



The Changing Face of Marketing

One upon a time marketing was relatively straightforward, you held all the cards. You had some flyers or brochures probably a simple website and maybe a mailing list.

Your business challenges were much the same then were the same as they are now:

- find new clients
- differentiate yourself from your competitors
- get more referrals
- cross-sell more effectively
- smooth out those feast to famine sales cycles



How are today's potential customers reacting to marketing?

Today's more savvy and cynical **connected** buyers that old style marketing is no longer so effective:

- We bin 44% of Direct Mail entirely unopened
- 86% of us skip through television ads
- 84% of 25 to 34 year olds click out of a website because of an irrelevant or intrusive ad
- As of February 2012, 17 million of us in the UK had registered with the Telephone Preference Service so we don't get unsolicited calls

I'm guessing you recognise yourself in this and**if you're behaving like that... why wouldn't your customers be doing the same?**



How do we make up our minds to buy?

If we don't like the old methods what **are** we doing? Well here's the more likely path we – and of course your potential customers – are following today:

Fred needs some marketing help:

He asks his networking groups – “There's a really helpful blog I'm following” There's this great video I saw recently” ”One of my contacts on LinkedIn has lots of recommendations”

He asks his social media contacts – My accountant's marketing company is brilliant”

He looks on the internet – one company has a video and a blog which has raised their SEO so that they come up on page 1. On their website he finds helpful case studies and advice. He signs up for their newsletter

Are you cynical about the amount of online references here? Let's look at some stats from the office of National Statistics:

- In 2013 73% of UK Adults accessed the internet every day
- In 2013, 72% of all adults bought goods or services online, up from 53% in 2008

Oh and by the way, because looking on the internet has become embedded in our everyday lives the way to search for information has shifted from our laptops and PC's to our smartphones. This has real significance for business with access to the Internet using a mobile phone more than doubling between 2010 and 2013 from 24% to 53%



There are three main reasons why we've changed the way we look before we buy:

1. The internet has changed the game – there are alternate methods for finding, researching and buying
2. We live in an increasingly cynical world – “people who sell things might just do or say anything to get a sale”
3. Social media has transformed our ability to communicate and connect online and this is where recommendations and validations are happening every day.

On top of this, in a fast paced world, if you're looking for information you want it NOW – and you don't want sales spiel. The information that you seek needs to be relevant so that it informs and assists you.

You may even appreciate being entertained a little – your reaction will be “they sound fun, or they sound like my kind of company” If YOU are doing that, why wouldn't your prospective customers be doing the same?

So here's your problem – you're the expert in what you do and you KNOW there are buyers out there who would really benefit from your product or service so...

How on earth do you get the attention of your target market?

Generally speaking this is about proactively producing high quality valuable content that is **read, trusted and shared**. Content is the words on the page your customers read, the copy on your website, the latest blog post, the links you highlight on Twitter, the videos and images you share. So **words, knowledge and information**.

Let's face it if you don't consider the use content to tell the world about your professional expertise and achievements it is likely that only your existing clients and the people they refer to you will know about them!

By **valuable** content I mean content with a bigger purpose. This is information which is genuinely useful and relevant in the eyes of your target market or customers because this leading them to turn to you when the time comes to buy

In other words you are improving their lot. You might be interested in this example by a Primary School Governor:

"I was searching to other day for legal firms that specialised in helping schools convert into academies. It's a crowded market, yet one firm kept coming up top. The firm has created a straightforward and well-written guide that answered all my ground-level questions on the subject

It wasn't particularly visual, it simply laid out the key areas I needed to understand. It won me over during the research phase. I didn't want to immediately "ring for a free appraisal"- talking is something that comes a bit later, when you've orientated yourself in the area, and you know what you don't know and where you need help.

This company had showed themselves to be authoritative, helpful and on the ball. They'll be the first place we go when the time is right"

So there's a **fundamental shift in marketing approach** instead of businesses focusing on pushing out sales messages that are ignored they are required to provide something of value - **so you should stop selling and start helping**.



