



HOW TO BE **BRAND READY** & PROSPER IN 2018

12 TRENDS THAT B2B BRANDS
SHOULD BE READY FOR.





***“It's tough to make predictions,
especially about the future.”***

YOGI BERRA

American baseball player, manager and coach, an 18-time All-Star, and won 10 World Series championships as a player—more than any other player in MLB history.

Emotional Connection.

B2B brands are waking up to the power of emotion, and emotionally connecting with audiences from initial engagement through the entire customer experience. Great products and services are not enough. B2B brands must forge deeper relationships with their clients. Those that "get it" stand to benefit, by winning more engagements and holding on to clients longer, all the while increasing sales and client lifetime values.

Employee-Focused Branding.

I don't think we have a single client that is not actively searching for great talent. While many B2B brands had become accustomed to directing all marketing to prospects and clients, growth-minded brands have realized that winning top talent is just as challenging as winning top clients. B2B Brands are introducing messaging about culture, values and their own brand experience as a smart career destination. This should be part of every B2B brand's marketing focus in 2018.



Brand E-Magazines.

Remember the corporate magazine? E-magazines are essentially a new digital twist to a proven marketing tool. The e-magazine can effectively deliver the B2B brand story, with supportive content featuring key business initiatives and news updates. As a digital delivery system, enhanced effects like integrated video, dynamic visuals, and engaging interface styles make the e-magazine a highly interactive tool for customers, key prospects and strategic business partners.

B2B BRAND TREND #4

Social is Foundational.

B2B brands are moving beyond talking, wondering and thinking about social media. Many are realizing that an effective social media marketing program, fueled by an equally effective content strategy, opens the door to new selling opportunities. Progressive B2B brands are also introducing their sales teams to social selling techniques as part of their weekly business development regimens, creating alignment with social marketing and sales.



Customer Experience.

B2B brands are going beyond the idea of "customer satisfaction" and working to build delight at every customer touchpoint. Attention is being placed on customer-centric brand communications – before, during and after the selling process – to turn first-time customers into long-term, valued brand loyalists. We also see more B2B brands delivering content in a "members only" fashion that is only accessible to active customers.

Account-Based Marketing.

Account-Based Marketing (ABM) is direct communication with an individual prospect as though they are a market of "one." Target Joan Smith, director of operations at ABC Co., because she represents \$1 million in new business. The new digital toolkit enables B2B brands to have expedient and highly personalized communications with the "Joan Smiths" of the world. Think of ABM as a mission to engage your top 25 "Joan Smiths" in a way that empowers them, while reflecting positively on your brand.



VR Exploration.

The biggest obstacle for B2B organizations is opening up a prospect to the possibility of change. Virtual Reality (VR) experiences elevate the possibility of change by fully immersing a prospect into the brand. VR experiences lead to a much deeper emotional connection, while amplifying receptiveness to key brand value propositions. If your brand represents change, VR can be a powerful change agent, especially at tradeshows and events.

Search-Centric Content.

While paid search is becoming increasingly relevant to B2B companies to attain good search engine results positioning, organic search optimization and long-tail keywords still matter. This is especially true in formulating how searchable B2B content is written. We'll continue to see optimization of B2B content posed in the form of asking questions – both broad and narrow – with clear answers, and subtle conversion opportunities or unobtrusive calls to action woven in.



Story Telling.

For B2B brands, story telling is going beyond the realm of testimonials. It now includes actual fiction-like or semi-fiction like experiences with supportive visuals in true “story time” format. We'll see more B2B brands creatively utilize this medium, as they leverage all of the attributes that make classic story telling a popular, entertaining and memorable form of communication.

B2B E-Commerce.

A few years ago, many B2B brand marketers stated with certainty that they could “never sell their products and services online.” Today, more and more are recognizing ways to offer goods, services or knowledge in a manner that is packaged for easy online purchasing. Some are starting small, offering more basic online deliverables such as spare parts, stock items, or simpler service offerings. These first steps will lead to opportunities for bigger online purchases and engagements with new customers.



Marketing Automation.

We expect many B2B brands to introduce varying levels of marketing automation into their marketing programs this year. Whether basic or advanced, marketing automation accelerates brand adoption and saves steps in the selling process. Once properly set up, marketing automation campaigns work for B2B brands 24/7/365, fostering deeper relationships with prospects that have demonstrated levels of interest, or buying intent.

Native Advertising.

Native or contextual advertising is all about being visible and relevant where searching audiences are looking, and showing up in a smart way. In 2018, we expect more B2B brands take advantage of this, with digital campaigns that are not intrusive, but rather a useful, timely marketing or brand message, and relevant to a given viewer's interest.





BE UNCOMMON.

BE DESIRED.

BE AGGRESSIVE.

BE BRAND READY IN 2018!

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