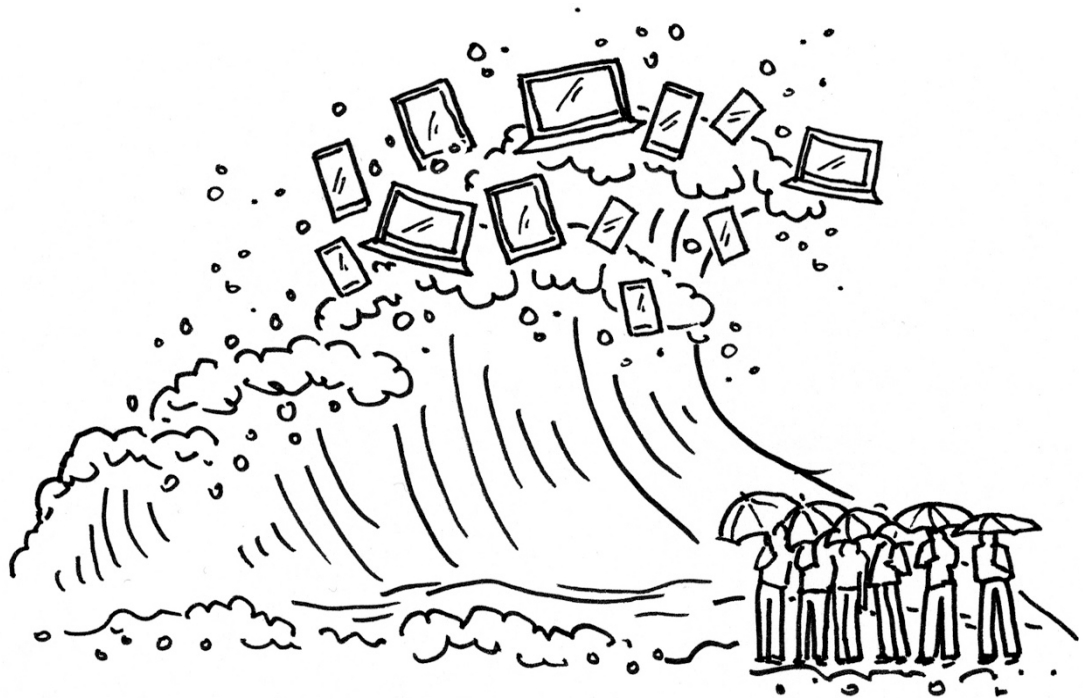


# A DIFFERENT LOOK ON: GOING DIGITAL

## DIGITAL SUCKS ...



The digital revolution is a doomsday for the unprepared, say the experts. Digital is coming to get you and if you don't believe them, ask a taxi driver.

Yet beyond the gloomy keynote speakers, there is a justified excitement about the digital world and how it is affecting the way we do business. It can bring tremendous benefits to all industries – and the world of B2B marketing is no different.

The problem is that the tsunami of new opportunities brings with it a bigger wave of garbage. How to sort out the good from the bad? How do you tell the game-changing digital tools that B2B marketers cannot afford to miss out on from the over-hyped, under-cooked, time wasters? There are a few of the former and many of the latter.

Do not worry. This whitepaper aims at cutting through the jungle of hype, providing guidance for sales, marketing and communication managers in the world of industrial b2b markets. We have worked with specialists and consultants to screen what is trendy and retain only what is most relevant for your business.

## ■ So what can digital do for me?

Benefits of the digital transition in the world of b2b marketing fall into two main categories:

- > increased productivity (it will make you work better)
- > stronger engagement (it will make your communications work better)

