

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a subway station platform. A train with red and white doors is stopped at the platform. The ceiling has fluorescent lights and a digital display board. The platform has a yellow tactile strip along the edge.

1 Upminster
2 Circle Line via L
3 Upminster

CLOSING THE GAPS IN B2B CAMPAIGNS

October | 2020

Practices in B2B Campaigns

INTRODUCTION & DEFINITION

At **Verto** we help emerging, ambitious technology and services companies find new business. We see that sellers struggle to engage with new prospects as they prefer to focus on existing accounts. Company leaders feel that Marketing is complex, expensive and never seems to deliver the leads that sales need. Agencies talk about media and content, but they can't speak the language of sales. Leading analysts like Gartner have identified "Improving prospecting and early pipeline activities" as a top challenge, and this is where we come in. Verto brings a formula of Sales "know-how", digital demand generation and prospecting tools in a flexible model, that helps you conquer the sales and marketing gaps which have previously snagged your revenue success.

What's the role of marketing campaigns? Campaigns that raise awareness and promote engagement with your prospects are part of top of funnel prospecting. We specifically encourage the use of marketing technology, such as Buyer Intent tools and Autonomous Campaigns to build mindshare and produce a consistent pipeline of new business potential. Buyer Intent tools are deployed to locate what we call *People of Interest* – those who are digitally active in your space, engaging with a variety of sources and content out there. This is only part of the battle though. These companies and contacts are not yet ready to be engaged by inside or field reps. We advise our clients to then encourage these *people of interest* to engage with your specific content and assets in order to build mindshare, create preference and turn them into *interested people*. We achieve this by creating multi-channel marketing campaigns.

So how about we give you some insight as to why you should do this and the guiding principles you might use when creating and provisioning these campaigns?

"We're going to move to more targeted messaging — using intent data and driving against ABM programs — to move marketing efforts further into the sales funnel, because the physical sales contact is going to be a different experience for the foreseeable future." - Michael McLaren, Merkle



WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

Before we jump into that, it is good practice to define what we mean here. There's so much lingo and terminology flying around, these days, it's easy to become confused. Our overall advice regarding definitions is that (obvious definitions notwithstanding) it doesn't really matter *how* you define the terms, and labels you use. We have said that there are so many out there which makes it more important that you pause so that you can take some time to all agree on *something*. This is the point. It's less important what the actual definition is, but more important that you all agree on it and then move on.

To start with, then, how do you best define a Campaign?

The most meaningful definition for campaign I found is the explanation from [Marketing MO](#) and one that [we discussed in an article from December 2017](#): "...marketing campaigns are the main method for both communicating with their market to reinforce their positioning, and for customer acquisition. Good campaigns follow a theme and include a series of touches on the market. It's noisy in the marketplace, and a message delivered once through a single medium rarely makes a difference. While there's no magic number regarding the best frequency for a message to make an impact, opinions range from three to twenty times, with seven being an old marketing adage. Many marketing campaigns contain an overarching theme, which can be leveraged over extended periods of time with multiple variations, or different elements, to tell an entire story." **Well done Marketing MO.**

COMPONENTS OF A CAMPAIGN

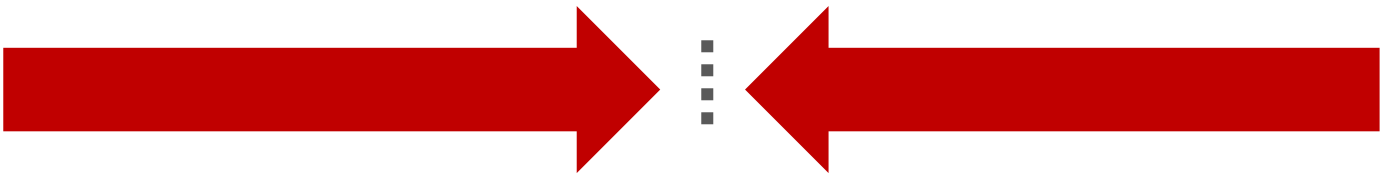
It's easy to find out what a reasonable campaign should consist of. All you have to do these days is go to the trusty internet and you'll find all sorts of sage advice (maybe like this). Without being overly dismissive, there is some sound, basic advice out there. For example, every Campaign should contain the following elements:



We immediately run into some issues, however. Some of these things are easier said than done and can make us furrow our brows further. For example, "strategy" is possibly the most overused and misunderstood word of the last 40 years. Ask ten people as to what their strategy is in a particular area of their business and you'll likely get answers that sound less like strategies and more like plans, goals, and objectives. [The simplest definition I came across is Michael Porters](#): "What are the three definition strategies? Michael Porter developed three generic strategies, that a company could use to gain competitive advantage, back in 1980. These three are: cost leadership, differentiation and focus." A strategy is a high level "how".

All seven listed campaign components are worthy of inclusion to guide your campaign formulation, but again we encourage you to avoid getting dragged down all the various rat holes that exist. We use the analogy of “gaps” at Verto and this area is replete with them so beware. In other words, it’s ok to define your campaigns with a different set of components. Clearly, you’ll use the ones you think are the most meaningful and be prepared to discuss and defend.

