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The Strategy Gap: Planning for Proliferation

[By Aaron Batte]

It has been said that advertising and marketing spending, particularly B2B spending, is a leading indicator of the overall economy. Today, marketing spending is growing, competition is heating up across industries, and business marketers are seeing aggressive awareness and demand generation programs moving higher up on their strategic agendas.

One of the crux issues that marketers are currently maneuvering through is proliferation — we all know by now that the marketing landscape has been dramatically transformed by technology, media segmentation, and expanding distribution channels, and it continues to change at a blistering pace.

Executive level B2B marketers are becoming increasingly “bought-in” to the idea of devoting large shares of the marketing budget to digital channels and online media to drive growth. However, several factors constrain successful execution of these growth strategies.

From the CMO down the ranks to frontline marketing managers, all corporate marketers are hearing the same marching orders: “Get the sales organization more leads — *now!*” While some top marketers are leading the charge, many are failing to balance short-term goals with long-term strategic marketing plans.

The following are five tips for overcoming the widening gap between online execution and corporate marketing strategy.

1. Don't Use Technology for Technology's Sake

Understand your audience, and make realistic assessments of the media your

audience consumes. Podcasts are great, but it is unlikely that your customer will download and listen to a podcast that is simply the audio version of a product brochure or read a blog about the virtues of your manufacturing process. Almost all of the established and emerging digital channels have some value to marketers — but only certain kinds will have value to you. Identify and leverage the channels that correspond to your growth strategies, and leave interactive video mash-ups to Nike.

2. Create Cadence

Move beyond the one-off projects. Too many marketers have been overwhelmed by the abundance of options when it comes to tactical planning for online marketing. Rather than committing to a unified campaign, they get caught in the trap of dabbling with various technologies and tactics that lead to inconsistency, customer confusion, wasted budget, and ultimately undermine long-term strategic planning. Plan multitouch, multimedia campaigns with the understanding of how they work together and how they impact each other, and craft your message and offer accordingly.

3. Focus on Measurement and Feedback

The immediacy of direct feedback and data that online channels provide is a marketer's dream — use it to your advantage. This information holds infinite opportunities to increase engagement, acquisition, loyalty, and retention. It's all about using the data to create campaigns that drive registrations, generate more sign-ups, gather relevant data, increase purchase intent and ultimately, drive revenue.

4. Build Flexibility into Your Programs

Optimization may be the single most important element to creating successful, high-performance, online campaigns. Create a culture in your marketing organization that allows for responsiveness, and you will make it easier to respond quickly to the feedback your campaigns provide. Work within your campaign strategy, and dynamically test your messaging. Measure and compare the results from multiple touchpoints, and try to understand how these variables combine to affect your results.

5. Leverage Your Resources

The exponential speed at which the online marketing industry is progressing is nearly impossible for any individual to keep up with. Engage



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experts both within the organization and externally to help focus your efforts and to make your campaigns as efficient and effective as possible. Use your agency partners to develop, execute, and optimize your online awareness, and demand generation campaigns. Tap your PR firm for placements that drive organic search activity. Most importantly: make sure they are all working together. After all, it's the World Wide Web, and your customers are connected to it — shouldn't your marketing efforts be connected too?

About the Author

Aaron Batte offers clients an uncommon combination of creative talent and strategic marketing vision. A veteran of the advertising

business, Aaron has worked with some of the world's best-performing brands, including Avaya, ESPN, General Motors, Honeywell, Disney, Oracle, AT&T, FOX Networks, Ford Motor Company, Unisys, Comcast, and MSN.

As both principal and director of client services at Faction Media, Aaron guides the development and management of account teams and acts as the chief advocate of best practices for client service across the business. Prior to founding Faction Media, Aaron was the President of Theory, a Denver-based advertising agency well known for outstanding creative and demand generation strategies.

Aaron has been recognized by both the American Advertising Federation and the American Association of Advertising

Agencies for his outstanding work in commercial advertising. He has received numerous industry awards for both traditional and interactive advertising, including an Emmy Award and two Addy Awards. Aaron enjoys a nationwide reputation for fast-forward thinking and a results-oriented work ethic.

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