



Don't Forget About People and Your B2B Marketing Won't Suck

By Mark Wingerter (Originally published July 2021)

The term “B2B marketing” shouldn’t even exist. There is no dividing line between a customer and a business in marketing because a business is not a person with needs and desires to be fulfilled. As soon as you draw that hard line in the sand, your marketing starts to suck because marketing sucks when it loses sight of people.

It’s easy to forget that every business is full of human beings who help shape it. We have a tendency to get stuck in the “we make this thing to perform this task” type of navel gazing with our messaging, and we yammer on about the facts, figures and features of our product. This misses the individuals we are meant to serve.

No one will care that we have the nicest, shiniest features our industry has ever seen unless we first prove that we care about the person they are meant for. A great product or service is useless without an audience willing to get behind it. This isn’t a hunch, either. It’s science.

Author Simon Sinek observed the way decision making works in the human brain and codified it for businesses this way: “people don’t buy what you do, they buy why you do it.” This is because the part of the brain responsible for taking action, called the limbic brain, is the same one

responsible for feelings and emotions. Unlike the neocortex, which processes things like language and numbers, the limbic brain develops trust and loyalty.

Put simply: human beings make decisions based on feelings, not data. So, when marketing to businesses we need to shift our efforts to illustrate that we understand the people behind the business and that we are ready to serve them.

Define your beliefs and lead with them

Stop leading with your features and technical lingo. Those things will be important down the line, but first you have to get people to listen. What are the needs of the community that makes up your business customer? What do they care about? What issues do they face? What makes their lives harder and how can you make them better?

You must market yourself as uniquely able to serve the individual, which by extension will serve their business. It isn't about you or your product. It's always about them. Marketing yourself this way requires not only a knowledge of the audience, but also your core beliefs as an organization.

Define your beliefs. Lead with them. If your product is sitting right beside an identical competitor product, your beliefs are all that will set you apart. They are the only aspect of your business that your competitors can never do as well as you. Leading with your beliefs will therefore qualify leads who believe the same things and incite potential customers to action.

Know who is NOT right for your product

If your beliefs are defined, then you've created a community. There will be those that align with you and those that do not. Great marketing not only understands this but embraces it wholeheartedly. It fosters a connection to a group of people who will relish following you without having to be manipulated into doing so by costly ads and tactics.

So, don't create a product for every person. Today, everyone is no one. Almost nothing speaks to the mass majority anymore, and the things that do are extremely rare. You will thrive in the margins, and that means allowing those outside of them to go to your competitors.

Author Seth Godin said, "When we find the empathy to say, 'I'm sorry, this isn't for you, here's the phone number of my competitor,' then we find the freedom to do work that matters." There are businesses that need to work with your business. But there are others better suited to your competitors. Get honest with yourself so you can market to the right people and create a symbiotic B2B relationship that benefits both sides.

Market from the inside out

If you're not being good to your employees, you're not being good to your customers. The success of your client relationship is lived out through the one-on-one connections between your employees and theirs. It is vital that your customer-serving mindset be manifested within your organization through serving your employees.

Marketing starts from within. You cannot fake your beliefs. Lead by example with your employees so that they can naturally reflect your values to your clients. It is the truest way to do work that matters and ensure that you do not lose sight of the people your business seeks to serve.

Prove what you're about

Ultimately, your content is your conviction. What you advertise, write in white papers, explain in product videos – all of it will prove what you inherently care about. If you're deeply committed to people, then relax. Your marketing will reflect that commitment and help you generate trust and create sustainable relationships with loyal customers. If you're not willing to be committed to them, best to hang it up now, folks. You're just going to waste your budget on marketing that sucks.