

Are We Doing This?

10 B2B Marketing Trends to Watch in 2019



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Foreword From the CMO

A Look Ahead

2018 was a defining year for B2B marketing, perhaps beginning to blur the lines between B2B and B2C more than we've ever seen. So what does this mean for 2019?

At the end of 2018, one of the biggest acquisitions in B2B marketing software history cemented marketing automation as a category for some time to come. If you're going to drop \$4.75 billion on Marketo, you know there's a vision beyond just email management. And Adobe is not the only one—look at HubSpot where the market cap increased from \$1.7 billion (Jan. 2017), to \$3.3 billion (Jan. 2018), and recently \$5.3 billion (Nov. 2018). Ripping a quote from the headlines of the Adobe / Marketo press release: "The imperative for marketers across all industries is a laser focus on providing relevant, personalized, and engaging experiences," said Brad Rencher, Executive Vice President and General Manager, Digital Experience, Adobe. I personally met with an analyst from Forrester a few months ago who covered Adobe and was confident that this acquisition signaled more parallels between B2C and B2B marketing to justify such a high price. I've been pushing this a lot over the last year in my comparisons of the personalized experiences delivered by consumer brands like Spotify and what that means for us as marketers.

I recall about six years ago meeting with Joe Chernov, a rockstar B2B marketer, who at the time predicted marketing automation platforms

(MAPs) would be the center of our marketing universe, as a way to make sense of the confusion that comes from landscapes like Scott Brinker's MarTech supergraphic. Well, now that Joe's prediction has come to fruition, my prediction is it's time to build out the supporting infrastructure to fuel value and actionable insight into our MAPs. In 2018, we saw investment into promising companies providing strategies which can help marketers target and engage with their audiences. In reviewing the top trends cited by marketers (not software providers), I found it interesting that many of the big investments into software tied to what's on marketers' minds. Take as an example:

- Drift's \$60M in funding (\$107M total) to fuel Trend #4: Chatbots
 - Terminus' \$11M raise (\$30M total) and acquisition of BrightFunnel to support Trend #5: ABM
 - PFL's \$25M raise to fuel Trend #7: Tactile Marketing
- And with bias, perhaps the one I'm most excited about:
- Uberflip's \$32.5M Series A to fuel a number of these trends including #1: Personalization, #8: Experience-Driven Content, and a few others that connect like ABM and AI.

These big dollars signify big bets by investors predicting what will be the next area of focus and concentration for marketers. As I look through the list I see a trend across them all which is the need for us to personalize and deliver a more authentic experience at every stage of our buyer journey. The rise of the MAP has armed us to gather data for this, but sending an email "Dear #name" isn't enough. We need to turn our attention to ways where we can create a memorable experience for our audiences in 2019. I hope these trends help you on your way.

Randy Frisch
President and CMO
Uberflip

Randy

Introduction

The Fascination With Trends

No matter what industry you're in or role you have, we all share a universal interest in trends. As marketers, we look to Google Trends to understand what keywords and search terms are most popular; we look for trending hashtags and conversations on social to inform the content we put out; and we put "Trends" sessions on our agendas at conferences because we know they'll draw an audience. We've tapped into this almost universal desire to understand what the masses are doing.

It's human nature. Trends help us validate our own efforts and choices. They allow us to say, "Oh yes, that's right, I agree," and feel good about the work we are doing. But they also help us understand if there are new things

we should be exploring that maybe we aren't, or if there are things not yet on our radar that perhaps should be.

As we plan for the year ahead, we asked 200 B2B marketers to share their top three trends for 2019 in their own words. In the pursuit of real, raw, unfiltered answers, we asked marketers an open-ended question, rather than have them select from a list of our creation. So what strategies, tactics, and technology will they be exploring in the year to come? While personalization as a theme weaved its way through many of our top trends, a return to data and old-school approaches was not far behind. Read on to learn what your peers had to say.



