

"Effective B2B marketing is not only about numbers"

Today's marketing sometimes only seems to be about unique visitor counts, search engine optimization, click through rates, views, likes and clicks. And of course, it is important to have an audience. If no one hears or sees your message, it will be hard to achieve anything. But it is equally important to find the right audience. And it is even more important that your message is actually perceived, understood and then hopefully leads to action. What does it take to get your audience engaged and committed to you as a vendor and to your products and solutions?

The basics

Any marketer knows you have to plan for success. You need to understand the market, the needs of your clients, the essence of your companies' proposition and of course the value of that proposition to the clients. In addition, you need to understand the supply chain and your position in it. Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of your competition is key. And when all that information is available you can start planning your marketing efforts. At three major levels:

1. Your corporate marketing strategy
2. Campaigns that are supportive of that strategy
3. And events and actions that are supportive of those campaign.

At all three levels you will try and answer the obvious questions related to any marketing activity:

- **Objective:** What do you want to achieve?
Notoriety? Recognition? Awareness? Lead generation?
- **Audience:** Who are you communicating with?
Location? Job? Age? Gender? Background? Interests? Education?
- **Message:** What are you communicating?
What is the content of your message? Topics? Themes?
- **Media:** How do you communicate?
Web? Social Media? Events? Meetings?

- **Shape and form:** What's the style of communication?
Formal/informal? Visual? Technical? Emotional? Inspirational?
- **Constraints:** What resources are you able to use?
Budget? Time? Deadline? Support? Available media/content?
- **Planning:** When will you do what?
Actions connected to people and time.

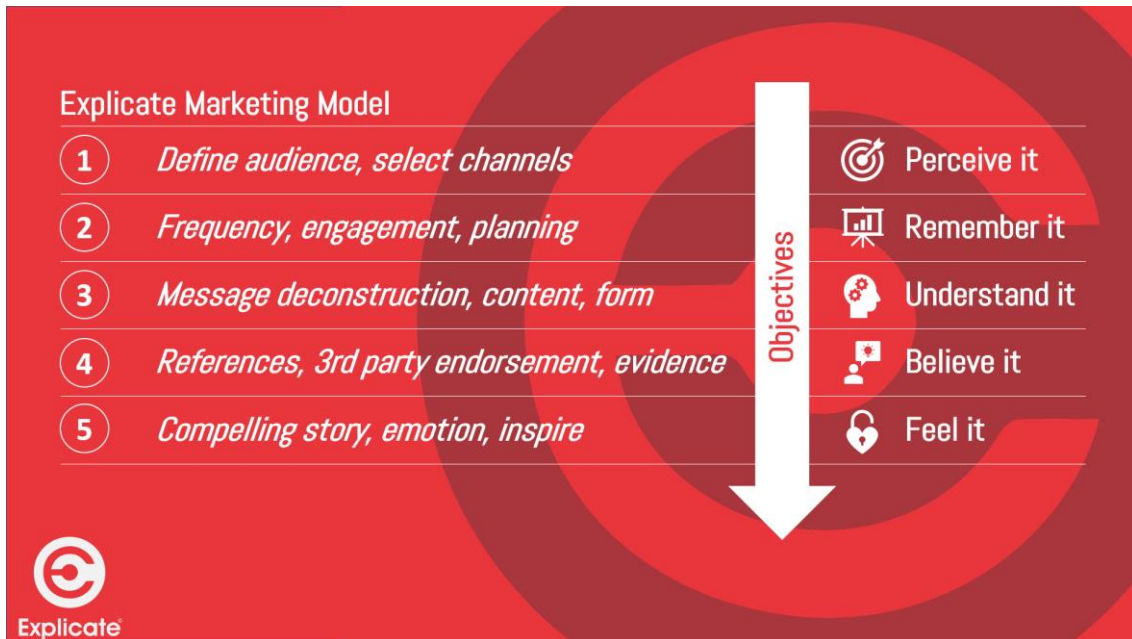
Most marketers will know their audience well. They may have crafted personas to target and they will speak to clients often. They mostly know what media channels are available to use. They will work with agencies on the creative side of things. And if the constraints are clear, planning activities is usually also not the biggest challenge.

