10 steps to improve your global B2B marketing

Lessons from 25 years in corporate B2B marketing management



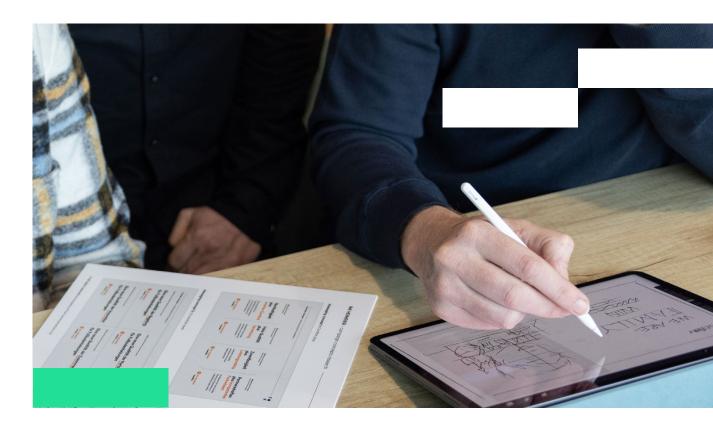
Søren Kristensen

Client Strategy Director & Head of DACH, Fox Agency Imagine the scene. It's the monthly management meeting. You've spent a lot of time contemplating your approach. And now the moment has arrived. After his presentation on the monthly business performance, you ask the Vice President of Finance to sit down for a minute. You tell him that you've looked at the numbers in the Business Warehouse and it would be a lot better if he applied the Cum-Ex approach. After all, as an experienced marketing professional, you're perfectly qualified to tell a Finance leader how to do his job, right?

Sounds like you're overstepping boundaries? Absolutely. Would it be acceptable in the meeting room? Absolutely not. But now imagine if it were the other way around: The guy from finance telling you how to improve your marketing activities? Sounds sort of familiar, doesn't it?

Because when it comes to marketing, everyone has an opinion. And that's a great thing, but it's also a significant problem. Even in the world of corporate leadership, personal taste and opinions are allowed to get in the way of carefully planned, strategically sound marketing activities – often overriding the recommendations of the experts. That's not to say that the marketing team has an exclusive say on what's right and wrong. Different perspectives and constructive dialogue are vital. And with ever-advancing globalisation, industry 4.0, IoT and all the other buzzwords, the main differentiator between the market leaders and the rest becomes increasingly clear: communication.

The companies that excel in communication with their customers, their employees, their suppliers, stakeholders and partners have a greater understanding of what people need – and crucially, are able to better demonstrate the value that their service or product adds to their customer's business. Typically, they will also have a customer-centric organisation and culture, where every team member is highly invested and motivated in delivering for the customer.

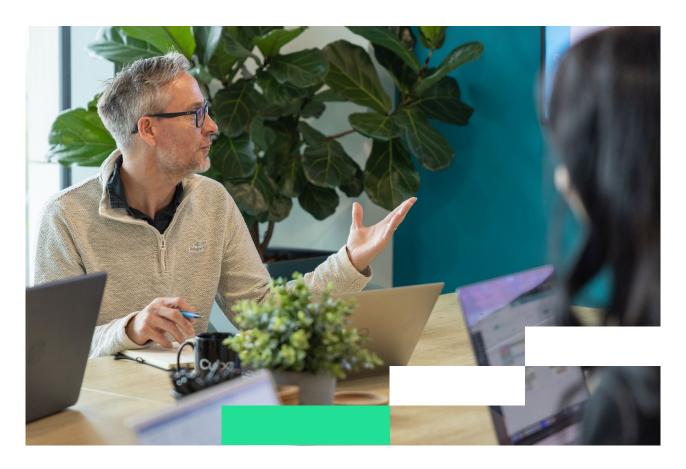


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Marketing departments are the internal experts in communication and the link between the customers, sales reps, product managers, supply chain planners, engineers and almost every part of the organisation. Daily cross-functional, internal communication, where information is shared and contextualised, forms the foundation for sound business decision-making, and is the strength of the marketing-driven organisation.



