, SEO (Search Engine Optimization) and PPC (Pay Per Click) will continue to lead the charge in attracting and educating new prospects while outbound will help move those prospects through the sales cycle and nurture both prospects and customers. Outbound marketing will also continue to play an integral role when approaching new markets (as your inbound tactics gain traction).

### Go Do's:

- If you don't have a consistent outbound strategy, get one. Outbound includes email marketing, call-downs, events, tradeshow and yes, even direct mail.
- If you have one, review it and "refresh" it. Need some inspiration? Check out these ideas from [Direct Marketing News](#) and [Marketing Land](#).



# #3

## The IMAGE is important!

The brain processes graphics 60,000 times faster than text. That alone should support the need for strong images and graphics in your marketing. Add in the need to speak to short attention spans – on any device – and it's clear that images play an important role.

Design and words should work together to connect with prospects searching for you online. Similar to content, images (including video) will become more than an after-thought and will move to the center of B2B marketing materials.



### Go Do's:

- MOST IMPORTANTLY, decide what you want to say FIRST and then determine the best graphic vehicle.
- Look at your website – how many concepts do you have that might be better as images (for example, methodologies)? If you are spending any time explaining an idea, a process or a system, consider developing a graphic that will catch the eye and explain the concept more easily.
- Images are magnets. Even if you don't need a diagram or a graphic in a blog or social post, adding a compelling image will draw the reader to the copy.

# #4

## And the moving image.

Yes – it's another one you've heard before but this isn't about creating MORE video, it's about creating SMARTER video. What does this mean? Like all “shiny objects” the increased importance of video content brought us a SLEW of talking head videos filmed with a flip cam and a dull speaker or even worse, a voiceover reading us a Microsoft PowerPoint.

We see marketers using a much wider array of video tools, services and resources to create videos that educate AND entertain (or at least make us want to watch through to the end.)



## Go Do's

- [Read this great article](#) from the Content Marketing Institute for the best tips we've seen on how, when and why to integrate video into your content marketing.
- Start with the messages you want to share and then look at which of those will work best with video. Not everything is better with a moving image.
- Don't take ONE step toward video unless you have a distribution strategy too. And no – that's not just adding it to YouTube for people to stumble across.

# #5

## Sales and marketing teams will align.

Or die trying. According to a survey by Sirius, B2B organizations with tightly aligned sales and marketing operations achieved 24% faster three-year revenue growth and 27% faster three-year profit growth. With the rise in inbound marketing and an increase in hand-raisers [aka unqualified suspects], this alignment becomes more critical.

Even if your marketing and sales department is two people you should STILL have agreement on the role, responsibilities, and requirements for each. The best way to align your sales and marketing teams? Create a Service Level Agreement [SLA] and meet regularly to address any challenges.



## Go Do's:

Create an SLA between sales and marketing that includes:

- The number of leads marketing is responsible for.
- What constitutes a lead (hopefully based on a lead scoring system you set up with sales).
- How marketing will hand off leads to sales.
- How sales will return any unqualified leads to marketing.
- What content (whitepapers, videos, demos, etc.) sales needs to support and accelerate the sales process.

# #6

## Personalization of the prospect experience.

No, not “Dear Barbara”. Rather the personalization of the entire experience. Prospects should land on a page that is specific to what they are looking for (think micro-sites and campaign landing pages). And follow-up communications should be based on the actions they take.

In practical terms this means marketing automation tools that make it easy for you to serve up information and messages based on your prospect’s responses.



### Go Do's:

- Automation tools such as ClickDimensions, Marketo, SalesFusion and others make it easy to deliver the important information your prospects and customers need to make a purchase. Evaluate which one fits your needs and make the investment.
- If you're already using these tools, make a commitment to invest in additional training to learn more of the “features” that can help take your marketing up a notch.

# #7

## The death of SEO as we know it. Well, sort of.

In October of 2013, Google released 'Hummingbird' and with it, a significant (but well telegraphed) change. With Hummingbird, marketers can no longer see the performance of their keywords in their Google Analytics.

What does this mean to you? The same thing it always has – you need to have high quality, original content that focuses on what you do and what your prospect needs as well as links to and from sites that are relevant to your prospect.



### Go Do's:

- Use keywords throughout all your content including blogs and social media posts but use them naturally. In the simplest terms, talk about the challenges your prospects are facing and you'll get found.
- [Read this great blog](#) on how Hummingbird will impact marketers.

