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# B2B MARKETING TRENDS ROUNDUP 2020

Historically, B2B marketers have focused on converting new customers. But the B2B landscape is maturing, and these marketers are learning from their B2C peers that it's less expensive to keep an existing customer rather than bring in a new one. This eMarketer Roundup will feature a curation of articles, interviews and insights to understand the key trends shaping B2B marketing today.

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# SPONSOR MESSAGE

The need to personalize customer experiences across all channels is top of mind for many B2B marketers, as over 75% of consumers expect a consistent experience wherever they engage. However, many businesses still have a long way to go when it comes to providing a cohesive, personalized experience.

B2B marketers know that consistent, high-quality product content plays a critical role in sales growth. Content such as images, videos, descriptive text, specifications and product recommendations are extremely influential in purchasing decisions. [Contentserv](#) is sponsoring this Roundup because we understand the challenges associated with consolidating, managing and publishing siloed, poor-quality and incomplete product content.

Technology investments in content creation, centralized content access, distribution and localization are necessary first steps to delivering a consistent and compelling product experience. Contentserv helps brands and retailers efficiently manage and deliver rich, accurate, complete and channel-ready product content—anytime and anywhere.



# OVERVIEW

**Traditionally, organizations haven't viewed the customer experience as a singular thing owned by one particular person or department. That's changed, as brands have worked to put customers at the forefront—and it's given modern CMOs new importance as owners of that experience.**

That means being in tune with customer feedback and data from all sources. "I see an increasing number of CMOs interacting more directly with customers and customer feedback, as well as working with them on the perception of their product and influencing more directly the sale of that product," said Leslie McNamara, CMO and head of workforce development at Citi Retail Services, an arm of the firm that provides private-label credit cards for retailers. (*eMarketer spoke with over 60 CMOs for our latest report "The Future of the CMO."*)

Owning the customer experience means CMOs must serve as the voice of the customer internally. For example, Kathryn Frederick, CMO at Ticketmaster, referred to herself as the organization's "ruthless advocate for the consumer," which she says is one of her biggest roles.

But ownership always comes with added responsibility. Many experts who spoke with us for this report noted that complying with customer data regulation such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) is a new part of their role. At larger organizations, CMOs can work with legal teams and compliance officers. But at smaller companies, marketing is often tasked with leading the charge on consumer privacy.

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**"CMOs have to focus on the customer life cycle with presales and postsales together. It is just as important to keep and retain a customer as it is to acquire one."**

**– Rebecca Martin, CMO, Calabrio**

This can be contentious, as these same privacy concerns and laws often impede on marketing's ability to deliver a personalized experience. Still, protecting customer data was the leading challenge for 42.5% of CMOs worldwide and the top obstacle for working with data, named by respondents in a September 2018 survey from Forbes Insights and The Trade Desk.

There's also the responsibility to think holistically about the journey and create engagement and nurture touchpoints across the entirety of the life cycle—this is especially true for B2B and direct-to-consumer (D2C) CMOs who offer recurring revenue services like Software as a Service (SaaS) products or product subscriptions.



Whereas traditional marketing was more heavily focused on bringing in the prospect, in modern marketing, the lines between prospect and customer have blurred, according to Rebecca Martin, CMO of workforce optimization software provider Calabrio. “CMOs have to focus on the customer life cycle with presales and postsales together. It is just as important to keep and retain a customer as it is to acquire one,” she said.

In theory, more data means better customer insights, which can help marketers craft a better experience. “Over the past decade, marketers have worked hard to get access to data so we can derive intelligence from it,” said Alicia Tillman, CMO at multinational software company SAP. With this data, CMOs can learn about the customer and are enabled to shape enhanced experiences. “We can anticipate customer needs better to keep them coming back to us,” she said.

But the reality of this work is often more complicated. Four in five CMOs worldwide said delivering a customer experience that is seamless across channels is an important marketing capability that will enable future success, per May 2019 research from Dentsu Aegis Network. Yet only six in 10 CMOs said they had the ability to deliver this experience well.