The ability to take insights from the customer and their market, overlay these with the company's value-add, and gather internal feedback empowers the whole organisation to set priorities that deliver on customer satisfaction and business objectives. The marketing-driven organisation is emphatically NOT synonymous with the marketing department having the final word in every decision – rather, it is about utilising and involving the entire business in the communication and marketing process.

And having spent over 25 years in global marketing, product management, technical documentation, training, business intelligence, and strategic project teams, I know from experience – valuable learning can come from everywhere. Great mentors, failures, hard work, and even pure luck – all play a part in developing what you do.

> Here's 10 big lessons that can improve the effectiveness of your global B2B marketing.



Be the champion of customer-centricity

Make sure your results are business-critical

Ensure communication and culture align

The martech stack is your friend

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Speed is everything

Be firm on 'what' and flexible on 'how'

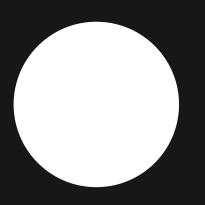
Own your content plan

'Document, don't create' approach

The power of training

Viva the culture!





Be the champion of customer-centricity 10 steps to improve your global B2B marketing

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The marketing team occupies the lion's share of the ongoing customer conversation. You communicate more frequently, with more people (both inside and outside the organisation) than any other department. And with that big voice comes big responsibility: to use your influence in an effective way.

Let's be honest: no B2B customer really cares about your product - they're only interested in how you can solve their problems.

First and foremost, that means sharing relevant information, with the appropriate people, when they want to receive it. And by relevant, I mean relevant for the audience, not just for you. Let's be honest: no B2B customer really cares about your product – they're only interested in how you can solve their problems. Effective communication brings you closer to your customer. And the closer you are, the greater your understanding will be about their business, their challenges, and the solutions they need from you. Your business has expertise that the customer wants to help overcome their challenge. And remember, most likely, you will have the vision and capability to create a solution that far exceeds the customer's understanding of the possibilities. As Henry Ford once said: "if I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses."

So let's make sure we leverage our insight and expertise. Be the champion of customercentricity in your organisation.

Make it mandatory for everyone in the marketing team to go see a customer, visit a facility, get on-site, go to a tradeshow or a conference, and invest time in getting the customer's perspective on their business challenges. The closer you are to the market, the more your communications will resonate. Engage with customers in workshops, involve them in relevant projects, and invite them to do training with you. The customer might not always be right, but you will always learn something useful. Put a process in place for the collection and distribution of customer input throughout your organisation, and ensure the information is managed and presented in a user-friendly way. Nobody has time to dig through raw data, especially if you don't know exactly what you're looking for. There are many tools available in the market to help you, whatever your scale and resources, from large CRM platforms like Salesforce and HubSpot to more specialised solutions like Zapier.

Integrate customer service as a part of the marketing organisation. Since traditional order placement has been almost fully replaced by digital solutions, customer service is available to build customer relations and an excellent customer relations and an excellent customer feedback with simple tools like Net Promoter Score or more sophisticated options like ZenDesk.

According to Deloitte,



of B2B customers buy more from a company after a good customer service experience

- making customer service an extremely powerful marketing tool.

Read the full article here

Installing a new culture will take time and resources, and maintaining momentum is essential. You have to be prepared and disciplined in the implementation. If you need advice or support, **please feel free to contact the B2B tech marketing experts at Fox Agency.**



Make sure your results are business-critical

10 steps to improve your global B2B marketing

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Legend has it that UK industrialist Lord Leverhulme once said: "half my advertising spend is wasted. The trouble is I don't know which half". And today most B2B marketing departments still struggle to directly connect marketing impact with marketing investment. Despite digital campaigning, online customer sales funnels, coupon promotions and so on, it's still almost impossible to fully attribute a sale to a specific marketing action in the B2B world.