This is not new – think of supermarkets like Waitrose encouraging you to buy more food stuffs by giving away lovely recipe cards ...however it is more **commercially prevalent** which means you probably have to up your game.

So, no more ad hoc campaigns run once or twice a year when leads run out - this is about marketing as part of your day to day activities.



Which SME's are doing this successfully?

Scottish Law Firm www.Inksters.com bucks the trends about their sector's reticence over online marketing- sharing their expertise through valuable content shared on Twitter, their niche websites and videos. Essentially they are putting years of legal knowledge online – a generous move - so perhaps it's no coincidence that they draw in 20% of their leads straight from the web

Tensile fabric specialists www.BaseStructures.com has beat the recession with their value of orders tripling. The platform for their content marketing programme is their “Knowledge Bank” section of the website

www.payroll-services-centre has packed their website with helpful content including a resources section, jargon buster, blog, downloads, newsletter and social media feeds. In two months their Google ranking soared and their content marketing strategy draws in 60 inbound leads a month

These are all small companies with which you may be able to identify but the big boys are playing the same game. Even Coca Cola who have long been wedded to creative advertising announced they were switching their focus to sharing excellent content in 2012.

Here's what their VP of Global Advertising Strategy said

“All advertisers need a lot more content so that they can keep the engagement with consumers fresh and relevant, because of the 24/7 connectivity. If you're going to be successful around the world, you have to have fat and fertile ideas at the core.”

Increasing your Marketing Reach

Now we may not be seeking global domination but even working locally the great thing about social media is that it has made it easy to build up a large network and communicate with it – dramatically increasing the number of people we “know” and who know us.

This makes referrals very easy, it takes seconds to tweet an answer to “Know any good local marketing companies?” because most of your friends and contacts have trusted networks in whom they trust for advice and referrals. The difference is that this is now shared publicly rather than one to one.

And of course it is now easier and cheaper to publish and spread our ideas than ever before.

So might it be worth considering converting your knowledge, expertise and ideas into information that is useful and meaningful to your customers? Let’s look at an opinion poll conducted by “Roper Poll” they found out that:

- 80% of business decision-makers prefer to get company information in a series of articles rather than advertisements.
- 77% of people understand that the underlying premise of an organisation’s content is to sell them something - but are OK with this if they get something out of it.
- 61% say valuable content makes them feel closer to the company that delivers and they are more likely to buy from them.

So in what vehicles can you share valuable content?

Here’s the usual channels:

- Video
- Blog
- PowerPoint
- Webcasts or Podcasts
- PDF documents
- Self-Published E-books

What form might content marketing take?

You have lots of choice:

- Cartoons
- Infographics
- Sector related book reviews
- Interviews
- Guest Blogs
- Q & A's
- Surveys
- Industry research
- Case Studies
- How to do's
- What to avoid
- Market data
- Best of
- Best practice
- What's new?



The characteristics of websites as lead generators

To accommodate the current ways of marketing it is necessary to ensure that your website ticks the following boxes:

- More library of content than brochure
- Created for the customer
- Clear messages
- Niche is good
- Varied content on different levels: light to deep
- Newsletter sign up
- Balance between about you/for your customers
- Fresh content
- Social media links
- Perhaps a search function

To drive traffic to your website one would normally look at:

- Slideshare
- Newsletters (using content curators)
- Keywords
- Blogs
- Social media

However, social media is at its most effective only if you apply the 70 20 10 rule:

- **70 %** of your posts should be information that's valuable and relevant to your fans; this is where your content comes in.
- **20%** should be content that comes from other people and might be quotes, jokes or general insights.
- **10%** should be promotional

If this handout has given you food for thought here are some helpful questions for you:

1. Can you further differentiate your marketing position?
2. How might you improve your online presence?
3. What content might you start producing?
4. Do you have a twelve month marketing overview and a three month action plan?

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