Personalization

Personalize everything—your emails, ads, direct mail, website, content, and recommendations. The expectation in 2019 is that all of your marketing will be personalized. And customers crave it. In fact, they're willing to give up even more data about themselves just to receive personalized offers and a custom, tailored experience. If the Spotifys and Amazons of the world can do it, so can we. Technology will be needed more than ever to help scale B2B marketers' personalization efforts.

1

Personalization

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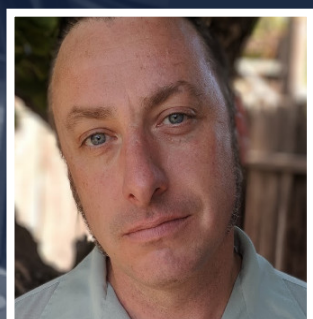


“Deliver content that is personalized to [your audience] and how they’ve been engaging with your brand. Variable text fields are out. Anyone can sniff those out before they hit their inbox. We’ve been conditioned to expect our first name or, in many cases, our email address populated at the beginning of an email. Everyone is doing it. You can’t package together a bunch of content and e-blast your database and expect that throwing a #first-name# field at the beginning will drive engagement or make your audience feel special. Make sure you’re providing relevant and timely content that is personal to what they’re interested in.”

JK Sparks

Lifecycle Marketing Manager,
BombBomb

“



“Highly relevant marketing matters more than ever. Consumers are getting over the creepy feeling of advertisers knowing their every move and are now more likely to be annoyed by irrelevant retargeting (like getting ads for something they already bought) and expect that we provide more helpful experiences.”

Owen B. Ray

Senior Content Marketing Manager,
Invoca

52%

52 percent of consumers are somewhat likely to switch brands if a company doesn’t make an effort to personalize their communications to them.

- [Salesforce’s State of the Connected Customer Report](#)

Weighing In | Yoav Schwartz, Uberflip

Personalization has long been a staple in B2B marketing, but Yoav Schwartz, CEO and Co-Founder of Uberflip, says marketers will take it one step further in the year ahead. “2019 will usher in the first wave of marketers leveraging AI to achieve higher levels of personalization. We’ll see everything from inbound to demand to ABM content experiences get more personal (and hopefully not creepy) through marketers’ ability to gain more intel on their audience via third-party data providers and content experience platforms.”

2



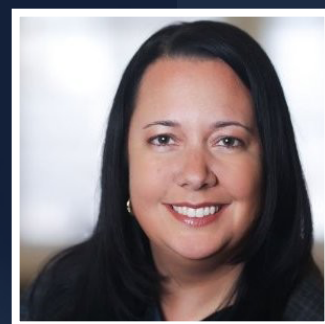
Artificial Intelligence and Intent Data

Marketers had a lot to say about artificial intelligence. It's been regarded as a way to cut down on marketers' tasks and free up time to be more strategic. It's also a means to personalize at scale. Coupled with intent data, marketers will be able to more accurately serve up the right content at the right time to their prospective customers and website visitors. In this case, data and technology continue to usher in a new norm for marketers.

2

Artificial Intelligence and Intent Data

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“Content marketers and content strategies are being tasked with delivering higher performance (leads, revenue, ROI), so using advanced intelligence tools to power content will be the only way to deliver more out of the same (or smaller) budgets supporting content.”

Patti Doyle
Chief Operating Officer,
Vennli

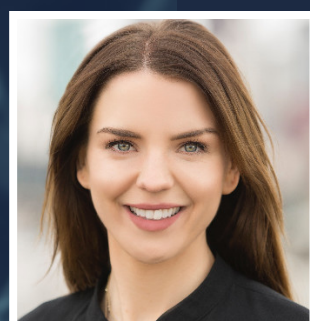
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“Personalization is essential to filter the right content (and experience) to the right place. But it is also time-consuming and expensive. Adding artificial intelligence and machine learning to personalization democratizes the concept, allowing mass scale personalization almost on autopilot.”