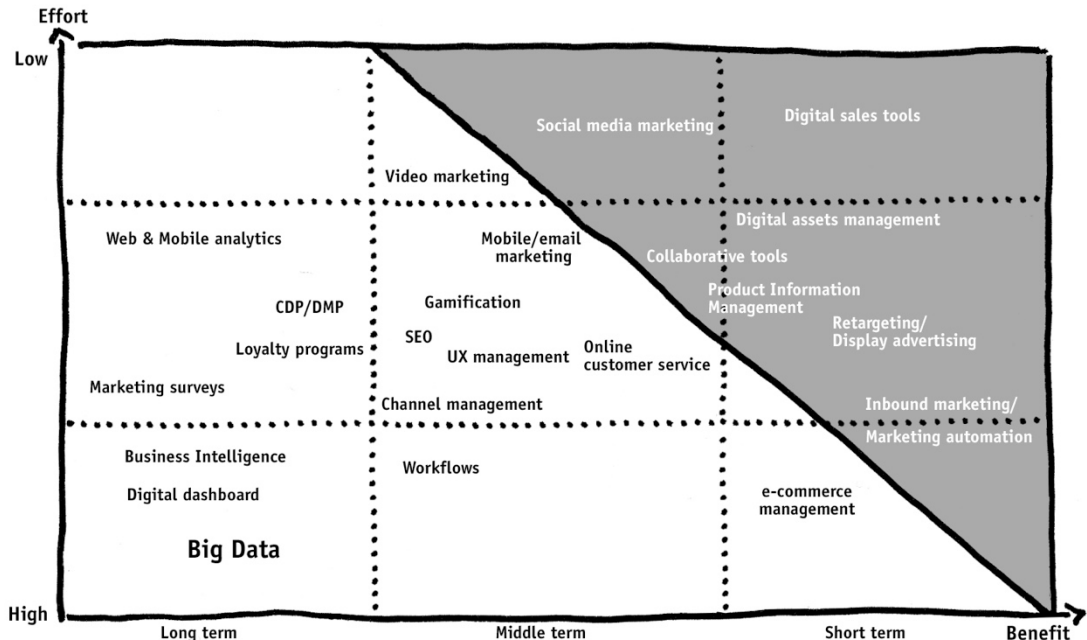
Higher productivity includes, for example, better information flow in workgroups through collaborative tools. Or lower marketing cost through cross-media publishing. Stronger engagement, on the other hand, means that you can have better knowledge about your targets and their needs via marketing automation and inbound marketing, or that you have new opportunities to bypass distributors and engage directly with the client. This article freely dabbles in both categories.

## ■ An analogue map of digital trends

The following diagram is a simple attempt to summarize digital trends. You can't click it, it will not post to Twitter on your behalf, and it does not dynamically reflect your current location, heart rate or relationship status. However, it does sort the main digital trends relevant to B2B marketers according to two dimensions:

- > The effort it takes to deploy them
- > The benefit we can expect from it

In the upper right corner, you find the quick wins. Moderate efforts creating fast returns. Tools in the lower left corner generally demand more effort and require more time to pay-off. This doesn't mean they aren't worth it – simply that you need to be in it for the long haul (usually about twice as long as it suggests on the vendor's website). The upper right corner is our priority.



## ■ Time to prioritise

According to our experience with industrial marketers, digital change is real – but adoption is slow, especially in b2b markets. One of the main reasons is indecision over which tools and systems to invest in. Limited human and financial resources restrict the choice of initiatives that can be driven simultaneously, so you have to prioritise.

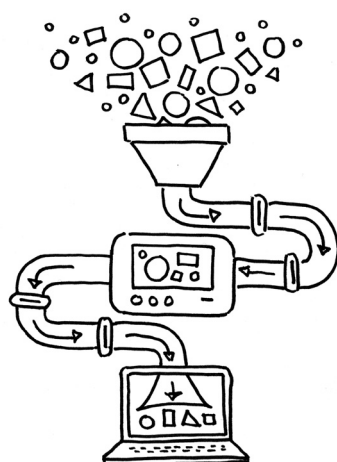
We have therefore compiled a list of the 7 main topics for your consideration, based on our understanding and experience of typical industrial marketing and communication needs. You will have to deal with all of them sooner or later and we hope our summary will help you work out which one to deal with first (if you're not already doing it, of course). Pick your battles carefully and you're far more likely to come out a winner.

