

# Boost B2C Marketing Results with Customer-centric B2B Tactics



Engagement Marketing Solutions

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**W**hile B2B and B2C marketers cater to different audiences and apply different tactics, one thing is certain. Today all marketers—whether selling to business decision makers or consumers—must treat each and every customer or prospect as a unique individual. But even though many B2C marketing campaigns are high on creativity, they're often low on personalization, segmentation and automation.

B2B marketers, on the other hand, diligently create dialogues with individual prospects and customers, gathering information through give-and-take communications programs that can be handed over to a sales rep when the time comes to push toward conversion. That kind of one-to-one focus benefits companies—whether they're selling cargo containers or cargo pants.

Unfortunately, many B2C marketers simply divide email lists into two or three segments based on certain basic attributes like opens and clicks or gender and geography. Perhaps they're using this "one-size-fits-most" strategy because they either fail to gather customer and prospect insights or struggle to find the best way to leverage all the data they do compile. By implementing some of the tried-and-true B2B contact management and marketing automation techniques, B2C marketers are better able to turn potential customers into paying customers and even lifelong fans. Following are results-generating B2B tactics that can work equally well for B2C marketers.

## Gather Customer Data—Then Use It

In today's competitive business environment, relevancy is the golden key that sets both B2C and B2B marketing programs apart from the competition and helps companies truly engage with customers and prospects. Marketers must ensure that the right message is reaching the right target at the right time.

To be able to send targeted, relevant communications, you need to gather quantities of customer data and store it in easily accessible systems. B2B marketers often have large amounts of industry and client information, and rely on relational tables to capitalize on the power locked in customer databases.

With a relational table, marketers can run multidimensional queries with ease. Items such as purchase history information are kept in a separate table. The tables are "related" or linked by one unique identifying field such as a customer number or Sync ID. The marketer can now store all the historical purchase history needed without compromising the space or flexibility of the main database. Rather than wasting valuable time manually manipulating data or waiting on a request submitted to a data warehouse, marketers can use relational tables to easily pull and act on the exact information they want from their client database.

For example, an online retailer of watches and accessories plans a Labor Day Sale of all things denim. From a relational table containing past purchases, the marketer pulls a list of contacts who had previously bought denim items. Using rule sets and dynamic content, recipients receive messages such as "This denim-banded wristwatch is a perfect match to the denim handbag you purchased last month. And it's on sale!"

## Rank or Score Contacts for More Granular Segmentation

One of the biggest challenges all companies face is the inability to touch all prospects in a timely manner. So if a "hot" prospect that's likely ready to buy has recently opted in to your email program or is even now roaming around your website, you want to be able to react. Fast.

B2C marketers must figure out how to sort and tend a wide array of potentially valuable sales opportunities, just as their B2B counterparts must do. Otherwise interested prospective customers—and the sales opportunities and revenue they represent—can be lost.

Ranking or scoring prospective customers is a method of assigning points to different criteria for each prospect that flows into your marketing organization. It allows you to rank and prioritize your contacts and determine the likelihood of each becoming a customer. The score is determined by adding up



the points on each of the demographic and behavioral criteria you identify as indicating strong purchase intent. Based on a contact's score, it can be funneled into the appropriate marketing campaign to propel purchase.

B2B marketers understand the importance of thoroughly moving every prospect from awareness through interest to conversion. Comprehensive scoring techniques are an important part of their lead-management process. According to a recent Silverpop survey of more than 1,800 marketers, 49 percent of B2B marketers score prospective customers on their likelihood to purchase, compared to just 36 percent of B2C marketers.<sup>1</sup>

Consumer marketers who take advantage of sophisticated contact scoring tools like those implemented by B2B marketers are better equipped to distribute messages tailored to each recipient's unique interests and needs and his or her position in the buying cycle.

The related scores help marketers identify their most engaged subscribers as well as those at risk of becoming disconnected with the brand. They will know how likely their recipients are to make a purchase (or a repeat purchase) and also how likely they are to move from customer to brand ambassador. In addition to asking for information through preference centers and surveys, companies should also evaluate an individual's propensity to buy through his or her actions, including open and click rates, social sharing activity, time spent on the website and recent purchases.

### React to What They Do, Not Just What They Say

B2C marketers that rank or segment contacts based on behavioral attributes are better able to develop highly targeted campaigns for their most engaged recipients, their less engaged recipients, and those that need a little something extra to bring them into the fold. Granular scoring methods based on expressed preferences as well as behaviors can allow marketers to lead recipients down very individualized paths.

Behavior-centric marketing takes segmentation to the next level by capturing actions that lead to interactions between customers and brands. Studies show that campaigns that target based on website click-stream data generate conversion rates that outperform untargeted broadcast campaigns by nearly 4 to 1.<sup>2</sup>

Sophisticated B2B marketers incorporate Web tracking into marketing programs to monitor a site visitor's behavior and respond to them accordingly. B2C marketers can do the same. For example, if a customer always visits the Plus size category on an apparel site, sending emails featuring the latest Women's fashions will appeal.

