



# 4 B2B Marketing Trends to Watch in 2016

By [Daniil Karp](#) / Posted [December 22, 2015](#) In [B2B Marketing](#)

Last week we brought together [four of the top minds](#) in B2B marketing to share their perspective on the ideas that will drive innovation in 2016. We were interested in learning what technologies and approaches would define budgets and go-to-market strategies in the coming year.

[Here is what we learned:](#)

## 1. **Marketers Using Cross-Channel Strategies Will Win**

Andrea Ward, VP of marketing at Oracle Marketing Cloud discussed the importance of breaking through silo-ed approaches to marketing. Today's marketers have access to more tactics and technologies to support their efforts than ever before. However, unless those efforts are aligned across tactics and information is shared across technologies, marketers will see only a fraction of the possible ROI.

For example, a product announcement should merit more than just a press release and analyst briefing from your product marketing team. Your content team should leverage webinars and blog posts to tell the story of the release and establish email, social media and advertising campaigns to spread the message.

This approach takes extra effort and planning and for marketing teams who, in many cases, are already thinly spread. Andrea recommends that B2B marketers create forcing functions and paths that drive and simplify the implementation of cross-channel marketing. The dividends from these approaches are very real – Oracle Marketing Cloud has begun to drive a quarter of their net-new leads through social media and has seen clients report a 34% lift in marketing campaign conversion.

## **2. Customer-Centric Marketing Will Become a Must-Have**

For Russell Glass, head of products at LinkedIn Marketing Solutions, relevance marketing is the driving force of 2016. The history of B2B marketing has progressed from product- to solution-marketing. We've now arrived at a place where customer-centric marketing will no longer be a nice-to-have, but a must-have for marketers who wish to remain competitive.

For most customers, the online browsing experience is a long walk around the internet in search of relevant content. This truth represents a huge missed opportunity that is being exploited by leaders in the B2C space. Netflix uses its treasure trove of viewer data to create blockbusters like House of Cards and Amazon uses buyer behavior insights to create uncanny product suggestions. These two are only the most obvious instances in which customer-centric visions have allowed companies to secure market leadership in their respective industries.

For modern B2B marketers, the path to relevance starts with a 3-step process that puts customers at the beginning of the strategy development equation:

- Marketers have to develop buyer personas and work to understand the needs driving their customers' investments. Inherent in this process is understanding the organizational behaviors of their customers and how decisions are made.
- The messaging and marketing that you expose your prospects to should be built off their personas and aim to help them better understand their business challenges and begin formulating strategies for addressing them. The goal is to move from content marketing to helpful content.
- Finally, marketers need to use the data they receive from their campaigns to better understand their customers and to inform the marketing experiences they create.

### **3. Interactive Marketing Will Be the Next ROI-Maker**

Scott Brinker, editor of ChiefMarTech believes the next big driver of ROI in B2B marketing is the rise of interactive content. The main challenges of marketing are to break through the noise, engage someone with relevant content and build a connection that lays a foundation for a future partnership. Until recently, B2B marketers were stuck with static content as the main tool for creating this link between their brand and their customer.

Interactive marketing presents an opportunity to build a relevant connection in a way that static, gated content can't. By offering customers an opportunity to engage with your product or better understand their own needs through interactive questionnaires or personalized online experiences, interactive content can virtually deliver the sales engineering experience directly to prospects.

For companies who bring complex B2B solutions to market at a high price point, the opportunity to share the experience and value of their solution with early-stage prospects before ever engaging with a sales person can be transformational.

### **4. People Will Define Marketing Technology Success**

Baxter Denney, VP of online marketing and operations at New Relic takes a people-first approach to ROI for marketing technology by examining the team in place. As the field of marketing technology continues to explode, finding the right people to manage the tools and derive the most value from them will be the top challenge for B2B marketing leaders. With a demand for talent across every industry, hiring marketing unicorns who have all the right experience on paper will not be a sustainable approach for marketing teams.

Baxter suggests that for B2B marketing teams to excel, companies must seek candidates who have the right talent framework, rather than the right experience. A successful hiring manager will look for specific traits that will allow them to build an effective marketing technology team without having to compete directly against companies who are searching for exactly the right person with exactly the right experience.

The traits Baxter values in a marketing technology hire are: proactive, hacky, analytical connected and empathetic. Using these characteristics, marketers will be able to compare applicants based on necessary and actionable attributes as opposed to the perceived value of a particular experience. Moreover, if the traits used by New Relic aren't right for you, the trait-based approach is still one to consider as you're competing for talent in the hot marketing technology field.

To go in depth with the presenters themselves, check out the full presentation: [4 Lightning Talks: B2B Marketing Predictions for 2016](#).

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