## DIGITAL SOARS ...

### ■ Inbound Marketing and Marketing Automation

Purpose: track website visitors, enrich customer and prospect knowledge, drive engagement, enable precise communication targeting

Hubspot call it “inbound marketing”. The idea is that, rather than pushing information to saturated readers, you tempt people to your blog or website with a personalised offer of high-quality content. And while the central hub of marketing automation is your website (because that's where you control the experience), it is the marketing automation tools from people like Hubspot that do much of the clever stuff. They track recurrent visitors, identify them by appropriate means, detect their areas of interest, segment



them by building buyer personas, and provide relevant information to them through the web and emails, building automated processes whenever possible.

Years ago, we used to talk about bulk emails. These days the main benefit of these automated tools is not the volume they handle, but their degree of personalisation. It's one-to-one marketing on a massive scale, sending the right message to the right type of prospect at the right stage in the buying process. The way they capture, manage and use data can have a transformational effect on your marketing.

Marketing automation is on the rise, also in industrial B2B markets. Most U.S. B2B companies already use such platforms, while Europe lags a little behind. Making the most out of your website visitors, managing contact data across the sales team and identifying high potential prospects are the most important motivators.

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Capture and nourish information concerning target audience	Information overflow
Target communications precisely	Poor content quality and relevance affecting brand
Generate leads and convert more efficiently	Resource intensive, often underestimated
Automate engagement with prospects	Methodological effort needed
	Long-term investment

Providers: Hubspot, Eloqua, Marketo, Sharpspring.

## ■ Digital sales tools

Purpose: enrich and simplify sales pitches, enable central control over contents.

How many sales reps still tour their region with clunky PowerPoint demos, boring their audiences into submission with non-interactive presentations based on outdated product information and material that marketing doesn't even know about? Too many is the answer. But, if they work for you, the good news is that you can improve them overnight with digital presentation tools.

Tablets and tactile PC screens turn sales pitches and meetings from a one-way bore-fest into an interactive and engaging experience. Prefabricated apps enable marketing staff to build branded presentation tools within minutes, manage contents via the back office, notify sales staff around the world about the availability of new items and gather information from the field via questionnaires and configurator tools.

Last but not least, these tools offer detailed usage statistics and obsolete information can be discarded remotely from all devices via the back office. All information is stored online in the cloud and offline on the device. So the presentation is not only a better experience for the customer, you also know that all sales staff will deliver consistently accurate messages. Move over mavericks; marketing is taking back control of the customer experience, while also giving sales teams the power to really engage their prospects.



OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Sales staff empowerment Central marketing control Enhanced brand image Higher impact of sales pitch Consistency of image Collect data and gain insight	Acceptance of sales teams Requires constant central management of assets

Providers: Touch&Sell, Showpad, ModSho...

## ■ Digital asset management

Purpose: centrally manage assets such as image banks, videos, design rules, documents etc.

Ever spent hours searching for an image to use in a campaign? Struggled with rolling-out new brand guidelines worldwide? Wasted time resending information already sent? Then wasted more time sending it again a week later? It's a recurrent struggle for all marketers. While bigger companies have their platforms for sharing such information internally with sales and marketing staff and externally with agencies and partners, SMEs often rely on unstructured piles of data handled upon request by overloaded staff.

Brand libraries and image banks are made to do away with the mess. They enable the marketing department to centralize all available files and information, tag it appropriately and ease searching, manage access rights and keep track of copyright information.

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Consistent image across the board, including 3 <sup>rd</sup> parties Organized distribution of CI Rights management Centralized marketing resources	Accumulation of trash Requires constant central management of assets Migration and maintenance Control access

Providers: Bynder, Nuxeo, Widen

### ■ Collaborative tools

Purpose: enable more efficient marketing collaboration, involve seamlessly internal and external stakeholders



Email is a pretty good way of communicating. The trouble is that it simply wasn't designed for effective team working. Much more effective are the newer generation of collaborative tools that were designed from the ground-up to support business teams. They bring together teams across organisational structures, accessible by both internal and external staff. Teams are able to share and manage files and data easily, as well as displaying updates in a way that suits their way of working. Also, crucially, most such tools are cloud-based, meaning that all communications and files are backed up, centrally controlled and accessible from any location or (authorised) device. Although data security remains an issue, the productivity advantages can be significant.