Some online marketing solutions even enable marketers to identify unknown users' website activity and connect that behavior to the person's email address when they finally opt in. For example, a father of four regularly visits a website for a popular cruise line and always seeks out information about those designed for families. When he finally registers to receive emails, just imagine how impressed he'll be when the very first message highlights family-friendly cruises.

### Nurture Consumers from Perusal to Purchase

B2C and B2B marketers may use different tools and tactics, but at the end of the day, their goals are identical. Sell stuff.

The sales cycle in B2B transactions are generally longer than that required for B2C sales. MarketingSherpa's "2010 Email Marketing Benchmark Report" reports that 59 percent of B2B purchase decisions take longer than three months.<sup>3</sup> So, it is not surprising that B2B marketers take extra care to nurture, cajole, entice and remind prospects of offerings, continually working to move leads along to a close. B2C marketers are less likely to implement a formalized B2B-esque lead-nurturing program designed to shorten the buying cycle.

## Detailed Customer Data Makes Flour Company's Profits Rise



King Arthur Flour is one of America's best-selling flours, and email is a big component of its marketing efforts. However, the company wanted to learn more about customer preferences so it could better manage communications and deliver more relevant, targeted messaging that would engage recipients.

King Arthur Flour uses Silverpop's relational tables functionality to connect Silverpop Engage with its order management system to send emails based on purchase order history and cart abandonment. Often used by B2B marketers, a relational model utilizes a group of tables all connected to a database by a shared field. By applying one common identifying field, such as a customer number or Sync ID, you open up a world of additional historical information that typically cannot be supported by a flat file structure due either to limitations on the number of available fields or difficulty in creating multidimensional data queries.

To gain even deeper insights into its customer preferences, King Arthur Flour uses Silverpop Survey to gather data enabling the company to send targeted messages based on subscriber preferences. For example, King Arthur asks, "Which holidays do you like to bake for?" Recipients then receive emails with special recipes for their favorite holidays.

More targeted segmentation based on customer and prospect responses led to emailing more often but to smaller lists. This approach is clearly resonating with the company's subscriber base, since King Arthur generated a 150 percent increase in its email marketing ROI.

At first, this seems logical. Consumers typically spend less money with each purchase, so in relative terms, purchases happen with lightening speed when compared to B2B sales cycles. But “easy” consumer decisions can be a double-edged sword. When you’re dealing with smaller-ticket items, companies benefit when the decision to buy moves quickly and without much wavering. Consumers who hesitate may pass you by and move on to a competitor—and never think twice or look back.

Marketers can speed the move from interest to conversion by implementing comprehensive lifecycle marketing programs. By creating specific campaigns that deliver relevant information for each stage of the buying cycle, marketers are better able to move prospects off the dime. Below are campaign elements appropriate for three simple segments of a B2C lifecycle marketing campaign based on scores or rankings.

#### For recipients ranked as interested:

- Welcome messages
- An educational campaign
- Lead warming activities
- Promotions for first purchase

#### For recipients ranked as engaged:

- Renewal notices
- Shopping cart abandon notices
- Service alerts
- Receipts
- Reminders of upcoming events
- Special promotions for top customers
- Targeting based on website page visits

#### For recipients ranked as lapsed:

- Sending surveys to identify reasons for lack of engagement
- Offering incentives to revisit the website
- Delivering promotions to encourage purchases

## Make It Happen Through Marketing Automation

While following the lead of B2B marketers and collecting more information and delivering a deeper level of segmentation may make perfect sense, adding this level of detail to your campaigns may just sound like a lot more work than you can accomplish. However, by leveraging proven B2B marketing automation solutions specifically designed to make marketers’ jobs easier, it’s not as difficult as you might think.

Because B2B marketers often have complex factors that need to be considered to progress a prospect through the sales funnel, they rely on marketing automation solutions that help overburdened marketers simplify processes by automating repetitive tasks. Marketing automation increases marketers’ ability to deliver relevant content at times most conducive to making a sale. And because even complex campaigns can be automated, these online tools help marketers better engage with prospects, maximize marketing efforts, improve efficiency, increase revenue and accelerate the conversion timeline.

Campaign automation technology eliminates manual processes and saves time and resources by automating the execution of campaigns based on user actions and rules defined by the marketer. It takes a substantial amount of planning, coordination and automation in order to implement successful marketing programs that treat customers or prospects individually, creating unique dialogues that drive much higher responses. Visual campaign builders that feature drag-and-drop, movie-editor-style functionality allow marketers to easily create highly personalized email marketing programs based on contact scoring data and executed through multiple message tracks.

Marketers can easily create everything from simple, single-track drip campaigns to highly complex, multiple-track marketing programs with Yes/No decision points that automatically move prospects down the appropriate path through to a sale.

Highly personalized, automated campaigns can even be designed to adapt to the actions of each customer based on his or her interactions (or lack of

## Ranking Database Works Swimmingly for Georgia Attraction



**G**eorgia Aquarium features more animals than any other aquarium in the world. Following its opening, it was challenged with building relationships with three main audiences: aquarium visitors, business sponsors and donors.