But specifying what you exactly wish to achieve is often a more challenging task than one would assume. And specifying and creating content is also not always easily done. Both specification jobs require a combination of analytical skills, creativity and a sound understanding of the business and proposition that are the object of the marketing support. The "Explicate Marketing Model" may help you streamline your thoughts and focus your mind on the topics that make a difference when planning your marketing efforts.

Explicate your marketing efforts

The Explicate marketing model is a result from years of hard work, study, experience and common sense related to communicating commercial messages to audiences. It is applicable at the level of a corporate marketing strategy, a marketing campaign and even every single step in the campaign. The model helps to identify the goals or objectives that you are trying to achieve with your audience and the way these objectives can be realized. It is common practice to define one or more personas. It is much less of a common practice to clearly specify what it is that you wish to accomplish with your audience.

And that is exactly what is at the heart of our marketing approach. The model specifies layers of physical and/or emotional commitment to your brand and your message.



The model specifies five layers of marketing communication objectives:

Perceive it

In order to achieve anything with your audience, your message must be seen or heard by your audience. It does not make sense to do an expensive super bowl TV advertisement when you know your audience does not like sports. It would be silly place a banner on a tech site if you are targeting elderly people who rarely have used computers. Knowing your audience is key. Define personas if it helps specify who your audience is. And figure out what media channels you can use to get their attention.

This is the easy step. It is the core activity of most marketers.

Remember it

The next layer is about retention of your message with your audience. We all know (or should know) that the retention period of information stored in your brain is around 7/8 weeks. This means that if you wish to stay top-of-mind known to your audience, that you will have to reach out to your audience, one way or another, every 7/8 weeks.

If the marketing effort is related to single message, it is still obvious that the message needs to be repeated several times before it is stored in the long-term memory. Some B2C marketers are masters at planning campaigns. In B2B many marketers somewhat underestimate the importance of repeating the message several times.

Many theories and techniques exist on how to increase the imprint of the message in the conscious memory of your audience. Getting your audience engaged helps. And keeping the message simple is vital. Not only to remember it, but also to support the next type of objective.

Understand it

People can see and hear something many times. But it is not inevitable that they really understand your message. Messages often are misunderstood or misinterpreted. Even if the objective is only to increase brand awareness, it is still important that it is understood what products or services are offered by that brand, otherwise the information is not properly processed and internalized and certainly not linked to the right topics. Transfer of the knowledge to the relevant situations is not achieved. If you are spending a good amount on broadcasting your brand name in various channels, but hardly anybody understands what you do, they will most likely not think of you when they require a service or product that you can offer them. A good recipe to waste considerable marketing budgets.

Of course, this also applies to more sophisticated situations where you are introducing a new (or renewed) product, service or solution. Let's say it is a new product. A new video surveillance camera that was purpose designed for schools and universities. You are hoping to sell it to security managers of these educational institutions. In your ads, articles and communication you can highlight a long list of improved characteristics and features, including 'cutting-edge AI technology and deep learning algorithms which support automated video analytic routines that can generate alerts when the embedded engine is triggered by a detection event that exceeds the threshold of certainty of presence within specified zones of human objects carrying devices that can be potentially harmful'. You instead can also point out that you have 'a modern camera that helps keep students and staff safe by automatically alarming security personnel when an active shooter is detected in the school area'. The second message may be better understood and also be more effective in persuading the potential client to consider your product.

Believe it

But understanding a message does not automatically mean that people believe it or agree with it. Now more than ever, people are looking for evidence. In many B2C environments it is hard to be successful nowadays without good reviews on relevant websites. And consumers can easily compare prices and other product features.

