

8 B2B marketing trends for 2020

 By [Warren Moss](#)

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Warren Moss from Demographica lists 8 B2B marketing trends to watch out for in 2020.



Warren Moss, founder of Demographica. Image supplied.

1. Account-based marketing (ABM) continues to thrive

We're glad to see that ABM is finally growing as more companies are signing off on it as a strategy, including it in their budgets and scope – and we look forward to seeing this trend continue. There are plenty of hurdles to getting it off the ground, though, including eating up hours as they fumble with the vital process of account selection. Proper preparation is at the heart of successful ABM, alongside the proper alignment of sales and marketing, selecting the right target accounts, creating bespoke content for target accounts and setting the right KPIs for ABM campaigns.



Account-based marketing

Maxine Ohayon 8 Mar 2019



2. Targeting audiences, not verticals

Historically, when companies create B2B marketing campaigns, they tend to think about those campaigns in terms of which product or service they're selling or which vertical they're serving. We're finding that more and more B2B companies are reframing this to focus instead on targeting audiences, instead.

B2B marketing is going to be more about the purchase journey – thinking about the customer and creating campaigns that speak to them, rather than just the product or service. Putting the purchase journey at the centre of the communication is the future, and we're pleased to see that so many CMOs are already embracing it.

In keeping with this trend, we're seeing B2B companies focusing more on the partner experience, too. Forrester Research found that 70% of B2B revenue comes from a third-party channel – a distribution partner of sorts. The majority of the top B2B companies in the world – think SAP and Oracle – sell their products predominantly through partners – so it makes sense to focus on the experience those partners have when they're selling your products. Focusing on that element is a differentiator – partners who have a great experience with your product are more likely to choose to support it, ahead of those of your competitors.



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3. Switching from sales enablement to buyer enablement

Sales enablement has traditionally been the role of sales teams, but we're finding that the development of those programmes and assets is increasingly becoming a marketing function in the B2B space. This is on the back of a reframing from sales enablement to buyer enablement – trying to help customers buy better instead of helping sales teams sell better.

4. Digital event diversity

There's an increasing trend for companies to move their physical events into the digital space. B2B companies spend a fortune on eventing and they do plenty of them, and it's getting increasingly difficult to justify the returns on such a huge investment. Companies are, therefore, turning to online opportunities, like webinars and applying frameworks that allow for the proper commercialisation and accurate measurement of these events.

5. Forwards with face time

As much as these physical events are shifting into the digital world, when it comes to the buyer experience, we're seeing that people are valuing physical face time more and more. While there are now more digital tools than ever before that allow buyers to self-serve, they still have their own jobs to do and many are finding that the amount of time required to manage things themselves is quite high.



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Companies are increasingly overloaded with tech – when marketing tech became de rigueur, companies went all-in and are subsequently finding that it's actually quite hard to make use of all of it. Buyers are increasingly demanding face time to help lighten the load, which in turn allows B2B companies to focus on buyer enablement.

6. B2B messaging apps to the fore

We're seeing a major uptick in the use of messaging apps in the B2B space, which makes sense since they're ever more pervasive in the B2C space and business buyers are consumers in their own right, too. As a result, they expect the same levels of convenience they have as consumers when it comes to making B2B calls.

The immediacy and instant gratification offered by messaging apps and chatbots serve an important need in the B2B space and it makes sense to engage with people in the way they're used to interacting in other spaces, too.

7. The rise of influencer marketing in B2B

While influencer marketing is incredibly common in the B2C space, it's still in its infancy in B2B. It's a lot simpler in the consumer world, where a brand identifies someone with an appropriate audience on their social platforms and pays them to 'authentically' promote their product to that following.

In B2B, it's ethically difficult to approach the CEO of a major company and pay them to promote your product, but it's important to find other ways to gain this type of endorsement. Direct marketing is one way to negotiate the ethical issue. If the client is an influential person in their professional space and their company is using a B2B product that is helping them, why wouldn't they want to shout about it?



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Adiv Maimon 23 Jan 2019



By highlighting the benefits they've had in using your B2B product or service, they can promote it in a credible manner. We're in the process of creating frameworks for this in the local industry, but globally, it's a major trend.

There's also a rise in social selling in the B2B space as a platform or tactic. There still needs to be authenticity around it – how people do it and why, but it's definitely growing. My sense is that we're going to see a lot more of it in the B2B space, soon.

8. Bridging the knowledge gap

B2B clients are becoming increasingly aware of the gaps in their knowledge and they're turning to partners and agencies to help bridge them. We find that discovering new opportunities and technologies is simple, but actually acquiring the knowledge of how to run and maximise them is hard to do.

They're, therefore, reaching out to their B2B agencies and asking us to help upskill and train them. An improvement in skills

and personal and professional development in the B2B marketing capability can only be of benefit to the industry.



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Wade Fraser 17 Jul 2019



We've found ourselves involved in more pitches this year than ever before, as more and more South African businesses are looking to appoint a specialist B2B agency. Companies used to be comfortable with appointing B2C-focused agencies that were good creatively or strategically and asking them to supplement their work with B2B projects or bring in B2B agencies for specialist work.

Now, we're finding that companies are truly starting to understand what good B2B marketing looks like and looking for dedicated agencies to deliver it. It has meant that we're starting to build a healthy ecosystem for B2B marketing in South Africa and the industry is growing, which can only be a good thing.

ABOUT WARREN MOSS

Warren Moss is the founder & CEO of Demographica, a full-service specialist agency focusing on Business to Business (B2B) and niche consumer markets. What makes Demographica unique is the fact that anthropology (the study of human societies and cultures and their development) is at the heart of all of their strategies. Warren and Demographica have been recognised by winning some major business and marketing awards. Warren is also currently the Chairman of the Direct Marketing Association of South Africa.

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