

GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS

B2B BRANDS AND AGENCIES WORKING TOGETHER



The current state of your world in B2B marketing land is—much like your B2C brothers and sisters—in a seemingly constant state of flux and shifting priorities.

Consider the following stats from *The Age Of Brand, Agency & Customer Collaboration*:

- 76% of B2B buyers use three or more marketing channels for research.
- Nearly 60% of marketers in the B2B sector don't believe their marketing campaigns are effective.
- 60% of B2B marketers named engaging content as their top challenge while 72% named creating engaging content as their top priority.
- 60% of B2B marketers consider mobile marketing as a “crucial enabler” and conduit of their overall sales.
- Only 27 percent of today's B2B marketers believe that their campaigns are customer-centric.

These are just a glimpse into the world and the mind of the B2B marketer. And with so much going on across so many different channels, the need for a strong relationship and partnership between B2B marketers and their agencies is more important than ever.

The Times They Are A Changin'

It used to be that a brand's internal teams did their thing and their agency partner(s) did theirs. Oh sure there was some collaboration—there had to be. But the lines were pretty clear as to who did what.

Those days are gone. Forever.

A key finding of this Forbes Insights global study—sponsored by Oracle Marketing Cloud—speaks loud and clear as to the changes that are happening: 60% of brand and agency executives say their roles and responsibilities have changed significantly over the past two years.

Mark Roberts, CMO of ShoreTel, says the shift in roles is noticeable. “Agency relationships have evolved dramatically over the last few years, primarily as they have explored how to become more strategic in the relationship and as marketing groups have struggled to keep up with the pace of change in technology.”

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As a result of this shift, both groups are re-engineering their internal organizations and forging new ways of working with their respective agency or brand counterparts. At the same time, the research found that technology is ingrained in marketing operations and—perhaps most significantly of all—agency and brand stakeholders are challenging themselves to analyze and apply data in more sophisticated ways.

With Change Comes Challenge

Any change is bound to cause either an opportunity or a challenge disguised as an opportunity. And this is no different with 48% of marketing executives stating that evolving brand and agency roles are making successful collaboration more difficult.

One brand that looks at this challenge as an opportunity is Dow Corning Corporation. In fact, agency and brand teams have become so fully integrated that they're often seen as a single, fully integrated resource for the business.

"It's a seamless interaction between external and internal resources that see each other as members of the same team, not as competitors," says Randall Rozin, Global Director, Brand Management and Digital Marketing at Dow Corning Corporation. "Each has a distinct role and responsibility to play."

Data and analytics have changed the face of B2B marketing and the relationship between brands and agencies. But make no mistake about it. At the heart of these efforts is a drive to effectively gather and mine rich sources of customer data.

In fact, when asked to identify which area will see the greatest impact from more effective collaboration between brand and agency peers, the number one response among the survey respondents was capitalizing on customer data/analytics.

Kevin Koh, CEO of DDB Group Korea, says the coming together of all data is vital. "We are aware that a client will have their own data and their own opinions on what they believe will be best for their brand. But we will also have our own data. We need to collaborate together so that we can share the data and create campaigns and strategies that will create long-lasting impact with consumers."

ShoreTel's Roberts says the biggest challenge here is finding the one source of truth. "We are looking towards the vendors of services to provide the data and initial analysis of that data for the services they provide," he says. He cautions, however that this can create a disjointed view. "There is much debate about the creativity of marketing suffering due to this approach. I personally see it as a balance and a leadership issue."

He adds that identifying trends is a gift with a caveat: "You still need to do something with that data. All too often I see us delve into the data and then lose direction."

That would explain why 40% of the respondents say their organizations don't effectively use customer data to create new marketing programs. And almost as many—38%—don't effectively create and deliver timely content tailored to specific customer personas.

Another key aspect is the analysis of metrics. Successful reporting requires a big picture approach that combines many campaigns into a single view. The question becomes is it reasonable for this kind of reporting to reside with the agency or does the B2B brand need to own this function?

Rozin says the overall ownership of reporting should reside within the brand. "Creating a single customer view that broadens our understanding of our customer base across all types of accounts is very important and to do that we endeavor to understand both offline and online experiences."

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Tech's Role

Many of the marketing technology tools live on the B2B brand side—such as the marketing automation system with prospect contact information. The agency will likely need access to the results of marketing campaigns, either directly or indirectly, but that doesn't mean they have to own and manage the tool.

Roberts believes it depends on the capabilities of the agencies and experience level of the marketing team but adds: "At some point it becomes obvious of the requirement, and I don't believe it's related to company size. It is related to the complexity of message and variety of campaigns delivering that message."

He says he has noticed that the pace of change has made the usual cycle of learning, seeing value, bringing it in house, and making it a core marketing capability to be impractical. "The best practices and technology discussions are moving too fast to get a return on the traditional approach. This necessitates more engagement and collaboration with agencies offering services in these areas."

B2B Best Practices

Before the rise of the internet and social media, the B2B marketer's job was much simpler. In fact, marketing was often charged with merely providing branding and sales collateral, PR, advertising, and trade events. For the most part, the sales team found and developed their own marketing leads – through connections, on the golf course, or by cold calling into target accounts.

Those days are long gone.

Learn how B2B Modern Marketers around the world are using **best practices** to achieve success.



Download **The Age Of Brand, Agency & Customer Collaboration** to learn more.