

Why B2B online marketing is not dead

 By Sibongile Lehloo 14 May 2015

Is the concept of B2B online marketing dead, outdated and irrelevant? Most online marketers will respond with a resounding 'yes' but I must disagree, no it is not. But! And a big but as a matter of fact, it has evolved and changed from direct marketing to branding. As the online space and marketing efforts advance we begin to understand the B2B market and clients better.

From the old HTML company websites of the earlier 1990s to web 2.0 technologies of the early 2000s and now to social media, the business landscape itself has changed and therefore changed marketing with it. Business to business online marketing strategies were a craze in the late 90s, however with the evolution of online and social media brands then started direct marketing to consumers, this also then posed a problem as business to business clients were non-responsive to this type of marketing. Marketers realised that business to business marketing communication is very different from that of the everyday business to consumer marketing.

With the help of advanced online reputation management, big data and analytics, we dissect the B2B market space and begin to build a persona around this market and understanding it. Who they are, where they are and what they are about? These insights about the segment help digital marketers reach their targets better and take them on the buying journey.



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Big data has revealed that when we set out B2B online marketing strategies we are seeking to attract the C-suite, senior management and buyers of organisation; who spend most of their work related media consumption time online. Online marketing in this case then becomes a very significant disruption that we can take advantage of in two ways: using push and pull marketing tactics to our brands.

Pulling customers to online content and pushing content to customers all in the name of branding; this becomes paramount to the B2B online marketing strategy. To achieve this we use the 'traditional' marketing tactics on the internet.

The 'traditional' tactics of a 360 marketing campaign involve three main pillars that support the efforts reaching an audience and these can easily be translated into the digital space.

- 1. Owned media** - this would be the website, user experience, email, blog and other social media platforms. When developing a B2B internet marketing strategy, people, experts and specialists in companies also become a fundamental part of owned media, simply because people buy from people and brand ambassadors have a loud voice among their peers online.
- 2. Paid** - this is when the marketer goes out to buy 'eyes on a page', advertising space on different platforms, in this instance it could be banners on third party websites, AdWords, website take over on partner sites, rich media advert and advertorial on industry or news websites. Buying advertising space online closes the gap between audiences that we are already reaching and are familiar with our brand; and our target market whom we are aiming to reach and do business with.

3. Earned media - this would be when we have earned 'eyes on a page' with content and material is so good our audience shares it and some main stream media pick it up and distribute it to their network. Another great example of online earned media would be SEO page 1 rankings.

These three things are the strength of a successful B2B online marketing coupled with great content and a strong call to action. They increase brand share of voice and visibility which then ultimately increases share of market.

So B2B marketing is not dead and in fact it is far from its death. It is now an intricate mix and balance of the right brand message coming from the right people/brand ambassadors at the right time reaching the right audience. This is simply because brands or businesses don't talk to other brands and/or businesses; people talk to people, people buy from people and people buy and do business from people they like, this is the new B2B online marketing.

ABOUT SIBONGILE LEHLOO

Sibongile is the Digital Manager at KPMG taking care of KPMG SA's digital footprint and playing an advisory role for KPMG Africa's digital presence. She has over ten years of professional experience in online branding, marketing, web design and digital media strategies and implementation. She specialises in B2B integrated digital campaigns and this includes online reputation management, social media strategy (for companies, professionals and youth), content management and paid digital media strategy which she is currently responsible for. View my profile and articles...

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