

## Twenty-First Century Marketing Communications

- Transformation from a Predictable Monologue to an Engaging Dialogue -

Today's marketing communication challenges require that you evolve your old business practices, create some new ones, and even discontinue using conventional wisdom that's proven to be obsolete. Check this list of key points, and assess your company's progress.

### **Context: the Outside-In Perspective**

Does your point of view reflect an apparent awareness of customer business challenges? – The traditional Marcom approach starts with internal product or service benefits, and then an external venue is sought to promote that notion. Today's approach uncovers a market opportunity first, and then a relevant product or service benefit is presented within the context of that given opportunity.

### **Content: the Strategic Imperative**

Can you describe your product/service relative to customer business objectives? – In the past your product or service pitch was likely targeted at specific tactical needs, and the customer was left to determine the relative strategic priority. Today's informed marketer will proactively relate their offering's content and value to a customer's primary strategic imperative, wherever possible.

### **One Objective, with Many Constituencies**

Do you customize your value proposition to fit different constituent needs? – The outmoded marketer's conventional wisdom used to require finding a customer's common denominator, and then articulating value relative to that singular requirement. Today's approach seeks to find a common high-level objective, while also acknowledging the need to mold the offer message to fit multiple customer (i.e. marketing, finance, operations) constituent priorities.

### **Appropriate, but Not Unimaginative**

Are you primarily focused on conformity and convention, or creativity? – In the past, the desire for Marcom sameness was typically conceived to blend-in with the market norm (to be non-distinct), rather than to stand out from the crowd. Today's bolder approach seeks to intentionally distinguish an offering within the cluttered marketplace, by highlighting unique attributes that applies an imaginative element to an otherwise sedate topic.

### **Formal, but Not Overly Contrived**

Is your business communication delivered in a human voice? – In a bygone era, most marketer's copywriting was frequently decried for using trite "corporate speak" that often assured that messaging was considered suspect by their target audience. Today's marketer uses a much more conversational tone as the lingua franca of acceptable formal business communications – clear, articulate and always in a believable and credible voice.

### **When Offline Meets Online**

Do you communicate with the anticipation of receiving a response? – Company executives of the past often spoke of valuing feedback from customers, but the laborious process of preparing and delivering formal correspondence was like a deterrent shield that limited contact. Online communications tools removed most of those legacy barriers. Today's marketers are not only accessible, they're actively thinking about improving engagement with their various constituents. Every communication is a potential call-to-action, waiting to be harnessed for its insightful merits.

### **Show Me, Guide Me, Inspire Me**

Are you a recognized thought leader within the marketplace? – The word “management” was often used interchangeably with “leadership” in the last century. However, the rise of annual customer surveys quickly corrected that misconception for many companies. Today’s marketers have learned that their primary constituents are more discerning and demanding. Authentic thought leadership is not only highly valued, sharing it is viewed as the essential keystone to building meaningful strategic partnerships. If you’re not currently inspiring your customers, then recognize that you’re probably just a supplier.

### **Worth More Than a Thousand Words**

Will your next presentation trigger an emotional connection? – Business communications has evolved considerably over the years. Six-page glossy brochures were printed by the thousand, and booth display storyboards were permanently attached to exhibit walls. In contrast, today’s savvy communicator needs a grasp of graphic design, and will likely create impromptu PowerPoint presentations with animation. But pictures and bullets alone won’t captivate most audiences, now that video is a main ingredient of both online and offline communication. Visual storytelling is becoming commonplace, and it will proliferate.

### **Your Website, Our Cause**

Have you considered championing a known customer cause? – In the mass-market mindset of yesteryear, every new form of electronic communication was leveraged as another way to broadcast indiscriminate messages to unsuspecting listeners and viewers. The unsolicited broadcast email message followed this tradition of pushing irrelevant content to the masses. In contrast, today’s marketer seeks to attract and pull constituents towards their highly targeted communications. A focused Microsite is the cause-centric online tool that enables forward-looking companies to establish a separate Web presence that reaches out to those who become self-qualified participants.

### **Your Storyline, Our Keywords**

Would a major search engine highly rank your company news? – While most business publication editors will ignore and delete the majority of press releases they receive, search engine spiders will typically read and archive every single one. Today’s press releases must be written with variations of keywords and phrases that will ensure they will rise to the top of the SERPs listing for your customer’s most common online searches. Organic search listings are proven to be significantly more credible than paid search ads.

### **Metrics and Analytics in Marketing**

Are you doing things right, or doing the right things? – Advertising and marketing used to be thought of as more like art than science – you made your investment and hoped for a positive outcome. And yet, it was difficult to quantify. The leap-of-faith era with perfectly written and executed, but otherwise ineffectual, business communications is over. Online methods enable today’s marketing leaders to easily test, measure, benchmark and report on the results of all marketing strategy and associated tactics.

### **Ideas in Action: Take the Next Step**

Old habits die hard – it’s more than a saying, it’s a statement of fact for many marketers who feel trapped by their own organization’s inertia. Changing the prior status quo requires decisive action. Keeping your business communications in sync with best practices has never been more crucial than it is today – in the global hyper-competitive technology marketplace. There’s never a better time than the present to move your own marketing communications efforts from a predictable monologue to an engaging dialogue.