Traditional metrics like brand awareness, brand recognition and brand preference, combined with online metrics like traffic, conversion rates, bounce rates and clickthrough rates, provide indications of the overall effectiveness of marketing activities. But they are difficult to link to sales and business performance, as many other factors impact the customer demand and sales development process.

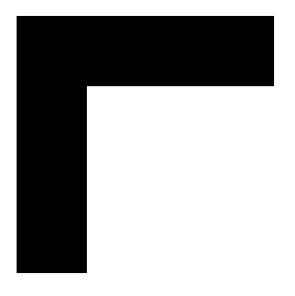
It's very easy to fall into the trap of sharing your pure marketing KPIs with the rest of the management team, because we all want to demonstrate that we've done great work with numbers and charts. Those KPIs are great for managing your teams, setting goals and creating milestones to aim for, as well as providing a sense of purpose for team members.

However, for you as the leader of the marketing structure, it's your responsibility to put the marketing performance into context for the wider management team, so that they have a chance to see and understand marketing as a business-critical activity.

Put yourself in the position of a Vice President of Manufacturing, where everything is managed by data collection and analysis, and it's relatively easy to show cause and effect with data.

For example, replacing an old machine with a new one increased productivity by 10% per day, or the spike in sick leave caused a drop in production in week 14. Your story about an increase in brand awareness will mean little to that VP, because they cannot determine an effect on the business. You have to find ways to demonstrate the business-critical impact of marketing. If you can piggyback systems and data collection from other teams – do it! Most businesses today are using some kind of CRM like Salesforce or HubSpot, but often it's limited to the sales area. Tap into that data and appoint someone in your team to become the CRM marketing expert who can integrate marketing activities into the CRM and extrapolate KPIs for you. Establish CRM-style metrics like Marketing Qualified Leads, Sales Qualified Leads, Customer Acquisition Costs and Customer Lifetime Value.

Of course this requires mapping of processes and discipline throughout the organisation to capture customer interaction data in the right places. Fortunately, as we get ever more digital, it's becoming increasingly more straightforward and less labour-intensive for the people involved.



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According to the study 'Why B2B sales needs a digital-first approach' from consultancy experts Gartner, **80%** of B2B sales interactions between supplier and buyer will be digital by 2025

 meaning that marketing has to be deeply rooted in the digital sales process.

Read the full study here

Keep in mind:

that the more you're able to demonstrate the impact and results of marketing activities to senior management, the easier it becomes for the budget decision-makers to approve marketing investments – and also for you to highlight the effect of any budget reductions.



Ensure communication and culture align

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Peter Drucker stated in 2006 that

"culture eats strategy **for brea**kfast"

This wasn't to say strategy was unimportant – rather that a powerful and empowering culture was a surer route to organisational success.

A big marketing campaign focusing on your company's excellent service offer is doomed to fail if in reality the customer is met by a disengaged team. Simple things like long response times on emails, people not taking calls, or no one taking ownership of issues will kill the credibility of your campaign message.

Likewise, an internal campaign to promote innovation will only gain traction if there is a culture of openness to change and willingness to do things differently. If the company culture is more risk-adverse or conservative, you should first invest in turning this around, before you start any marketing and communication.

I think we have all been in a corporate environment where new leadership launched shiny internal initiatives like 'reaching the summit', 'customer champions' or 'big yellow' with posters on office floors, new mugs for everyone, and possibly even new Powerpoint templates. Most of these initiatives burn out very quickly, because they don't address the organisational barriers, and fail to invest the time and effort required to really embed the necessary cultural change. In fact, almost 70% of change initiatives fail to achieve their goals as a result of bad management, poor implementation or lack of resources.

Culture change cannot be achieved through top-down mandate – it lives in the collective hearts and habits of people and their shared perception of 'how things are done here'. If you have authority, you can demand compliance, but you cannot dictate optimism, trust, conviction or creativity. 13

McKinsey introduced the 7-S framework in the late 1970s, addressing the critical role of coordination, rather than structure, in organisational effectiveness, and the framework has gained a second life in change management thinking. It's a good mental tool to use when preparing your communication and marketing strategy, and even helps on an operative level as well:

Does my message align with who we are?