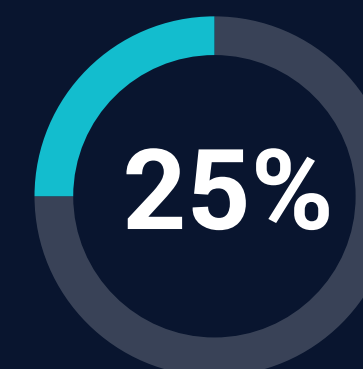
Trina Moitra
Head of Marketing,
Convert.com

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“The ability to predict what an individual or company may be interested in through intent data will dramatically change the way B2B organizations select content topics, create campaigns, and engage buyers in 2019.”

Moira van den Akker
Global Demand Generation Manager,
Trimble Buildings, Trimble



25 percent of B2B companies said they currently use intent data and monitoring tools, while 35 percent said they plan to use intent insight within the next 12 months.

- [2018 State of B2B Intent Data](#)

Weighing In | Marc Johnson, Bombora

While both artificial intelligence and intent data on their own stand strong on this trend list, where the two intersect makes us excited. We asked Marc Johnson, Chief Marketing Officer and General Manager of Bombora, his thoughts on the matter. “How do you personalize to a business? Not easily. With the convergence of AI and intent data, however, it is now possible to understand the interests of a buying group within a business and apply those insights to deliver actually relevant and valuable content. 2019 will be the year when this will become a core element of account-based marketing (ABM) for B2B brands.”

3

Video

Video has taken up residency on marketers' trends lists for several years now. For 2019, however, the moving-picture medium comes with a few caveats. While in the past, simply using video as a medium was enough to check the "I'm doing this trend" box, in 2019, educational video content gets shorter, snappier, and serial in nature. Heralded for being "shareable," video is also the format du jour for social media advertising and high perceived engagement. Across the board though, video is widely praised for its ability to build authenticity and human-to-human connection, whether that's in content marketing, brand building, or personalized sales outreach.

3

Video

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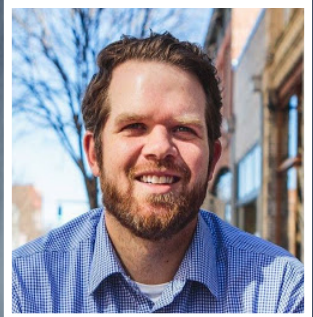


“I see live video continue to grow in popularity and effectiveness. Your clients and prospects are looking for authenticity. They want to build a relationship with your people, not just your company. Live videos capture that authenticity. It’s harder to be somebody you’re not behind the cold lens of your iPhone or Mevo.”

Abbey Kanellakis

Practice Growth Manager,
Rea and Associates

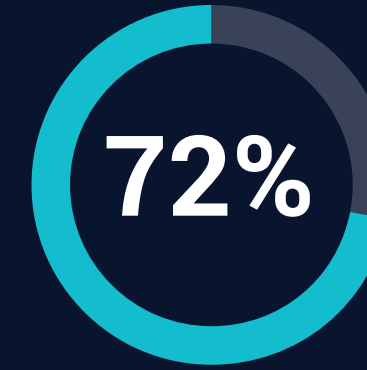
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“I know this has been on the list for years, but how many people reading this have an amazing video person on staff? When that is over 85 percent, I’ll shut up about it. Video adds personality and context that are difficult to replicate in written form.”

Chris Moody

Head of Global Content Marketing,
Cheetah Digital



72 percent of people would choose video over text to learn about a product or service.

- [The State of Video Marketing 2018](#)

Weighing In | Chris Savage, Wistia

Video is consistently on everybody’s top trends list, so we asked Chris Savage, Co-Founder and CEO of Wistia, what aspect of this popular medium B2B marketers should be zeroing in on. “For 2019, marketers should be thinking about how they can empower more people on their teams to take risks with video. The organizations we see using video well have figured out how to make it ongoing and how to recognize when the emotional push of a video will help drive the business forward.”

