

Looking ahead for B2B marketers

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As marketers, we deploy more high-tech tools and better metrics than ever. But information does not equal persuasion. B2B marketers must engage audiences. Here are five focus points our agency leaders identified as the key to success today:

1. Customers seek positivity: As contentious polarization continues to foul social media, people want trusted brands to support them, or at least provide a calming voice. Stronger brands exemplify our shared humanity through optimism and certainty.

Why this matters: PwC's research says 76% of people surveyed will stop buying from companies that treat their employees, the local community or the environment poorly. As clickbait and rage sully media platforms, brands that reflect our better qualities – optimism, kindness, caring – will shine brightest.

2. The customer, the customer, the customer: Customer first. Customer-obsessed. Customer experience. B2B marketing has long touted knowing the customer, but economic pressures have eroded that focus. Budgets are down, prices are up and field force cutbacks compromise the customer experience. More to the point, does our work truly engage them? A recent WARC survey showed that 78% of respondents feel “neutral” about B2B advertising — that’s a lot of “meh.”

Why this matters: Brands must make themselves relevant, particularly as new generations enter the workforce. Though younger decision-makers value results, they also want transparency, experiences and relationships. They want to feel positive about their brand partners. Look for a fresh resurgence for meaningful account-based marketing, along with inspirational storytelling and individualization.

3. A shift in authentic personalized content: As AI-generated mediocrity overwhelms channels, original data, research and content will grow increasingly

valuable. Personal – not just personalized – brand messages will win. While lead generation remains critical, marketing that creates brand awareness through human connection will resonate more authentically with customers inundated by attribute-based messaging.

Why this matters: A Deloitte study showed that brand authenticity drives 92% of brand trust, so we must avoid over-reliance on data-driven marketing. Without the balance of human-centric storytelling, we promote information, not persuasion. Authentic emotion and connection drive behavior.

4. In a distracted market, engagement is everything: If data is king and customization is queen, engagement is the emperor that rules them all. Marketers must move beyond basics and leverage data into tailored customer experiences across multiple touch points. This requires a deeper understanding of customer buying journeys and preferences.

Why this matters: Firsthand experiences are key to building deeper connections and brand loyalty. Delivering resonant interactive content and immersive experiences highlights product differentiation. By wrapping customer experiences in learning we ingrain our B2B brands.

5. Balancing budgets and ROI: Leaner budgets will make proving B2B advertising effectiveness ever more crucial. That’s both a problem and an opportunity, particularly since Boston Consulting Group contends that every brand dollar cut requires a future spend of \$1.85 to regain lost market share.

Why this matters: Despite the economic pressures, this is brand building’s moment. Without breakthrough, there’s no awareness. And without awareness, there’s no conversion. Supporting ideas that break through, earn attention and inspire customers makes brands noticed, remembered and understood. And delivers the ROI brand marketers seek.

TL;DR: A good rule of thumb for success in B2B marketing is to NOT think of it as business to business but rather business to business PEOPLE. Because no matter if it’s at work or home, people make every buying decision.