Is my communication authentic in the eyes of the recipient?

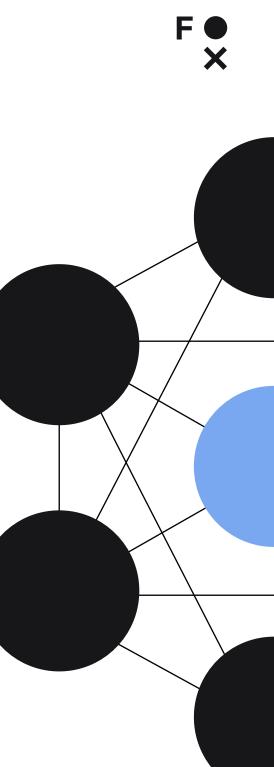
Are we as a company consistent at every customer touchpoint with our values?

I once heard a story about a press event at the Porsche HQ. A journalist was standing by a table that had a slight wobble. He asked a young Porsche apprentice if he had a napkin to put under one of the legs. The apprentice came back with a set of tools and adjusted the table base to perfect balance. The journalist said thanks, but a napkin would have worked just as well. The apprentice answered: "here at Porsche we do things properly". In a corporate culture like that, you know that it will be premium quality all the way.

If you want to be authentic in your marketing and communication, make sure your communication and culture align – it will help you to achieve better results with customers and colleagues. In most cases an outside view is helpful, so it's worth your time finding an external consultant or agency with expertise in cultural transformation and marketing communications.



Here at Fox Agency, we have supported culture projects across various regions and business sizes – and we're happy to give you our take on your specific challenge. <u>Get in touch with the team today.</u>









your friend

10 steps to improve your global B2B marketing



You can't improve what you can't measure. But in the complex world of marketing, the list of potential 'measurables' is endless. So you need to start somewhere: define an aspect of your marketing or business with a dataset that you're able to build, mine, and analyse using the resources you have available – so that you're in control. Don't rely on others to compile data just for you – talk to people and find out what reports and data they already generate and see what elements can help your specific topic.

When you have a clear idea of what you want to measure, and a plan for getting the data, look at the various tools that can help you structure the data and help you visualise results, like Integrate.io, Improvado or, Dataddo, (often referred to as ETL software), as well as visualisation tools like Tableau, Datawrapper or Grafana. To get valid output, it's important to ensure that processes are clear and robust. If you're not confident in data process management, engage with a service provider to get things set up correctly. All your later work will build on this, so make sure it's done right.

If your IT department has limitations in terms of software in the corporate environment, check opportunities for hosting or implementing at your agency partner. But take care to ensure that data ownership, GDPR and so on are managed properly. When your pilot implementation is successful, you can start to add more capabilities onto your martech stack. And done right, it means you're now able to demonstrate the value of quality content and creative work: does this element get the right people to do the thing we want them to? Does the article on tips and tricks get engineers to sign up for training? As you build your martech stack and gain more insights, you and the team can make faster and better decisions, and improve the marketing contributions to sales and other functions. With the increasing quality of leads you generate for the business, the more value you create, and the stronger your case for investment in marketing and communication.

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Pro tip:

make sure there is a shared understanding with the sales organisation about at what point a lead is sufficiently qualified to be handed over. Your chance of positive engagement is a lot higher if you provide few but good leads. Flooding the teams with insufficiently qualified leads will only cause disengagement.

The martech stack can help you automate your activities so you can focus your resources on value-creating activities, rather than grinding away on building reports. Apart from more being productive, it's also more fun.

At the time of this white paper, there are more than 15,000 martech solutions available (source: martech.org), making it a tough task to stay on top of the latest developments and choose the best options for your particular business. So it makes sense to reach out to partners, i.e. specialist agencies, who can help you build the best martech stack for you.