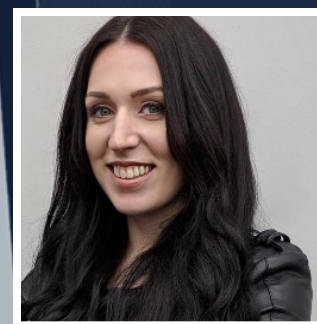


Chatbots

Not just for support functions, chatbots take charge in 2019 in two huge ways. First, as a means to distribute content—think Facebook Messenger bots. And second, as an extension of our sales development team engaging prospects as they visit our site's pages in an “I can't believe that's not a person” exchange. Our teams can't be everywhere, but chatbots will help us try.

4

Chatbots



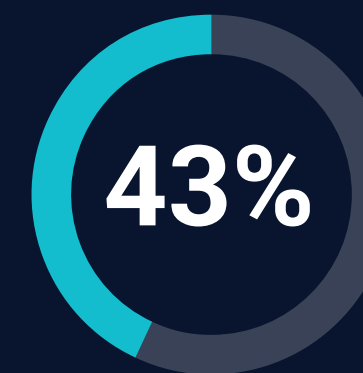
“Get comfortable, marketers. Chatbots are coming in strong. Social networking has made us all expect instant results, so when a customer has a question for a brand, they want instant answers. This is where chatbots come in. They can help answer frequent questions, and the more elaborate bots can even provide options, advice, and more.”

Ana Milosavic
Marketing Coordinator,
Hexonet



“Chatbots. Chatbots. Chatbots. Whether it’s Messenger bots for sales, web / app support bots, knowledge base bots, or any other kind of bot, jump onto this while you can cut through—the stats are insane.”

Tamara Grigg
Head of Marketing and CX,
VideoMyJob



Only 43 percent of consumers said they would prefer to communicate with a human.

- [The 2018 State of Chatbots Report](#)

Weighing In | Dave Gerhardt, Drift

Seeing “Hi? How are you?” when you load up a company website on your laptop is par for the course these days. Dave Gerhardt, VP of Marketing for Drift, weighs in. “Chatbots have risen in popularity over the past few years because they allow marketers and salespeople to foster human-like connections with unmatched immediacy. They make a needlessly complicated buyer journey easier to navigate. Marketers are seeing great success using chatbots to drive conversations, book demos, and close deals. And in 2019, we expect more organizations will adopt conversational marketing and chatbots to drive revenue for their businesses.”

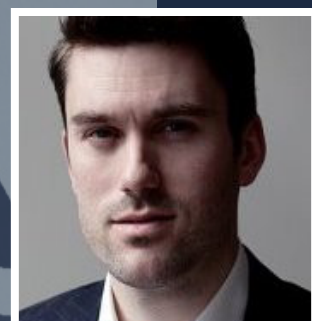


Account-Based Marketing

It's been on the rise for a while and shows no sign of slowing down in the year ahead. Businesses who have not yet adopted an account-based model will be trying it in 2019, and those who have will be looking to expand their efforts. The return is huge when done right and the success stories alone will persuade those who have not yet dipped their toes in the ABM pool.

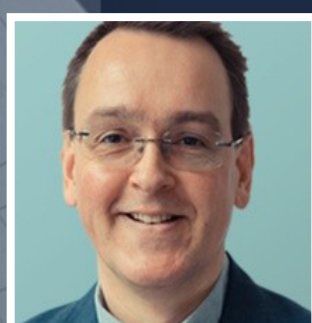
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Account-Based Marketing



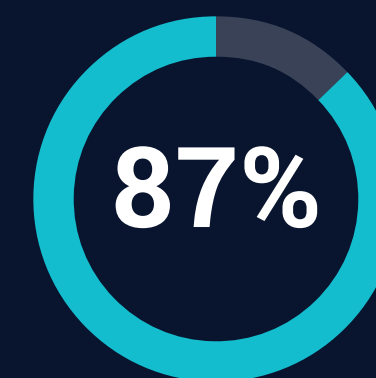
“When you are in a niche or low-interest business you need to reach your ideal customers, they won't come and find you. ABM enables you to spend your budget and time efficiently, cutting out waste. And content that you produce can be repurposed for general marketing purposes.”