The same survey (showing data year over year) asked respondents about internal challenges in delivering their marketing strategy. In 2018, 44% said a lack of integration across all elements of the customer experience was an obstacle. In 2019, 41% noted the same challenge.

Similarly, when asked about marketing leadership activities that are challenging to implement regularly, nearly four in 10 CMOs polled in the US cited “infusing the customer’s point of view in business decisions,” according to February 2019 research from Duke University’s Fuqua School of Business, the American Marketing Association and Deloitte.

In this Roundup, you’ll hear from a variety of CMOs and leading marketers at companies like SAP, HubSpot and Aetna, who are redefining what the importance of the customer point of view.





# B2B TECH CMOs ON LEVERAGING DATA TO STRATEGICALLY CATER TO BUYERS

**The transformation of technology and systems has given rise to a host of new responsibilities for B2B tech CMOs, but most will tell you that the future of the role will be about providing a holistic customer experience that ensures growth and loyalty.**

Once a position focused on blind creative and top-of-funnel executions, the role of the CMO has evolved to that of a data whisperer. Striking a balance between art and science is key to providing real-time strategic results that enable internal collaboration and external execution.

For our recent report on the future of the CMO, we asked current B2B tech CMOs about how data and technology affect their tenures, and how that evolution enables them to better cater to their buyers today.

## **Jen Grant, CMO of data platform company Looker**

Over the past 10 years, advancements in technology and systems have given us the ability to get accurate data and to really understand what's happening. While the CMO role used to be more creative, it was difficult to prove that what you were doing mattered, unless you had a believer in a CEO. But now, in real time, you can say exactly how every single campaign you run is performing and what it's producing for the business. This shift to data-focused results has fundamentally changed what it means to be a successful CMO. The role has really become a

strategic linkage between what we have to sell, how we sell it and what we get to market.

## **John Nash, CMO of customer engagement and marketing solutions company RedPoint Global**

One of the big macro shifts that's happening in the marketing space is the evolution of B2B customers. A lot of B2B customers are conducting their own research of your company and product. I've heard that upwards of 50% of their buying process is done by the time you know that they're even engaging with you. Instead of the brand being in charge of campaigns, our customers are in charge of their own journeys, and you have to be able to react in real time to consumer context, react in their cadence and know where they are and where they're going.

## **Todd Krautkremer, CMO of 5G network solutions company Cradlepoint**

The future holds three important things for CMOs. One is owning and enabling revenue contribution, and using analytics to understand pockets of opportunity and what campaigns are winning or not. Second is understanding full business strategy. As marketers, we have so much knowledge about the customers, markets and partners. We can bring the numbers and relevant market issues together to make business decisions. Third is the CMO's growing responsibility to market internally as much as externally to help employee transformation to align around the customer and be educated.



## Luanne Tierney, CMO of SaaS company Open Systems

Nowadays, there's this pressure of marketing always being on its toes. There's so much data and AI, I can't even name how many marketing technology tools there are. Ultimately, marketing is a combination of art and science, so unless you have a compelling story, what good is all the other stuff? And when I'm thinking about crafting that story, I don't just look at customers and prospects. I also focus on our employees because they articulate our culture, and our culture is our differentiator. Who we are is special. Every company is different. People buy from people.

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**The future of the CMO role will be about providing a holistic customer experience that ensures growth and loyalty.**



# THE MAKEUP OF A MODERN MARKETING TEAM AND AN EXPERIENCE-DRIVEN ECONOMY



**Alicia Tillman,**  
*CMO, SAP*

**As CMO of one of the largest software companies in the world, SAP's Alicia Tillman believes that quality of experience is at the center of today's economy. Even in the B2B sector, Tillman focuses her efforts on telling a consumer-centric story, not only marketing to the stakeholders in charge of purchasing technology, but also the employees who use it. She finds that her marketing team does this best when data is successfully interpreted and used to shape a narrative that resonates with consumers of technology within the business.**

We spoke with SAP about the modern marketing team, reaching millennial consumers in the B2B realm and the challenges of being a CMO.