Speed is everything

10 steps to improve your global B2B marketing





We've all been there. Despite all your best efforts, a product launch is delayed due to a change in the market dynamics, supply chain issues or whatever. It happens. So the better you're prepared, the more adaptive you can be. An overall communication plan, preferably a rolling 12-month schedule, will give you a pipeline of assets that you can share across the organisation and help local teams plan their activities and budgets, with flexibility in case things change.

As marketing increasingly moves online, and quality content becomes essential as the main driver of engagement in your digital channels, you have to manage a much wider range of content providers inside your organisation. Some will be in the marketing function, but many will be outside your formal organisation altogether. Some content will be delivered by partners you've briefed, and some will come from customers and suppliers.

The digital marketing machine is extremely content-hungry. And I briefly touched on the fact that alignment, tools and processes help with organisational speed in dynamic market and customer environments.

This is especially important in a global marketing organisation. You simply won't have time to back-translate every piece of content shared on social media, you won't have an in-depth understanding of a local culture, and you don't want to become the bottleneck. The better approach is to check (and check again) that the local teams are fully aligned with your values, and they're consistent in the key messages you defined. When you're confident that the team fully understands and supports the marketing and communication concept, give them some freedom to implement locally within the guidelines you've defined. That will give the team the ability to implement quickly, localise effectively, and enjoy a sense of ownership and purpose. Insist on the adherence to performance measurements, so that they - and you - can track performance and make improvements.

In every translation step, aspects of meaning are lost. Instead, create your strategy, campaigns plans and creative master version in English first. This avoids the complexity of having to translate from your HQ language (if not English) into English and then into a local language. It's almost always easier, cheaper and faster to find good translators and copywriters from English to a local language than e.g. from German, French or Italian to a local language.

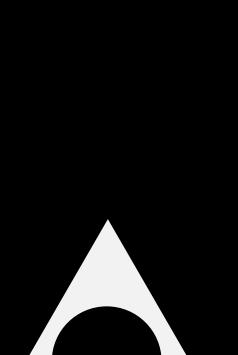


Instead of putting every social media marketing post through a rigid corporate approval, put a 'peer review' process in place locally – at least one person in your team with the required understanding and alignment, designated to approve all local material and content. They'll normally have a collegial relationship with the local sales teams and can better address things that have to be approved. If necessary, things can be escalated to you – but make sure your team knows that you are on their side in those cases.



Get a FREE content review

For a completely free content review from our expert team, get in touch with us today.



Be firm on 'what' and flexible on 'how'

10 steps to improve your global B2B marketing

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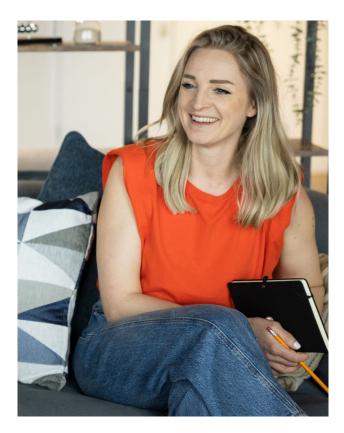
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Despite ongoing globalisation and B2B companies' everlasting claim of being purely driven by rationality, hard facts and numbers, it's still people dealing with people. And as such there will be different cultural backgrounds, language barriers, and endless interpretations of colours and symbols to be considered when running communication and marketing on a global level.

As a young marketing assistant, I took great pride in ensuring our marketing and communications were absolutely identical everywhere. The visuals and designs were exactly the same, translations were rigorously checked so that they were as close to 1:1 as possible. Our campaign looked and sounded exactly the same in Japan, USA, Germany, Spain or Morocco. I was all about total consistency in the holy name of brand awareness, brand recognition and international presence, and I totally forgot about my own cultural bias. Campaigns worked great in cultures similar to mine, but not so much in most other places!