Douglas Voeten
Head of Global Marketing,
Atradius Collections



“In the B2B world this is a game-changer and we have seen some amazing success stories. Successful campaigns often seamlessly blend digital with old-school direct mail and sales outreach.”

Jez John
Managing Director,
Webstars



87 percent of B2B marketers have agreed ABM delivers a higher ROI than other marketing activities.

- [ITSMA Research](#)

Weighing In | Sangram Vajre, Terminus

A lot of people talk about account-based marketing being a trend, but can a strategy be trendy? We asked Sangram Vajre, CEO of Terminus and FlipMyFunnel, to give us his unfiltered thoughts on this. “Account-based marketing is not a trend. If anything, ABM is a strategy that needs organization-wide transformation. ABM will become B2B.” Powerful words.

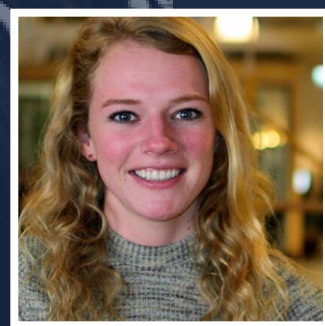


Customer Intelligence

What do we really know about our customers? Marketing is only as good as the data we have and can access. And if knowing our customers pre- and post-sale is the key to getting and keeping business and creating marketing content and campaigns that work, then customer intelligence is the foundation for effective marketing. Using a customer relationship management system is a given these days, but going deeper into data collection, integrating our tools across the business so we have one holistic view, and surfacing that data across teams with Slack integrations is the next thing we'll see in 2019.

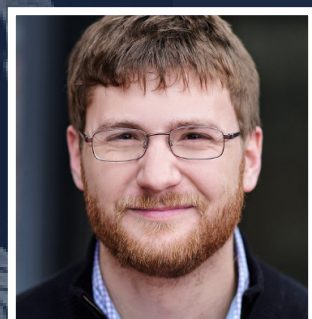
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Customer Intelligence



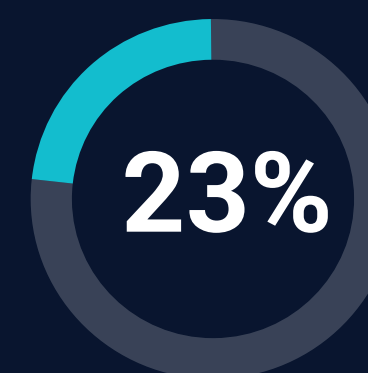
“We expect that the term ‘Customer Intelligence’ will gain in popularity in 2019. I can’t count how many presentations I’ve seen of the Deloitte MarTech Landscape of 5,000+ players. The competition is fierce out there, for both B2B and B2C companies. Brands need to step up their game when it comes to an understanding of who their customers are regarding drives, decision-making behavior, challenges, and lifestyles. This information is the key to creating more relevant communication that’s more likely to resonate with the audience.”

Janelle de Weerd
Digital Marketing Manager,
Crobox



“In 2019, customer-centricity, personalization, and customer experience are officially make-or-break factors for marketing success. Lack of integration between all the tools and systems within the organization has increasingly led to siloed data and teams, and ultimately the lack of a single, unified view of customers and their omni-channel journeys over time. Without that unified view, it is very difficult to be customer-centric, successful with personalization or customer experience, or generate meaningful customer insights at the rate required today.”

Gary DeAsi
Director of Marketing, Demand Generation,
Pointillist



Only 23 percent of companies are able to generate real-time insights with customer data.