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THE HIGH POINTS

As we have said, the seven points listed above are all valid, but here are the three to prioritize:

1

Buyer Personas Drive

Everything: Spend the time to think, talk, research and consult about your buyer and why they buy. Frankly, despite well intentioned advice and research on this much of the advice that emanates from the sales method and training industries is too high level to be useful is a lot of generic guesswork. If you can get to a few existing customers then you just need to ask them two questions *“why did they buy anything, and why did they buy yours?”*

2

Discuss the Outcomes Now: Just as all leads not born equal, neither are all campaigns. Not all campaigns should be or are capable of delivering the “Glengarry Leads.” ML’s, MQL’s, Engagements, Point Scores and general leading indicators are all valid outcomes on the “journey” of new business development. If the situation (company stage, marketing data, offer, etc.) does not align with pure lead generation outcomes right now, then don’t commit to them.

3

Learn as You Go: We live in strange times. On the one hand everyone will be nodding their heads vigorously when we say, “learn as you go.” They’ll even throw in trendy phrases like “fail fast” to show you how fashionable they are. Contrary to this we live in a time where we are surrounded by the cleverest people ever (of which we might be one). So set the expectation that changes will be made as you go and that you’ll calibrate the content, cadence, etc.



GENERAL ADVICE

1. Keep it simple
2. Better to have a good plan today (and go with it) than waiting for a great plan tomorrow
3. This is **NOT** an excuse for throwing things together, but you must find the balance between planning and execution
4. Don't get overly ambitious on goals
 - You won't win too many friends with extravagant claims of success, especially if you fall short. We appreciate that by the same token you won't inspire too many people with overly conservative estimates.
 - We acknowledge that human beings tend to look for shiny new objects, panaceas, silver bullets, etc. Solutions that will fix everything. You must be realistic with the predicted outcomes and you must be able to connect back to your Campaign Plan (such as the seven points above). You must find balance and be committed to the method that will deliver this.
5. Incorporate a greater theme
 - Our greater theme is "trust". We'll argue that everything revolves around your ability to overcome suspicion and generate an opportunity to build trust, irrespective of the industry, or campaign, or target audience, or goal.
 - Not only does this need to be considered as part of your brand, but you need to think through how you communicate this in things like marketing campaigns. From the language you use, the colors you choose and images you project.
6. Devote the most thought to your Buyer - everything comes from your consideration of who buys, why and how?
7. Consistency & Patience
 - Be consistent. Run your campaigns every day, week month, quarter, whatever cadence you have chosen (taking care to have considered what that cadence should be and why).
 - In the absence of some new discovery it's the consistency and discipline that drives the results you'll need, but these days patience is in short supply.
 - In B2B it seems to be generally accepted that a suspect needs to see, hear, or consume some content from you around 5 times before they'll entertain a more meaningful interaction. In the consumer world, I've read anything from 7-20 times. Advice with such a breadth of numbers can be unhelpful, but the

deal is that 3 is probably too few and 20 maybe too many in B2B. For example, according to the Edelman trust barometer “63% of consumers need to hear company claims three to five times before they actually believe it.”

70%

“70% of buyers said they noticed ads from a solution provider they chose during their research process. Of that 70%, almost half (48%) said the ads positively impacted their perception of the brand.” - DEMAND GEN REPORT 2020 B2B BUYER BEHAVIOR STUDY

- Use a number in the middle, that’s practical. Have some logic and 3rd party data to support your decision and then manage and calibrate as you go. If you find that email opens and clicks, or article clicks and content views and downloads from digital ads are not converting into better engagement (via form fills or say BDR outreach) then raise the threshold for when you transfer them to the downstream receiving function.
7. Don’t use examples like “hey this is what Nike” do or did. You’re probably not them and what works for them probably won’t work for you. Using big examples like this also sets an expectation with the management...one that’s hard to “undo.”

THE VANTAGE

The “Vantage” is where we’re trying to sum up the insights and advice we’re providing. We’re trying to net-out the takeaways in the hope that when you’ve considered what we’ve said, you’ll have a *different* vantage point! So here goes:



Dare to be different. There are many problems with “best practice” advice. Just because someone claims something as *best practice* doesn’t make it so, and once something has crossed over into the realm of best practice it’s probably become conventional and will therefore net you conventional (i.e. ordinary) results. So, dare to be different. You can still combine some best practices that will satisfy the conventional thinkers in your organization. When you do *dare to be different* ensure that you can articulate why you are adopting that approach.



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Incorporate your consistent “theme”. In our case this consistent theme is around “trust.” It’s a strand that runs through everything we do. Whatever your theme is (and it should be one of your brand pillars) you should incorporate the language, images and even colors that help promote that theme in all your campaigns no matter the specific thrust or focus of that campaign.



Be prepared to fight for your right to a “runway.” The Beastie Boys wanted us to “fight for our right to Party.” You’ll need to fight for your right to have long enough runways for campaigns. Say you accept that you need a “person of interest” to see, or engage with your content, six times before they become an “interested person”. You might want to present some opportunities to do this “constantly” (via digital ads, for example) plus an email routine of every 2-3 weeks. This means that this campaign will need a runway (or duration) of 12-18 weeks. There shouldn’t be anything earth shattering about this. We haven’t just discovered fire, but you’d be staggered how many people have not thought this aspect through. The point isn’t whether in your market its 6 touches or 10 touches over 10 week or 10 months. What’s important is that you’ve thought it through. It’s ok for people to disagree with you on the number of interactions or even the time schedule for those touches, but don’t go into a campaign conversation without well considered and defensible recommendations on cadence and runway.





MINDING THE GAPS IN B2B SALES AND MARKETING INVOLVES FINDING THEM FIRST

The gaps in sales and marketing have gotten wider thanks to the "new" normal. As a result - B2B leadership needs to do more with less. Demand generation, digital marketing, and sales enablement should work together, be simpler, cost less, and produce more.

We make it happen.

www.vertoadvisors.com