Having woken up to the problem, my initial remedy was to create a campaign that worked across a wider cultural spectrum, and that could still be consistently implemented. The result, of course, was the lowest common denominator, and a marketing campaign that was equally boring and non-engaging in all markets.

In reality, even in global B2B, there is almost zero chance of finding the 'one-size-fits-all' marketing and communication campaign. Because after all it's a people business, and people are different. So does that mean every market for itself, and each team should do what they want? Of course not. Here's where the common understanding of corporate culture, values, and the company value-add comes back into play.



You can be very consistent in what you communicate – in line with your values and the key message you want to deliver – but be flexible on the 'how' in terms of adapting wording, colours, symbols, and maybe images. To help, you should provide guidelines that ensure brand recognition, positioning and brand values, but allow enough room for the local experts to adapt around preferences in their markets. In the end, you want to get the business result – not the prize for globallymost-consistently-implemented-campaign.

In our fast-paced business world, the attention span is short and background noise is high, so you can't afford long approval processes at every step of the way. With this devolved approach, you can move at speed, and crucially you also give your team a sense of ownership and purpose – which means they're more motivated, and more invested in achieving success.

Own your content plan

10 steps to improve your global B2B marketing



If I've learned anything in business, it's that you should always expect the unexpected. But good preparation helps you to ride out the sudden storms, and navigate the complexities of global marketing. In fact, the more thorough your plans, the greater your flexibility. With a plan in place, you don't have to re-invent the wheel with every twist and turn of events – you can modify elements and adjust timing when required. It's a lot simpler to avoid human errors, last-minute costs or missing missed deadlines if you already have contingencies in place. And it's so much more effective and less stressful than constant firefighting!

I'd always advocate a rolling 12-month marketing and content development plan, which is updated every month. This is a good way for you and your global team to share visibility of activities and priorities.

In my experience, you should structure the plan around the activities where you have the largest degree of control. Things like product launches, updates, and new releases tend to move around quite a bit, so it's better to build around the topics that you control, and then add the more unpredictable content when it's ready to go. The less you depend on factors outside your sphere of influence, the more you'll be able to rely on your content plan.

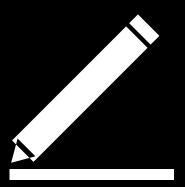
Since the marketing and content plan is a live document, it is important that it's completely visible and accessible to your team. I found it useful to use a shared access platform like SharePoint, or if necessary web-based tools like Miro. If your team is skilled working with project management tools, it's cool to integrate all the underlying workstreams, but the key point here is to have the big picture at a glance.

It's also helpful to separate the content and activity which is time-fixed sensitive (like trade shows, conferences, stock market reports) from things that might move (product launches, software updates, etc), so that your global team can consider this in their local planning. Overall, the more you involve your team in the process, the more you build a performance culture where each individual feels ownership of their local implementation of the global activities.



Discover how Fox can unlock new opportunities

Having a tried and tested planning template is a good place to start building your own plan. <u>Request your free campaign planning</u> <u>template here.</u>



'Document, don't create' approach

10 steps to improve your global B2B marketing

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A content strategy evangelised by Gary Vaynerchuk, AKA GaryVee, is one of 'Document, don't create.' The premise is that when you focus too much on publishing fresh, unique content all the time, your creative energy will start to stall – it's just exhausting!

Ask anyone who's attempted to keep a blog or YouTube channel going for some time and they'll tell you that inspiration comes in waves. Grinding through those times when the creative well is dry is excruciating, especially if you keep upping the standards of your work.

So, what's the answer? It's about shifting your mindset from creating to documenting.