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Ease information exchange	Control access
Speed-up project management	Risk of security breaches
Document management and versioning	Generate permanent sense of urgency
	Need to define policies and rules
	Need administration

Providers: Sharepoint, Slack, Adobe, Dropbox, Box.com, Icloud, ...

### ■ Social media marketing

Purpose: engage one-to-one interaction, reach individuals directly

The buyer used to be the last link in the marketing chain. Everything led up to their decision to buy the product. But the digital explosion has meant that every individual is not just a potential purchaser but an ambassador. What they do and say in relation to your brand can be seen by millions.

The advantages are huge. Brands can cost-effectively communicate directly with consumers, offering content, advice and customer service, which is in turn endorsed and shared with people they know. But while marketers can leverage this channel to their own ends, the social media echo chamber can also work against them. Social media marketing tools take much of the legwork out of social media management – enabling scheduled posts, for example – but they also offer monitoring features, because rumours spread fast and smart, prompt brand and reputation management is essential.

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Precise targeting Increase audiences Create 1:1 relations Nurture brand loyalty Get market insights Recommendation rather than communication Build and manage e-reputation Ease recruiting	Need community manager Requires constant attention Risk of security breaches Brand damage ROI hard to measure

Social media platforms: Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram

Social media monitoring/automation tools: Hootsuite, Buffer, Meltwater, bit.ly

### ■ Web advertising, retargeting

Purpose: match ads with target group, display on most relevant sites.



We've been advertising online for a while. But the technology behind enables some very sophisticated targeting that makes it increasingly effective.

Ever wonder why the same ad keeps popping up on every site you visit? That's retargeting – and it can be very effective for B2B marketers. If your prospect visits your site, you can remind them of your offer even when they leave your site. Retargeting uses networks that consist of thousands of different sites – which is why the advertiser seems to follow you wherever you go.

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Match targets and offering precisely Build awareness where it is most relevant Track prospects until conversion Personalize promises	Ad killers Banner blindness Intrusive, violation of privacy, off-putting Retargeting existing customers Failing to segment and measure success

Providers: Criteo, Google, DoubleClick,...



## ■ Product Information Management

Purpose: Support the global identification, linking and synchronization of product information across heterogeneous data sources.



Industrial B2B marketers often have to deal with a complex range of products. Keeping track of accurate, up-to-date product information is essential, but when products are constantly evolving (and product life cycles are becoming shorter every year, it seems) this job is becoming harder. Let technology ride to the rescue in the shape of PIM systems. Product Information Management systems help you to reconcile product master data, create and manage a central database system of record, enable the delivery of a single product view of data and support data quality and compliance through monitoring and corrective-action techniques. The end result is not only an easier life for staff, but customers also receive faster, more accurate answers to their product queries.

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Manage contents through the product's lifecycle	Organizational effort
Reduce errors	Migration and maintenance
Share contents between products	Integration with ERP

Providers: Akeneo, Quable, Nextpage,...

## GARBAGE IN, GARBAGE OUT

Digital technology will not revolutionise your marketing on its own. The tools, technologies and platforms mentioned above enables companies to communicate more quickly, cheaply and effectively with their customers. But without the right message, the right strategy, the right content, you are running the risk of getting better at saying the wrong thing. The strategic, human effort that goes into planning marketing is more essential than ever. Trust and credibility don't grow automatically by digital. That's your job.

- **Do your own thing**

There is a famous quote – variously ascribed to either Peter Drucker, Xerox or Zsa Zsa Gabor – that “the best way to predict the future is to invent it”. This is a really relevant point for industrial marketers to-day. There will be lots of people telling you what to do (or at least, gently suggesting what you should do, as we have done in this article), but in such fast-changing times the opportunity is there like never before to do your own thing. You know your market, you know your customers; you therefore know how the benefits of digital marketing can best be applied to helping them. So don’t be daunted by digital; be inspired.



## **OTHER PUBLICATIONS FROM US**

### **■ Read our white papers on:**

- > Content marketing
- > Communicating credibility
- > Emotions and the industry
- > Value propositions in industrial b2b markets
- > Employer branding
- > Communicating quality

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