## **What are the most critical components of a modern marketing team?**

I would say two things. First, you need to have the ability to provide intelligence and data. Over the past decade, marketers have worked hard, as every function has in a company, to get access to data ... and derive intelligence from the data. What

are we learning from it? How does it enable us to better shape an experience for a customer? I'm not saying everybody is going to be a data scientist, but ... there needs to be a function within any marketing organization where you have people who understand data enough to truly understand the intelligence that it's bringing to you.

The second is you need to be able to shape that intelligence into a story. You need storytellers. You need not only people who are very business-savvy, but also have a beautiful way of being able to tell a story about your brand in a way that is relevant, connected and emotional.

## **As CMO, what is top of mind for you at SAP, and where do you see it going and driving the business?**

We live in a very experience-driven economy. Business is won or lost based on the quality of the experience that your company, product, brand and employees are delivering. It's top of mind for every CMO in any company, regardless of the industry that you're in, be it consumer or B2B.

So when I think about the role of the marketer, in particular, we have a tremendous opportunity to really help get closer to the customer, to truly understand, not just their feedback, but also their needs, and that should be able to shape our operation as a result.





## **How does a CMO push forward to deliver and work through challenges?**

The pressures are real. I've been in the corporate environment now for over 10 years, and I've had the privilege of working with fantastic corporations throughout my career. But all of them are focused on the cost of growing the business. You're challenged, often, on headcount and programs, yet wanting to give more to this project or that project. Whether you're growing rapidly or not, that's always going to be the reality you're faced with.

For me, it's about understanding what matters to your stakeholders and what's commanding results in the marketplace, and this is where you make some really tough decisions because everybody on your team feels that they're working on the most important project.

## **How has your brand story and audience transformed?**

We need to take a hard look at the story that we are positioning in the marketplace, about the value of our brand. I was talking with a group of employees, and they were asking me about the 47-year-old brand. What's the story we need today vs. how you shared the story then?

Millennials have grown up with technology and, in a lot of ways, they're making choices based on the quality of the technology that they use day to day to perform their job. Therefore, you're no longer messaging to one person, nor are you messaging about features and functionality, but you're messaging to a broader group with lots of differences.

## **How does this change the way you operate as a marketer?**

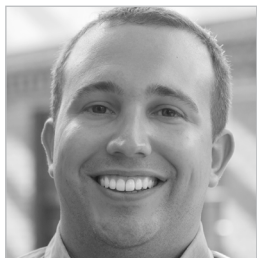
The dynamic has changed so much that it's cause for our story to need to be differentiated to talk about value and purpose, and be authentic because people want authenticity, and they want to buy from brands that stand for something, have a voice and take a stand on issues. Regardless of me being a B2B or not, it has to be much more of a consumer-based story because of the broad group that we now need to speak with and because, regardless of the industry sector that you're in, people buy based on the quality of the experience and how much that resonates and speaks to what they're after.

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**“There needs to be a function within any marketing organization where you have people who understand data enough to truly understand the intelligence that it's bringing to you.”**



# ORGANIZE THE ORGANIZATION AROUND THE CUSTOMER



**Kipp Bodnar,**  
*CMO, HubSpot*

**Making customer centricity work is no small feat. For B2B marketing software and services provider HubSpot, success begins and ends with organizational transformation.**

**Why put the customer first? And what does that really mean?**

When you think about the sales funnel, it's a very mechanical, business-focused framework for how you think about growth. It makes the customer an afterthought. Over the past few years, we've learned, and we now believe more than ever, that our customers are our most important marketing channel.

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**"Our customers are our most important marketing channel."**

So we are approaching this by thinking about having a flywheel where marketing, sales and customer service work together to create a remarkable customer experience. And on top of that, we look at customer word-of-mouth as the fuel that spins that flywheel faster and helps your business grow much faster than it would with customers who were not advocates for you.

