

MARKETING

B2C and B2B marketing are converging: Will you adapt?

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The new marketing and sales funnel

By [Kim Salzer](#)

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While countless marketers have opined on the differences between business-to-consumer (B2C) and business-to-business (B2B) marketing, the line between the two has recently been blurred.

This shift is happening, in part, because more brands serve both consumers and businesses, as when a B2C luxury bed-sheet startup lands a contract with a national hotel chain.

Even the companies situated squarely on one end of the B2CB2B spectrum are destined to lose out if they fail to learn from the other side.

The companies willing to innovate by testing and adopting new methods pioneered by B2C, B2B and even direct-to-consumer (D2C) brands have a huge opportunity to stand out in 2020 and beyond.

All marketing to millennials

What is the key reason to stop parsing out B2C and B2B strategies?

Today, most businesses are marketing to millennials. Thanks to Generation Y's size at **83.1 million**, they are the single largest consumer group they have long been the obvious target for B2C marketers.

More recently, however, millennials have started moving up professionally into management positions.

In 2016, millennials became the **largest segment** of the United States workforce, and some researchers say they will make up **75 percent of the workforce by 2025**.

As baby boomers retire, they are stepping into decision-making roles with spending power, and B2B companies need to adjust their marketing plans accordingly.

Here are four key strategies to help B2B and B2C companies alike navigate this new reality:

Forget the perceived personalprofessional divide

A key tenet of B2B marketing used to be that it should be more logic-driven and focused on ROI at the earliest stages of the customer journey.

B2C marketing, for its part, was supposed to appeal more to emotions upfront.

New B2B buyers, however, do not distinguish between the personal and the professional like those in decades past.

According to a [Deloitte study](#), millennials are "transforming the status quo by seeking purpose in the organizations they serve without sacrificing the flexibility to be who they are at work."

Today's leaders and managers build corporate culture explicitly around personal passion and social purpose.

With personal and professional identity more aligned than ever, B2Bs can borrow from B2C marketing building brand awareness around mission and social responsibility to draw prospects in, then focusing on ROI at research and consideration phases.

Invest in digital presence

Companies must own their message and build the type of end-to-end brand experience that millennials expect when making a buying decision even when they are at work.

CEOs need to conduct a digital audit.

An established B2B company learned this the hard way. It offers industry-making software solutions for home services providers residential and commercial HVAC, plumbing, and electrical companies.

The problem was that its go-to market strategy was built around newsletters, trade shows and inbound marketing. It did not initially prioritize Web site design, user interface or digital marketing efforts.

Here is a great example of a successful marketing strategy in our modern age.

A tech startup came in, saw an opportunity to disrupt its space, and started stealing customers. This company understood that new B2B buyers do their own online product research, traversing [more than 80 percent](#) of the buyer's journey by searching the Web, digesting the results of digital search ads, talking to friends, and checking social media before reaching out for a demo or quote.

In this situation, B2Bs must adopt a B2C-like focused digital footprint.

Bring in a digital marketing manager to understand Web site traffic, ensure that the company is mobile-optimized, launch email prospecting, LinkedIn, and other social media programs, and implement best practices for buyers doing independent research.

Trade show marketing and newsletters are not enough to keep established B2B businesses competitive. This model demands digital transformation to build a consistent brand message and drive accelerated growth.

Test experiential marketing

B2B companies have traditionally invested more in experiential marketing, such as tradeshow and conferences in the past and more recently, branded, immersive experiences.

But modern experiential marketing does not have to mean multimillion-dollar pop-ups. New experiential methods are available even to small-to-mid-sized B2B and B2C brands.

The secret here lies in your willingness to learn from D2C companies.

The paint startup [Backdrop](#) has set out to make the consumer's experience of painting their home better. Its brand experience extends all the way to [curated Spotify playlists](#) perfect for painting to and released regularly on Instagram.

By testing capital-efficient experiential marketing strategies such as branded playlists, then gauging how the community responds, companies can make informed decisions to go bigger with experiential programming.

Linear advertising and PR marketing are no longer sufficient for B2C companies.

Modern methods such as experiential marketing can be budget busters unless you learn from innovative D2C models.

Avoid strategy tourism using martech

The biggest mistake businesses can make in adopting new marketing methodology lies in failure to lay a foundation for measuring success.

Here is where a marketing technology stack comes in.

Tools for Web site tracking, email, marketing automation and CRM will help you reach buyers.

The preponderance of **more than 7,000 martech vendors** today makes choosing the right toolset one of the most difficult areas for marketing leaders to navigate. It is also a large investment, so businesses will need help putting it together if they do not have the expertise internally. Fortunately, it is worth it.

Investing in digital technologies will make operations more efficient, boost sales and enhance the customer experience, as well as empower leadership to quickly assess where to make further investment.

WITH A NEW generation making most buying decisions at work and at home, the old divide between B2B and B2C no longer exists.

Mom-and-pops and midsized B2B businesses that do not keep up with the digital transformation will be left behind, and established consumer brands can lose ground to D2C brands using innovative methods.

Owners and CEOs need to recognize that this new reality is here to stay, and they need to look beyond their own businesses to their customers and competition to stay relevant.



Kim Salzer is Los Angeles-based chief marketing officer at Chief Outsiders

*Kim Salzer is Los Angeles-based chief marketing officer at **Chief Outsiders**. Reach her at ksalzer@chiefoutsiders.com.*

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