When the Aquarium first opened, the strategy was to deliver as much information to as many people as possible very quickly. After the initial rush of excitement, it became necessary to begin crafting and delivering targeted messages to keep people engaged.

Ranking and segmenting its 620,000-contact database was an important element when the Georgia Aquarium began promoting its Aqua Vino event, a wine tasting and charity auction open to the public. The Aquarium worked with Silverpop Strategic Services to create a targeted plan that involved carefully segmenting its target audience into six different groups. Each received personalized messages about different aspects of the event with varying frequency. For instance, one group received an email focusing on the wines being served at the event while another group received an email about the auction.

By taking a targeted approach, the event sold out quicker than the previous year with a greater percentage of tickets being sold online than in previous years and in a shorter period of time.



interactions) with numerous messages and related landing pages rather than from just one, single message. For example, if a recipient doesn't open the first or second message in a predetermined series, the campaign can be automated to send him or her a very different third message than one designed for someone who has been engaged all along. In order to engage these more skeptical recipients, you might need to provide a more enticing discount or even a message asking for more information about his or her particular interests. Sophisticated marketing automation programs allow you to do this on the fly—freeing up more time for you to focus on the bigger picture.

### Putting It All Together

Scoring or ranking customers and prospects, segmentation based on rankings, and automated marketing campaigns that reach recipients when they're most likely to take notice are the core of highly successful B2B marketing programs. And the process works just as well for B2C companies.

Begin by determining scoring criteria based on understanding the attributes of your various customer segments. Then set up triggered campaigns that communicate appropriately based on contact rankings that measure behavior. The chart at right shows how a B2C marketer might divide up the customer base and develop messaging to accelerate conversions.

### Conclusion

Being a B2C marketer isn't getting any easier, and won't anytime soon. Today's consumers are more educated than ever. Inundated with a growing number of marketing messages, they have taken control of their buying decisions. They're doing their homework, researching brands and products online and seeking out input from friends, fans and those they're linked to.

While there are differences between B2B and B2C customers and the way marketers approach them, the lines between the two are getting blurrier. It's no longer enough to segment customer and prospect databases by list-centric attributes such as gender or geography. To be truly relevant, emails must be designed around each recipient's specific needs, interests, behaviors and level of engagement and readiness to buy.

By taking a cue from their B2B brethren, B2C marketers can take a deeper dive into their database and become truly engaged with each customer.

CATEGORY	RANKING CRITERIA	MESSAGING
Loyalist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Shares emails on social networks</li> <li>● Frequent website visitor</li> <li>● High open and click rate</li> <li>● Repeat customer</li> <li>● Submits product reviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Invitation to VIP Club membership</li> <li>◆ Extra discounts on purchased items</li> <li>◆ New product alerts before public receives them</li> <li>◆ Birthday e-cards with gift certificate</li> </ul>
Engaged	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Occasionally shares emails</li> <li>● Regularly visits website</li> <li>● Opens most emails and often clicks</li> <li>● Has made one or more purchase</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Survey to gather interests and needs</li> <li>◆ Send only emails similar to types most often clicked</li> <li>◆ Identify time when emails are generally opened and send accordingly</li> <li>◆ Offer discount on next purchase</li> </ul>
Indifferent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Never shares emails</li> <li>● Rarely visits website</li> <li>● Very low open rate; miserable click rate</li> <li>● No purchases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Survey to gather interests and needs</li> <li>◆ Incorporate links to pages on site recipient has visited in emails and offer special discounts for products promoted there</li> <li>◆ Ask for input on frequency and content</li> <li>◆ Offer deep discount available for limited time</li> </ul>
Disengaged	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Rarely opens emails and never clicks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Send email with personalized subject line asking for advice on what they want</li> <li>◆ Remind them of the benefits of your messages</li> <li>◆ Say goodbye</li> </ul>

### Footnotes

- 1) "Exploring the Differences and Similarities of B2C and B2B Marketing Tactics," Silverpop, 2010
- 2) "The Connected Click-Through: Tactics to improve the adoption and effectiveness of e-mail marketing and web analytics." Jupiter Research, December 2006
- 3) "Email Marketing Benchmark Guide 2010," Marketing Sherpa, 2010

## Customer Actions Lead to Scores That Drive Marketing Campaigns



**F**abric.com sends out specialized offers designed to keep loyal customers engaged and renewing relationships with inactive customers. Examples of messages include:

- "Happy Anniversary" emails celebrating the anniversary of a customer's first purchase
- "Happy Birthday" emails
- "We Miss You" emails for those customers that purchased previously, but haven't in the past year
- "We Want You Back" emails for customers that haven't purchased in the last 12 to 18 months

Fabric.com's automated marketing emails more than doubled open and click-through rates and increased conversion by more than 40 percent. For Fabric.com, one of the benefits of implementing triggered campaigns is that they can help bring in a steady revenue stream throughout the week and generate orders on a more even basis to help with warehouse workflow.