**How did you go about bringing marketing, sales and customer service together?**

At the operational level, we created what we call our flywheel team. It's a cross-functional group of marketing, sales and customer service leaders. Most of them are on the operations side and are obsessed with finding the points of friction in our prospecting customer experience and then removing them. They might look to see what changes need to be made to billing terms, landing pages, sales demos or our marketing experience on mobile, desktop, SMS or chat.

**How do you all work together to identify these friction points?**

Each month, we all look at our customer net promoter score (NPS). In NPS, you hear all the complaints. We'll look deeply at the qualitative feedback, and we've operationalized this process to a Slack channel. All of us can be in that Slack channel and see responses from customers in real-time. We can assign, follow up and start taking action to that feedback in a much more proactive way.

We also have a customer staff meeting every month where we identify core trends from the feedback. We bring in leadership from all departments. And we spend 2 hours on one or two customer feedback-related topics. The first hour is an interview with a customer. We spend the second hour talking about what investments we need to make as a leadership team and what changes to make to the proposed strategy.



# THE RISE OF RETAIL- AND BRAND-OPERATED MARKETPLACES

**Utilizing marketplaces is one way for a seller to expand reach. But for some manufacturers and distributors, that increased reach is not worth the competitive threats that they may face on a marketplace.**

“That’s why some retailers and brands are setting out to not just build their own direct ecommerce sites, but also start their own marketplaces,” said Jillian Ryan, eMarketer principal analyst and author of our report “Marketplaces 2019: B2B Ecommerce Strategies for Amazon, Alibaba and Others.”

According to data from FitForCommerce, retailers are launching their own marketplaces to fill in the gaps in product assortment, reduce the risk and cost of taking on inventory, offload shipping costs, and to strengthen relationships with suppliers.

“Some of our customers are building marketplaces,” said Jason Woosley, vice president of commerce product and platform for Experience Business at Adobe, who was interviewed for the report. “They are allowing third parties to participate in order to answer the B2B buyer need for a broader set of products.”

There are also a handful of B2B customers of Luminos Labs, an ecommerce consultancy, that are opening their own marketplace, according to the firm’s business development director, Mike Zaruba.

One such B2B is a national manufacturer of large-scale refrigeration units that wanted to sell more than just the products it built, but also offer incremental solutions from

other providers that are complementary. “Amazon wasn’t the right fit for this client,” Zaruba said. “They wanted to bring multiple product options together for their buyers and have control of the marketplace vs. going to sell their inventory in other marketplaces.”

Another client in the restaurant supply industry is also in the process of building its own marketplace with Luminos Labs. “They’re looking to build a marketplace that captures not only their own products, but also other products that they can help serve through the connections they have within that industry, and then expand from there. They are trying to fill a gap in their sector that other marketplaces just don’t fulfill,” Zaruba said.

Both of these B2Bs see the value in creating a single online commerce destination for their customers and want to make it easier to unify purchasing. Still, both are not yet up and running, so it’s still unknown how successful these types of marketplaces will be.

Office Depot is further along in the process of starting a marketplace, which, similar to Amazon, lives within its current website that sells its own inventory. In early 2019, the office supply retailer launched a pilot for marketplace functionality on its website with one seller: eForCity, a distributor of electronic device accessories. “We wanted to look for a seller who was complementary to what we sell,” said Natalie Malaszenko, the company’s senior vice president of ecommerce. “They’re also on multiple marketplaces, so it was really a partnership in launching, because we knew that we would learn together, as this is their first pure B2B marketplace trial.”



The rollout of the new marketplace has been slow for Office Depot, according to Malaszenko. “We wanted to make sure the integration with the rest of our website was seamless. And testing it was important to see how our current customers responded to the option and how adoption was,” she said.

Part of the strategy was to also serve small and medium-sized B2B sellers looking for another platform to distribute their inventory and tap into the existing Office Depot audience. However, at this juncture, Office Depot is being selective about which brands can sell via its marketplace, Malaszenko said. Products that potentially compete with other suppliers already in Office Depot’s inventory will not be able to participate in the marketplace.