# #8

## And the rise of advertising.

While Google has removed keywords from their analytics, they have kept them with their paid options. This could lead the cynic to believe that this was done to drive advertising. Whether it was or not, it doesn't negate the value of online advertising. New online advertising tactics such as [remarketing](#) and [LinkedIn ads](#) give you incredible opportunities to micro-target your audiences.

### Go Do's:

- Work with your SEO team to identify your goals and start testing various online advertising options.
- Going DIY or want to have more info before you bring your team in? [LinkedIn](#), [Google](#) and [Bing](#) have rich information on their advertising options with info for beginners to experts.
- Get specific. Look for advertising opportunities wherever your audience hangs out. For example, if you cater to distributors, evaluate the advertising options on [Modern Distribution Management](#).



# #9

## Customers move out from behind the case studies page.

What conveys credibility faster than your customers and the results you've helped them achieve? Not much.

Shrewd technology marketers will elevate the value of customer experience content like case studies, videos, and testimonials and will invest in building powerful customer reference programs to keep that content coming.



## Go Do's:

- Add specific customer reference metrics to your marketing plan. For example, produce one written or video case study per quarter (if need be, outsource it so it gets done), two blog posts per month about a customer, and six social media posts.

# #10

## Marketing jobs will change.

Outsourcing continues to grow. The skills required by marketers today are vastly different than even five years ago and for the most part, not found in a single person. Marketers today need multiple skills – from creating compelling content to on-line engagement, marketing automation, and measurement and analytics.

Rather than add headcount, smart companies will use their marketing heads as “directors” – literally directing the work of both internal and outsourced resources. Directors will be highly skilled with marketing automation and other technologies to create a personal experience that can demonstrate real ROI to the company.



## Go Do's:

- Look at what you do well, what you have time to do and develop a plan to outsource the rest. Not every marketer is a great writer or proficient designer. Outsourcing frees the marketing director to focus on the all-up strategy. After all, it's about adding revenue to the bottom line.
- If you do decide to outsource, find an agency with experience in the technology industry you live and breathe every day (ERP, CRM, Managed Services, etc.). Not only is ramp-up time reduced but you'll end up with a better product.

# #11

## Technology firms will actually use marketing technology to measure ROI.

In the category of the shoemaker's children who have no shoes, technology marketers continue to lag in their use of powerful marketing technology solutions. Now is the time to personalize the prospect experience and effectively convert inbound visitors. We understand that you are working with limited resources, but automation can help you make it happen.



## Go Do's:

Create a TRUE dashboard (a Google Analytics report is not a dashboard) that combines both sales and marketing metrics. Some ideas:

- Lead generation against target / # of qualified leads passed to sales.
- Engagement [website traffic growth, backlinks, visit duration, email metrics].
- Average cost of a customer acquisition and is it decreasing or increasing?

# #12

## Everything old is new again.

Direct mail works. Events work. Before you run out and start booking seminars again though, there's one big change that you need to consider before going live. Events, direct mail, webinars, etc. MUST deliver value to your prospects, not just to you.

**Think quality over quantity.** For example, be topical. If there has recently been a large security breach in the news (think Target stores), create a theme that addresses the fear each retailer is feeling over the hacking of customer and financial data.



## Go Do's:

- Doing an event or webinar? Forego the stale monthly 'demo and features' seminars of the past. Make it special. Work with a subject matter expert, for example, a data security consultant, to build an agenda that will deliver real value to your target audience.
- Think dimensional, compelling and personal for direct mail. No postcards, no flyers. Start with personal, physically signed letters from CEO to CEO, dimensional [box, puffy envelope, tube] pieces. Follow-up with high value offers [such as a book or research report from a third party expert] to cut through the noise your prospect is receiving [off and online].

# #13

## Let's call this a baker's dozen.

With trend #13 we'll finish off with a couple of resources you should consider integrating into your marketing plans.

- **SlideShare.** The most overlooked B2B sharing site. If you only have two sites you can focus on [okay three] it's LinkedIn, YouTube and SlideShare. [Why SlideShare means business.](#)
- **Google+.** Despite past predictions (not ours by the way), Google+ is not dying. It's growing. At the end of 2013, there were about 540 million users. Since you now need a Google+ account to post on YouTube we can expect that to grow SIGNIFICANTLY in the coming years. [Read more on how B2B marketers can take advantage of this powerful network.](#)

We hope you found these predictions and “Go Do” suggestions helpful. The Partner Marketing Group helps Technology Service Providers and Software Vendors build effective, multi-channel lead generation marketing programs.

Please contact us to discuss your strategy, content and social media marketing plans for the coming year.

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