

B2B marketing departments expend too much energy debating whether to invest in brand development or demand generation. There shouldn't be a conflict between these goals.

Brand vs. Demand

By Gib Trub

The crux

Why is it that technology marketers seldom takes into account what prospects know and what they care about?

Historically in the B2B world, marketing was split into the worlds of brand advertising and demand generation (direct response). And the split was complete. Different vendors. Different divisions in the corporate marketing structure. Different goals. Advertising had goals like image and awareness; direct efforts, a 2% response. The first was only measurable with expensive quantitative tracking studies. The latter was more straightforward, but what did it mean?

The truth

No one has enough time. If you ask any prospect from IT management to the boardroom they'll tell you the same thing. "We have to do more with less, and I don't have time to deal with anything that isn't an issue right now." That is a fundamental dynamic that marketing has to overcome today. Technology

prospects only have an inherent interest in brands they already have a sizable investment in or someone they are already actively evaluating. That's it.

The intersection of brand & demand

Here's how prospects evaluate marketing communications from companies they don't already have an interest in:

- Is that my problem?
- Do you solve it in a way that might make sense for our situation?
- Who else have you solved it for?
- Who are you?

If they believe you've done a good job hitting all of these points, they want to hear more. Right now.

That is the intersection of brand and demand.

No separation

An ad that doesn't finish with an offer of value will fail. A direct communication

that only makes an offer and gives no support to the value of the brand will fail. You need to apply all of the fundamentals of direct marketing all of the time, which means that there can't be a separation organizationally. And you need to make sure that direct efforts are created with the exact same understanding of brand and product value propositions that ads are. If 2% respond, what are the other 98% left with, if not a clear perception of the unique value you offer?

The point

Successful B2B communications programs in these times don't differentiate between brand and demand.

They embody both.

Four Simple Communications Rules

There are simple rules that have bearing on all brand and demand inspired communications:

1. **Address a real problem right from the start.** B2B sales aren't discretionary. They have a cycle. Startling pictures, provocative headlines and come-on offers get people to stop and look, but they won't pay any further attention if there isn't a tangible benefit.
2. **Use the language your prospects use** — and that doesn't include acronyms or Magic Quadrant terminology. They are at least one step behind you in category knowledge. They use simple declarative sentences. You need to as well.
3. **Remember it's all about them.** Prospects only want to hear about you after they believe there is something of value for them. And a little about you goes a long way.
4. **Offers have to fit the situation and time in the buying cycle.**

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