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**Retailers are launching their own marketplaces to fill in the gaps in product assortment, reduce the risk and cost of taking on inventory, offload shipping costs, and to strengthen relationships with suppliers.**



# WHY B2B MARKETERS NEED TO LEVERAGE PRODUCT CONTENT TO DRIVE SALES GROWTH

This post was contributed and sponsored by [Contentserv](#).

**It's not just B2Cs that are dealing with customers who are bouncing from online to offline and back, expecting a seamless experience at every touchpoint. We, as consumers, are driving the expectation that a B2C experience is inherent every time we buy.**

Gone are the days when brands purely focused on manufacturing products. Today, consumer demand has forced manufacturers to take control of their brand or brands to meet product information and transparency expectations across all touchpoints.

Per Live Person, 57% of consumers cite “lack of information about the product” as the primary reason for abandoning an online purchase. These consumer expectations are shifting the way B2Bs do business, internally and externally.

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**57% of consumers cite “lack of information about the product” as the primary reason for abandoning an online purchase.**

Curating and publishing this information can be problematic in and of itself if resources are limited. Providing consumer-facing product information for any channel requires resources, highly automated processes and an understanding of how to market and sell to consumers, as well as how to deal with channel conflicts.

Whether you are B2B and want to create the perfect B2C experience for your customers or you want to go D2C, your product content has a significant impact on buying decisions. [Click here to view the types of content needed to deliver groundbreaking product experiences that convert.](#)

Consumers connect with brands to research products and to find additional information they can't get elsewhere. According to KPMG, 41% of consumers say they trust companies that educate them about product features and benefits. Therefore, the management and optimization of rich product information should be a top priority for any business.

Creating a seamless omnichannel experience requires control and consistency of your overall brand and its products across all touchpoints, at all times. Incorrect, outdated or inconsistent product information gives a negative perception of a brand in the market.

Product information management (PIM) is a streamlined approach to organizational data and content management. A PIM solution enables businesses to capture, store, merge, transform, enrich and translate product content from different sources using multiple formats. This information can then be shared internally, published across all sales channels and syndicated to retail trading partners or recipients for a consistent product experience. PIM dramatically improves operational efficiencies and serves as an essential foundational solution to any omnichannel initiative.







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# A GUIDE TO THE TOP THREE B2B MARKETPLACES: AMAZON BUSINESS, ALIBABA AND THOMAS

**Then a business-to-business (B2B) company is building or assessing its marketplace strategy, a first step is understanding the different marketplace options. For our report, “Marketplaces 2019: B2B Ecommerce Strategies for Amazon, Alibaba and Others,” we analyzed the top three B2B marketplaces in the US—Amazon Business, Alibaba and Thomas—along with an overview of what makes their platforms work for buyers and sellers.**

We define a B2B marketplace as an ecommerce platform that lets third-parties sell directly to customers. The distinction between a marketplace and a distributor or retailer is that the latter owns the inventory, while the former connects the seller and buyer. Unlike business-to-consumer (B2C), B2B marketplaces facilitate more complex transactions accounting for business buying needs like wholesale, bulk orders, invoicing, order approvals and more.

## Amazon Business

Launched in April 2015, Amazon Business is currently available in eight countries: the US, UK, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Japan and India. In 2018, third-party sellers accounted for more than half of the \$10 billion in sales Amazon Business generated. The other portion of sales resulted from inventory Amazon, as a distributor, already owns. That percentage may even grow in 2019, as Amazon launched a private-label line for business buyers (similar to its consumer-facing Amazon Basics line) called “Amazon Commercial” in June this year.

Many of the sellers on Amazon Business are SMBs that are using Amazon to scale their ecommerce strategy and reach new geographical locations and audiences, according to Rob Green, general manager of business development at Amazon Business.

The journey for new sellers starts by registering through Seller Central to list products and set prices. Analytics dashboards are available on Seller Central to show buyers inventory/pricing levels and sales trends, including who is buying what, when and how often. Sellers need to perform at a certain level and remain in good standing when it comes to meeting customer expectations around quality, fulfillment and delivery.

