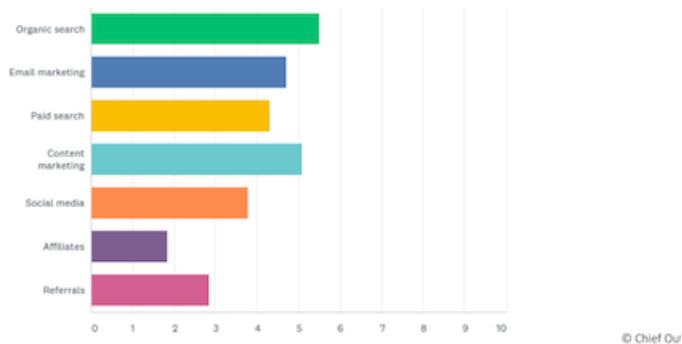


MARKETING

5 steps to compelling digital brand stories

May 7, 2020

Q13: What are your spending priorities across these digital marketing channels? (rank)



Spending priorities across digital marketing channels. Source: Chief Outsiders

By **Sandy Barger**

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A February survey ([here](#)) of chief marketing officers with experience across both Fortune 500 and emerging brands shows the strong trend toward digital advertising will continue, with 80 percent of CMOs expecting to increase digital spending in 2020.

A few weeks later COVID-19 hit and digital became even more of an influence. Social distancing and working from home forced people to accelerate their movement to digital across all walks of life from personal to work to social. Zoom alone grew to 300 million daily participants versus only 10 million in December.

As marketers continue to increase their focus on digital marketing, the top priorities will be on tactics that provide additional information, tactics such as organic searches, email marketing, paid search, and content marketing.

Spending priorities across digital marketing channels

Most businesses know digital marketing and providing customers with information is important. In fact, these are usually the first marketing actions companies make.

However, "lack of information" is not a problem. Studies show customers are bombarded with information, receiving up to 10,000 brand messages a day (American Marketing Association).

Successful content does not just provide information, but provides the "right information."

The digital age has made for a more sophisticated and informed type of customer. While slogans and taglines may still catch attention, customers are looking for details and in this competitive landscape, brands must get the story right.

Storytelling remains critical

To break through the clutter, creating the "right" story must include what people are searching.

At the core of failed marketing tactics is a lack of "WIIFM" a small acronym that looms large in the storytelling paradigm. "WIIFM" stands for "What's in it for me" an essential question that can make or break the connective tissue that bonds your marketing story to the customers.

There are five steps to creating a compelling brand story with a successful "WIFM."

Understand the target. We see it all around us today, there are many different and often polarized points of views. We see it in our political system, Democrats or Republicans, in our news, CNN or FOX and our tastes, onions or no onions.

To create the right story, it is important to consider the unique needs and interests of the target audience. Research is needed.

There are two main types of research: qualitative and quantitative.

Qualitative research is primarily exploratory research. It is used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions and motivations.

Quantitative research is used to quantify or determine the magnitude by generating numerical data that can be transformed into usable statistics.

While data from an expert research company yields the best insights, it is not the only option.

Lower investment options such as customer interviews or surveys through online tools such as Survey Monkey provide valuable insights to understand the target.

Understand pain points or motivations. While companies are currently providing lots of information, it is usually about the company and focuses primarily on the product or service's features.

In doing so, companies often require the customer to make the leap to the "WIIFM" themselves.

To communicate "WIIFM" it is critical to understand your customers' pain points or motivations. Addressing pain points such as likes, wants, needs and fears are the most compelling (The Persuasion Code).

As an example, a technology company recently developed a new innovative service solution.

The launch of the service generated a significant amount of awareness, but it did not convert into sales. The reason is the messaging failed to identify current, compelling pain points. The company ultimately were able to drive sales by retooling the messaging to focus on the attention-catching innovations and how they could address current pain points.

Develop authentic claims. Customers are very vocal about their satisfaction with products, which is helpful for brands.

In fact, word of mouth referrals and reviews are the most compelling source for customers.

With the digital age, customers, both satisfied and dissatisfied can amplify their points of view.

A study in 1983 found that 85 percent of customers dissatisfied with a clothing item told an average of five people. (Richins 1983). Now a dissatisfied customer can tell thousands instantly.

More than two-thirds of business customers rely on reviews. Sixty-seven percent of respondents said that the reviews they saw online made an impact on whether or not they purchased a product.

Companies and businesses can lose as much as 22 percent of their customers with just a single bad review or article. (Moz.com study).

Reviews are not always fair. In fact, 39 percent of reviews are false (Best SEO Companies) but someone reading that review does not know that.

So, to get positive reviews and avoid negative ones, the marketing message needs to make use of authentic, clear and truthful claims. The messaging needs to deliver on the expectations it is setting.

Provide competitive points of differences. Now that the brand has developed the messaging that will create an action, the customers must understand that action should be with your brand.

New technology and factors such as globalization have resulted in fewer barriers to entry and more competition across all industries.

A compelling story needs to include the brand's unique value proposition or how the product or service is different from the competition. Otherwise, the brand has created the demand for someone else to capture.

Provide proof. Customers are skeptical of brand claims. In fact, 63 percent of customers say they trust what influencers say about brands much more than what brands say about themselves in their advertising (Edelman 2019). It is important to provide proof given this lack of trust.

There are several ways of providing proof from statistical data, case studies, demonstrations, and of course, influencers.

Today's customers are digitally savvy and have endless access to information.

To get them to move from awareness to action requires more than just information. It requires a consistent, compelling story, and that requires a step-by-step development of "WIIFM."



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