- [SAS's Maximizing Moments of Truth White Paper](#)

Weighing In | Scott Brinker, [chiefmartech.com](#)

Is technology always the answer? Scott Brinker, editor of the [Chief Marketing Technologist blog](#), weighs in on technology’s impact on customer intelligence. “A ton of marketing technology is sold today as the solution to delivering better customer experiences. Of course, martech doesn’t automatically create great customer experiences any more than a food processor automatically makes you a great chef. It depends on how you wield it. And, frankly, the most important elements of customer experience have nothing to do with technology at all. They have to do with the choices a company makes about how to treat its customers. These choices are way harder than any martech integration challenges or other in-the-weeds scapegoats that companies claim hold them back from delivering better customer experiences.”



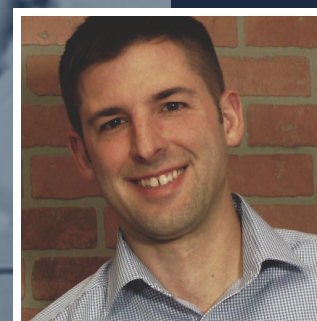
Tactile Marketing

What's old is new again. Direct mail has seen a resurgence. And it's no surprise given the growing adoption of account-based marketing and emphasis on personalization. As it becomes increasingly more difficult to stand out from the crowd (and crowded inboxes), marketers search for new ways to capture their prospects' and customers' attention and engage them to a meaningful degree. Direct or tactile marketing—so long as it's personalized—is the route they're taking.

7

Tactile Marketing

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“Believe it or not—direct mail is huge again. In a digital world, physical interactions are seen as more meaningful and trustworthy.”

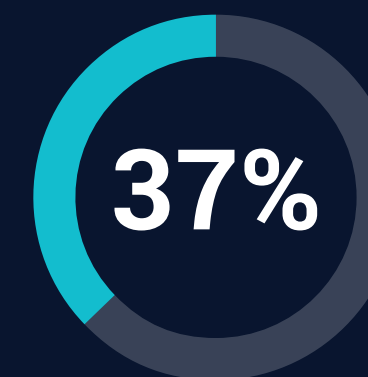
Chris Barr
Director of Marketing,
Taradel

“



“When you can, go old school. Subtle classic connections are timeless, and in the current age, tangible, personalized material stands out.”

Salvador Serrano
Creative Director,
Luxury Las Vegas



Direct mail marketing garners a 37 percent higher response rate than email.

- [Direct Marketing Association's Response Rate Report 2018](#)

Weighing In | Melanie Chapman, Jellyvision

So what's behind the resurgence of direct mail in 2019? Melanie Chapman, Director of Strategic Communications at Jellyvision, explains. “Direct mail has always excelled at grabbing attention in a way that surpasses email, display ads, and other digital channels. Now, it has caught up with its digital peers in terms of trackability. Smart marketers will continue to ‘digitalize’ direct mail by using data and segmentation to create individualized experiences for recipients, boosting direct mail’s flexibility and impact.”

A hand holding a pen, with a large white number 8 overlaid on the image.

8



Experience-Driven Content

We put a lot of effort into getting someone's attention. But once we have it, how do we keep it? We need to do more to engage our audiences, and one of the ways we can do this is through experience-driven content. Yes, to some this means interactive content like quizzes and assessments, but interactive pages and infographics, Flipbooks laced with multimedia, and content that puts experience at the forefront are what B2B marketers will be exploring in 2019.

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Experience-Driven Content

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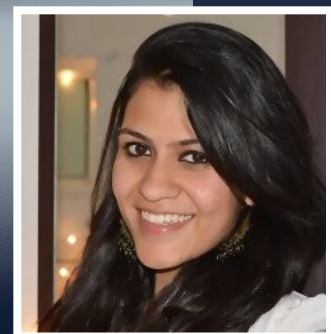


“We live in a world with almost endless content, so when you are creating yours, you want it to stand out. One way to do that is to involve some interactive elements to ensure that consumers won't only find and choose to look at your content, but actually pay attention to it. By adding interactive content to your collection, you are also showing that you know how to deliver what people want, and are keeping up with the times to deliver different kinds of content for different purposes.”