Buyers that make their business purchases on Amazon are able to buy in bulk and even get custom quotes from some sellers. Account administrators can use features such as “Workflow Approvals,” which enable multiple buyers to build carts to send to the admin for approval, or “Spend Visibility,” a tool aimed at the admin to provide a high-level analysis of what is being spent on certain categories or items. Finally, “Guided Buying” helps account admins identify preferred suppliers, brands and products.

## Alibaba

Launched over 20 years ago, B2B marketplace Alibaba.com was the first business from China’s Alibaba Group. While the company’s Chinese consumer-facing marketplaces, Taobao and Tmall, make up the lion’s share of revenues, international wholesale commerce on the B2B side generates roughly 2%, according to Alibaba’s annual report.



Originally designed as a yellow page directory, Alibaba.com connected Chinese factories with global buyers, mostly in developed countries, looking for custom manufactured goods. It has undergone a transformation in the past two years, and the marketplace is now an end-to-end sourcing and commerce platform that manages transactions between buyers and sellers. It provides a full suite of services, including escrow payments, communication tools, translation assistance, custom quotes and even logistic capabilities like shipping/delivery options.

In July 2019, Alibaba announced that SMB sellers in the US could sell without borders on the marketplace to buyers worldwide, an expansion that can help further differentiate Alibaba from Amazon. Whereas Alibaba was once very focused on custom goods, it now seeks to facilitate the buying and selling of commoditized items as well. Further, Alibaba does not own any inventory and considers itself a technology company, not a retailer or distributor—which, in the company's view, creates less competition in search results.

Alibaba does not take a commission on the platform's transactions (although there is a small credit fee involved), but instead it charges all suppliers an annual membership fee—roughly \$1,500. The company also gets revenues from ads that sellers can buy to do targeting by keyword, specific geographies or based on intent displayed by buyers through search history.

## Thomas

Covering more than 72,000 product categories in over 150 countries worldwide, Thomas has a more than 120-year legacy as a print directory turned digital marketplace (as of 2006).

Serving industrial B2B buyers for product sourcing and supplier evaluation, Thomas provides utility for the buyer to find the right supplier, engage with them and start the purchase, but it does not actually facilitate the transaction, said Tony Uphoff, the company's president and CEO.

Comparison tools allow buyers to find and compare multiple solutions against one another. Further, Request for Information (RFI) engines also help suppliers send custom proposals to prospective customers and create bidding opportunities so buyers have more choice and transparency.

Thomas has roughly 500,000 suppliers on the platform who get started by creating a free profile. "We encourage a free listing and then we've got a natural on-ramp for those free listers to develop paid programs with us," Uphoff said. This is how Thomas monetizes the marketplace.

There are more than 850,000 active registered buyers on Thomas who complete more than 1.5 million supplier evaluations every month. Three-quarters of the buyers are from SMBs, and 93% of the Fortune 1000 use Thomas to source suppliers.

Roughly 75% to 80% of the sales on the marketplace are from large-scale buyers that are seeking a custom manufacturer. The other 20% to 25% of purchases are from OEMs seeking very specific parts, which are also sometimes custom.



# BY 2021, MORE THAN HALF OF COMPANIES WILL USE LINKEDIN FOR MARKETING

**We estimate that slightly more than half of marketers (50.3%) will use LinkedIn for marketing and advertising purposes by 2021. This year, 49.6% of companies with 100+ employees will use the professional social media platform.**

Our forecasts exclude companies that use the platform strictly for recruiting.