In B2B environments that is much less the case. Supply chain models often include integrators and value-added resellers that have great influence on products that are selected. Relationships between suppliers and buyers are still valued highly when businesses sell to other businesses. For one obvious reason: trust! Whenever clients are faced with a new product, service or solution of a new supplier, they consider that a risk. People do not like risks. That's why so many people have difficulties dealing with change.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating. But it helps if other, comparable companies have tasted the pudding before. Reference cases and testimonials are great tools to convince potential clients to test-ride your product. Positioning your company and its representatives as thought leaders in your industry may also help to build credibility.

Feel it

Being perceived, remembered, understood and believed is great. It is something that many companies not easily achieve with their audiences. But to really excel, to really accomplish something with your marketing efforts, it is important to stir up the right emotions with your audience. It is great to be considered as potential supplier. It is even better if prospect are really excited and looking forward to work with you and your products or services.



People love stories about underdogs that become victorious. They love well-designed products that fit with their lifestyle and are approved by peers. They love doing good things to the world and others and be appreciated for it. They love to be amazed. They love to be inspired.

Proof of that is all around us. Just look back at the rise of Apple when Steve Jobs was still with us. Or have a look at the messages on LinkedIn with thousands of likes and comments: 80 percent is about people starting a new career or about statements that support the idea that, even in business, it pays of to be a decent human being and treat others with respect.

The marketeers of the biggest brands are masters at tapping into the emotion of their audience. This also applies to B2B marketing. Although good examples are scarcer when compared to B2C. So there still may be an opportunity to stand out!

Break it down

The Explicate model can be of help as a reminder in all phases of your marketing projects. It can help when defining the project, designing and developing materials, planning and executing activities and even when evaluating the results of your efforts. It is a reminder that your audience should be the center of attention in everything you do as a marketer.

As said before: the biggest challenges in marketing often are setting clear goals and objectives that are aligned with the business strategy and also to define the message or content of your marketing project.

We strongly advise to spend sufficient time analyzing and concluding about these two topics.

What is the construction of your objective?

You may have a clear objective for your marketing project. Let's say it is generating leads that you can feed into your sales channel. But what does it take to get a qualified lead from relevant people in your audience? When is a lead considered qualified? How do you identify the relevant portion of people? How do you persuade people to contact you? What is your position of strength in the supply chain?

To understand how to achieve your goals, we can help you to set up an [objective breakdown structure](#): a clear representation of the sub-objectives, priorities and dependencies that will help you understand what steps to take to optimize your campaign results.

The model helps here as well. We advise to try and look at your brand and your communication through the eyes of your (potential) clients. Who needs to perceive your brand or solution? What should they remember about your brand or solution? What should they really understand well? What would you like to convince them about? And how should they feel about your brand or solution?

The ability to answer these questions will help prioritize targets and focus on achieving goals that really have an impact on your marketing results.

What is the construction of your message?

The same approach can be applied to your marketing message. In B2B marketing in many industries, messages rarely are straightforward and one-dimensional. Let's say your message

is that you have a new product that will enable your clients, which are system integrators, to improve the solution that they offer to their clients, the end users. Just by reading this sentence you can already identify more than one message to the system integrators:

1. There is a new product
2. It has new features and possibilities
3. It can improve your proposition or solution
4. I will help you sell more or larger projects to your clients
5. Come to us to get informed and talk next steps

This still looks comprehensive. But let's take it one step further: what are the new features? What is the added value? How does it strengthen the solution? What may be worries or objections that live inside the heads of integrators and their clients? Does your audience have the knowledge to understand (parts of) your message? What is the nature of the message when we keep the objectives in mind?

In this case it, again, helps to view things through the eyes of your audience. What is the factual message (content) to them? How can you make sure they remember that message? What needs to be done to make sure they understand the key message? What can you do to convince them? And how can you convert the message into a story that will inspire them?

The ability to answer these questions properly will help you in the process of creating and designing your articles, movies, press releases, booths, mailings and other marketing instruments.

Doing the analysis and defining the [message breakdown structure](#) will help you identify the key parts for success and also the potential pitfalls in communicating the message.

We hope this approach will help you in successfully marketing your brand and your solutions. Good luck in business!

Explicate specializes in simplifying complicated matters. We deconstruct to comprehend.
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