Cassie Ciopryna

Marketing Communications Specialist,
CallSource

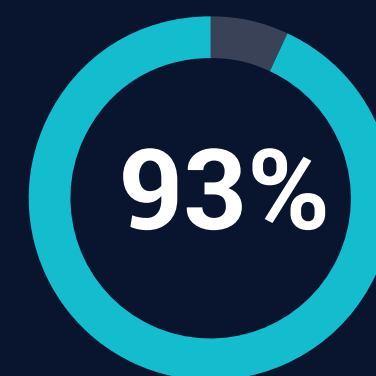
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“Create experiences, not just content. The amount of information available on any given topic will keep on increasing in the coming years. In this overcrowded space, it is important to make the content interactive and engaging to keep them reading beyond two sentences. It is also important to tell the same story using multimedia (infographics / videos) to cater to the readers who want to consume more content in less time. It also makes sense to create interactive websites to house this content.”

Yaminy Sharma

Marketing Lead,
Infosys



93 percent of marketers agree that interactive content is effective in educating buyers versus just 70 percent for static content.

- [The State of Interactive Content Marketing](#)

Weighing In | Seth Lieberman, SnapApp

We sometimes hear that experience is the difference maker when it comes to content engagement and activation. Seth Lieberman, CEO and Chief Customer Officer of SnapApp, gave us his take. “We live in a buyer-driven world where you can't just sell anything to anyone. Instead, marketers have to make prospects want to buy. Amazing user experiences are the key to delivering value to prospects so that a company can earn the right to a sales call. That's basically the job of marketing—earn the right for sales to talk with a prospect, and there is no better way to do so than an awesome experience.”

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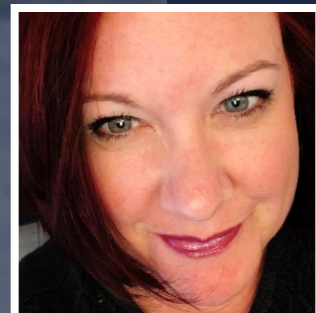
Voice Search

With the recent popularity of voice assistants and our reliance on voice search, marketers will optimize for this new element of SEO. How do we ensure our products, services, and businesses are what's spouted by Google Homes and Amazon Alexas when our would-be prospects ask? We need to get in front of this one, marketers, and 2019 will be the year to do it.

9

Voice Search

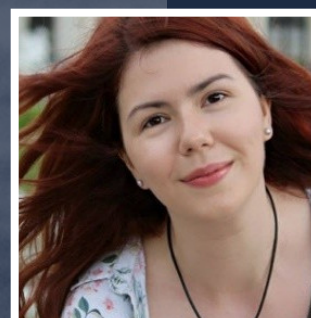
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“Devices with voice are becoming routine. Since voice is grabbed by the descriptive section of Google, it’s important to update your website to allow for conversational and relevant speaking so when content is grabbed by voice devices, it’s accurate and timely, succinct, and easy to understand and follow.”

Devon L Kirk
Director of Marketing Operations,
GetPayroll

“



“Most marketers associate SEO with Google and the glorious aim of showing up on the first page in the SERPs. Now SEO is much more than that. The focus is expanding towards other huge search engines such as YouTube and Amazon, but also towards optimizing websites and content for voice search. This is surely one aspect that marketers should not overlook.”

Daniela Turcanu
Senior Marketing Manager,
Walls.io



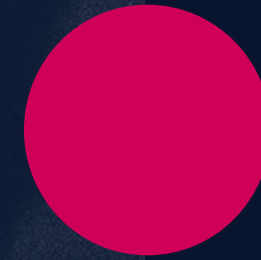
By 2020, 50 percent of all searches will be voice searches.

- [Comscore](#)

Weighing In | Nate Dame, Propecta

“Ok Google! What can B2B marketers do today to optimize their content for voice search in 2019?” We asked Nate Dame, CEO of Propecta, to weigh in. “Content is a competitive sport. But, when it comes to voice search, creating more content may not help. Voice search surfaces the best content that meets the user’s needs. To be discovered by algorithms, it also must be structured in a way that is easy for machines to understand. Using the keyword in all the right places is not enough. Instead, write exceptional content of the user’s need (not just the keyword), discuss related topics, and provide concise, sharp definition statements of the most important terms.”