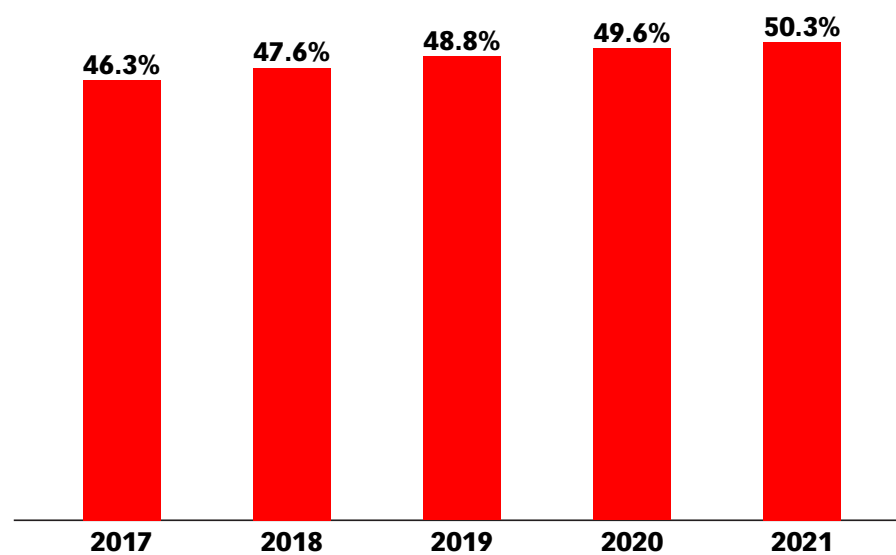
Currently, B2B strategies on LinkedIn are more common than B2C ones since it has historically been the preferred social media platform for B2B companies eager to reach professional audiences. In recent years, LinkedIn has introduced many features to target this audience based on job title, education, seniority, industry and company—all of which are important B2B audience attributes.

“We see more B2Cs using LinkedIn than in years past, but LinkedIn doesn’t work for all B2Cs,” said Jillian Ryan, eMarketer principal analyst and author of our latest report, “Engaging Professional Audiences on LinkedIn: How Brands Can Unlock First-Party Data and Connections.”

This naturally limits the potential growth of our estimate in the coming years: There is a ceiling on how many companies can use LinkedIn for their marketing and advertising.

But growth of LinkedIn as a marketing tool has partly mirrored the user growth we’ve seen to LinkedIn as a platform. Earlier, we estimated that the network will grow faster than previously expected, with about 62.1 million adult users in the US this year, or about a third of all US social media users.

**Share of US Marketers Using LinkedIn, 2017-2021**  
% of total



*Note: companies with 100+ employees; includes use of any of the proprietary public-facing tools on LinkedIn for marketing purposes; includes organic and paid functions; excludes use solely for employee recruitment purposes*

*Source: eMarketer, Jan 2020*

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“As brands become more adept at leveraging multiple social media platforms, marketers are finding success in utilizing LinkedIn to capture professional audiences at a different stage of the marketing funnel,” said eMarketer senior forecasting analyst Oscar Orozco. “LinkedIn has a wealth of first-party data on a professional audience and unique B2B targeting capabilities, making it a great place to engage business decision-makers. This will continue to drive increased use of the platform as a marketing tool in the coming years.”

In September 2019, LinkedIn launched a new interface of its Campaign Manager self-service advertising product, called Objective-Based Advertising. Within the new experience—which very closely mirrors Facebook’s offering—advertisers can manually choose from three umbrellas of objectives: Awareness, Consideration and Conversions.

“LinkedIn is working hard to develop more innovative offerings for their advertisers,” Ryan said. “The launch of Objective-Based Advertising is a step in the right direction and helps advertisers build the best audience segments based on what they are trying to achieve with each campaign.”



# HOW AETNA USES CONTENT MARKETING TO EDUCATE CONSUMERS ON HEALTHY LIVING



**David Edelman,**  
*CMO, Aetna*

**An increasingly important part of companies' messaging efforts is content marketing, which they rely on to build brand awareness and engagement, provide thought leadership, and tap into cultural conversations around particular trends and topics.**

Marketers recognize how content marketing can be key to their efforts. Nearly 80% of marketing professionals worldwide said they expect content-led campaigns to grow in the next two years, according to an October 2019 survey from World Media Group.

