



Is the current trend for B2B marketing to try an integrated approach?

The standard approach to B2B marketing, in the majority of cases, has always been an integrated program. This was the case long before the development of the Internet and still is. Evidence to support this is the large number of B2B one-stop-shops that were established in the late eighties and nineties. Back then admittedly the number of channels was very limited: advertising, PR, direct marketing, telemarketing and events, so the B2B sector sees the use of online simply as an increase in the number of available channels that can be used to reach their audience rather than a totally new way of working.

If so, what media channels are proving most popular (from a direct point of view), eg mail, telephone, email, mobile?

The channels that are proving to be most popular are the ones that work for your audience...a strong case for 'testing'. There is a growing problem that clients and some agencies are being heavily seduced by wild claims from online channels vendors, that for example email will deliver far greater returns than other channels. This is totally the wrong way to look at developing an integrated program. Your media mix starts with gaining insight into your target market, and identifying their marcomm channels of choice. Invariably it will not be just one.

Are there any particular digital channels that B2B marketing is really embracing?

B2B is often used as the testing ground for new channels because the digital world is where business exists. Webinars are proving very popular and very effective as part of an integrated program to engage with potential and existing customers. New banner ad formats such as drop-down banners are also working well with audiences who predominantly work online.

Does it pay to invest in a multi-channel approach or because B2B is more niche, is it better to be as targeted in your approach as the number of people you are targeting?

You can be very targeted with a multi-channel approach; in fact you need to be. A multi-channel approach allows you to increase the frequency to which your target group sees your communications over a very short time period, with the potential to seriously reduce the sales cycle time line from weeks and days to even hours if the campaign is executed properly.

**If multiple channels are being used, what is the most effective route to follow and why, eg. Mail followed by email or vice versa or a different approach?**

Again the multi-channel approach must be lead by the communication needs of your target audience. Some audiences are difficult to reach through traditional media channels such as direct mail, but for others this is an essential channel as they feel more in control. The approach is always: Awareness, Engagement, and Response. If you can do that with online channels, because your audience is highly receptive to online communications, that's fine. Others may require seeing an ad in their respective trade press, receiving an offer via VDP direct mail and then a follow-up online communication to get them to register for more info or download a brochure and request a meeting.

What are your audiences' marcomm channels of choice?

What is the biggest threat to success in a multi-channel approach?

Dropping a channel(s) because the response numbers suggest they are not working. Clients, and their agencies, are under increasing financial pressure to demonstrate ROI, and to remove all unnecessary costs. One way this can be done is to measure the effectiveness of each channel in a multi-channel program. After the phone, digital channels – web, email, mobile - have firmly established themselves as the ones B2B customers wish to use to respond to sales communications. Often the customer can remain anonymous through accessing the required information through the web, and they remain in control of the buying process until they decide otherwise and thus entering into a sales process.

To explain what I mean, lets evaluate a typical campaign where the response figures have come in as: press advertising (10%), direct mail (25%) and email (65%). On the surface it looks like the numbers are saying that email is the most effective channel and press advertising is the least effective. What this approach doesn't take into account, unless some tracking techniques are in the place, is the number of email responders who first saw the sales messages in the press, or even via direct mail piece, but who then decided to respond by email for the reason I mentioned above.

What are the creative rules for B2B marketing – does size matter?

Business Products/Services are Bought, not Sold. So the creative rules are simple: get to the core of why your prospect should buy your product or service, develop a creative theme that ideally can be used across all your channels and ensure that your communications is engaging and will motivate your audience to deliver the required response – by phone, email or any other way they choose.



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About the Author

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Communications Approach: Business Products are Bought, not Sold!

About Clockwork IMC

A lean and very experienced B2B integrated marcomms team based in West London. Best suited to SME and Corporate clients who recognise the importance of 'brand management' and the effect that impactful strategic/creative ideas can have on 'business development'. Acting as an extension to their marketing team, we are:

- Thinkers - Campaign Strategy/Creative Concepts
- Planners - Integrated Media Mix/Media Selection & Buying/Print Management
- Doers - Advertising (Digital/Press), Copywriting, Design, Direct Marketing, Exhibitions, Promotions, SEO/SEM, Support PR, Web.

Client Promise: No frills, just creative thinking, integrated execution and results!