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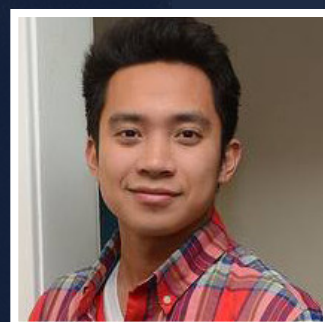
Influencer Marketing

We don't typically think influencer marketing applies to B2B brands, but it does. We just think of it in different ways—partnering on an ebook or webinar, guest blogging, or engaging industry influencers in your video content or events. In 2019, working with others will be par for the course. One of our survey respondents referred to this type of approach as “collaborative marketing,” and perhaps that's just the angle B2B influencer marketing needs to shed the cringeworthy image of *The Bachelor* contestants pushing sugary hair gummies via their Instagram accounts from our minds. Whatever we call it, leveraging other people's networks to reach a wider audience is a trend to watch in 2019.

10

Influencer Marketing

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“We are starting to see collaborative marketing across all platforms, from large brands to influencers. Think about it this way: four influencers, each having 10,000 followers on their social media. They publish one valuable piece of content together, share it, and not only reach 10,000 of their followers, but they also receive additional exposure of 30,000 subscribers.”

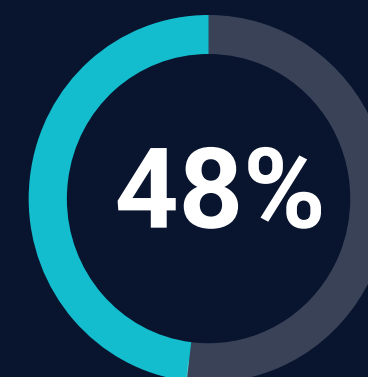
Mark Velarga
Head of Marketing,
PakFactory

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“There is nothing better than word of mouth, and influencer marketing brings forward someone besides a brand spokesperson to state the value of solutions and skills our brand offers.”

Brandi Seich
Global Marketing Director,
DHL



48 percent of B2C marketers run ongoing influencer marketing programs. Only 11 percent of B2B marketers are running ongoing programs.

- [Influence 2.0: The Future of Influencer Marketing Report](#)

Weighing In | Jay Baer, Convince & Convert

With influencer marketing making waves in both B2C and B2B marketing departments, we asked Jay Baer, Founder of Convince & Convert and author of six books including *Talk Triggers: The Complete Guide to Creating Customers with Word of Mouth*, for his take on this trend. “The key to spreading your story with influencers isn’t the influencers, it’s the story. Before embarking on an influencer marketing program, every company (and especially B2B brands) needs to determine what makes them worthy of conversation. Recognize that competency doesn’t create conversations. Every business must commit to doing something different that compels conversation. I call that a Talk Trigger. And you need one. Otherwise, your influencer marketing program is just a complicated, expensive, time-consuming ad campaign.”

Conclusion

With a new year comes a new beginning—or at the very least an opportunity to review our approach and see where we can test, experiment, and improve. This year, marketers have expressed a strong desire to intimately know their customers and deepen their understanding of their target audience. And for good reason. Whether they do so through customer intelligence, integration of martech platforms, intent data, adoption of an account-based model, or any other strategy discussed in this report, we, as marketers, are going to need to look a little closer if we want to provide the kind of personalization buyers expect from us today.

In addition, formats continue to be a huge topic of discussion and experimentation, with video, direct mail, and experience-driven interactive content as a means to engagement. Meanwhile, chatbots and influencer marketing (while to some may be outliers) are really just a way to reach more people. So regardless of the trend listed, marketers' needs boil down to three main things: They want to (1) better understand their customer, (2) personalize the experience for them, and (3) engage them through stand-out methods to beat out their competition. That sounds like something we all can get behind.



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