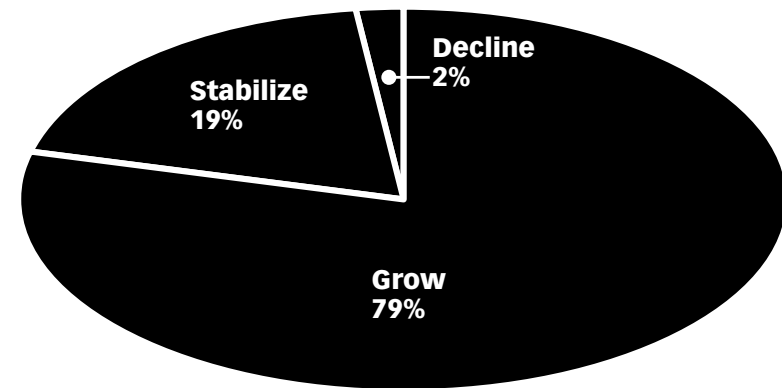
That is why Aetna, the Connecticut-based health insurance provider acquired by CVS Health in 2018, has a content marketing strategy for both its business-to-consumer (B2C) and business-to-business (B2B) clients. We spoke with the company on how they use content to educate consumers on healthy living and how it measures the success of those efforts.

## **How does the company use content marketing to promote wellness?**

On the consumer side, there are a number of different ways we use content marketing. First, we have a pretty strong social

## **Do Marketing Professionals Worldwide Think that Content-Led Campaigns Will Grow, Stabilize or Decline?**

*% of respondents, Oct 2019*



*Note: in the next 2 years*

*Source: World Media Group, "Understanding the Future for Content-Led Marketing Around the World," Nov 6, 2019*

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media presence where we inform, inspire, engage and help people understand the success stories of others. We also give them health checklists.

Additionally, we set up "digital hubs" for a wide range of disease categories. For example, if you have a cancer diagnosis or you're going in for a biopsy, you can access a whole set of our videos and checklists—they're a consolidation of all the resources Aetna, and now CVS, make available to you. We



provide resources that inform users on the questions they should ask their doctor, what to do before appointments, decisions to be prepared for, and personal stories from others who have had similar experiences.

Another area of our content covers health insurance. For example, during the annual enrollment period for Medicare, seniors are faced with a bewildering array of options as to how to construct their Medicare support, and we have a lot of rich content on that, like videos. This segment includes lists of questions to ask yourself as well as guided questionnaires to help you learn more.

## **What is your content marketing strategy on the B2B side?**

On the whole, our B2B content marketing strategy is the same as on our consumer side. There's a lot of support for B2B sales. We create a ton of content for that and use content management tools to get it out to our sales force. We also send content directly to our sponsors on a regular basis.

The B2B market is especially concerned with people who have chronic conditions. Those folks have more out-of-work days and unforeseen situations, along with higher medical costs. So, on this side of our content, there's a more explicit emphasis on things like diabetes and oncology support.

## **What challenges do health insurers like Aetna have when it comes to marketing healthy living to consumers?**

The strategy of Aetna itself took a pivot about four years ago, when the emphasis was placed more on members' health. One of the things that I was brought on to do, from a marketing perspective, was figure out how to help people understand

the benefits of healthier behaviors. The challenge with helping people be healthier is that it requires lifestyle changes. We know what we'd like people to do, but we don't necessarily know how to help or motivate them to do it. The vast majority of challenges we face involve people with chronic conditions who need help on an everyday basis.

If we can help people get healthy, everybody wins. They are healthier, and they save money. It also allows us to cut pricing, and thus offer more services. It's a total virtuous cycle.

## **How does the company measure the success of its content marketing efforts?**

The main way we measure success is by looking at the actions we inspire. We want to see people act on what they've learned, and because we see the claims data on the back end, we know what has actually been done.

We do measure the traffic on the site that comes from people who want to learn more about health insurance. The information on those sites is not biased toward any one health insurance option; it's factual and done in an interesting way to help people better understand the process. It then gives them an option to contact us afterward and learn more about their options with Aetna. We certainly measure leads that come through that.





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