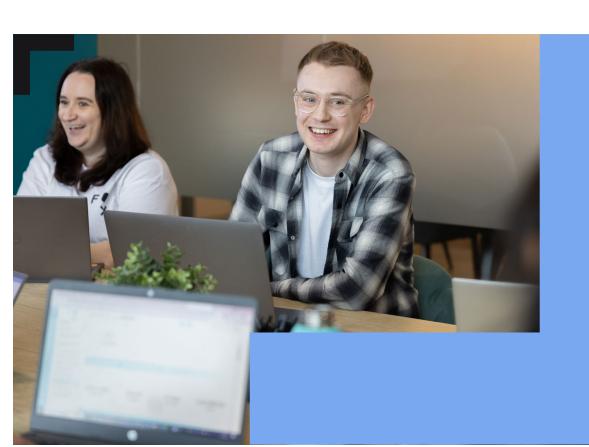
In doing so, it becomes much easier to produce engaging content. That why documenting is a better content strategy.

In trademark GaryVee fashion, he suggests that businesses should be putting out at least one long-format blog post, vlog, or podcast once a week, and between 6-25 pieces of content on Snapchat, Twitter, or Instagram daily.

That's probably a big ask for anyone. However, by "documenting" you'll have a much easier time generating content with the frequency and quality required for your audience.

When you're in this mindset, you're thinking about sharing stories of yourself, your team, your creative work, etc., without having to make something original every time. You can focus on what's happening behind the scenes: anything from photos of your workspace and project updates, to videos of your hard-working team and products in production. Even if it seems small, these little things add up to a bigger picture.

Stories bring us together. Stories allow us to connect with one another. If you're building a business, people want to hear your story. It's the truth!



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So, why not share the story of your company as you grow?

GaryVee uses his daily vlog not just to share his day, but also to talk about the steps he's taking to build his business, and the moves he's making towards his ultimate dream goal: buying the Jets.

> For your business, there's plenty of material for you to draw from.

Why did you choose to do what you do?

What motivates you and your company?

What mission are you on?

Find the stories that exist in your business: things that have already happened, or journeys that are still ongoing, and find ways to document them for your audience and potential customers.

It's a powerful way to convey your company's mission, in a way that resonates with the real people who are your target audience. **If your mission is the heart of your company, stories become the soul.**



The power of training

10 steps to improve your global B2B marketing

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One of the best ways to engage with customers, colleagues, and suppliers is running training and workshop events, where you and your team can interact with your target group in a forum where it's perfectly okay to share challenges and solutions – without the more 'political' elements like pricing policies or commercial terms.

Workshops can showcase the real value you bring to the client by allowing the client to take a peek under the hood. It's an opportunity for customers to learn about your processes and the tools you use, let them get hands-on, and to get them more deeply involved and invested in the whole experience of working with you.

In my experience, discussions are far more open in this kind of setting, and you'll get more direct and honest feedback from product users, and quite often new ideas on how to improve elements of your product and service offering.

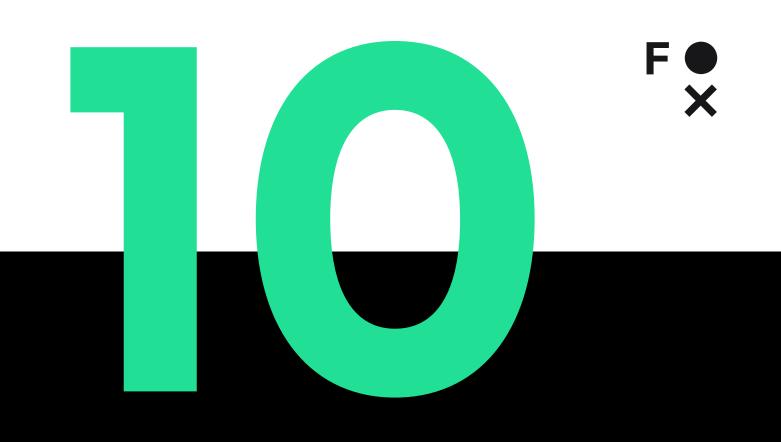
When your sales cycle is long, your customer's buying process is complex, and the investment is significant, workshops are an easy YES for your prospect and help to keep things moving forward. Think of the customer workshop as a key milestone in your sales cycle. It will almost certainly attract only the most highlyqualified prospects – typically those who already have some appreciation of the value you offer. They'll attend either because they want to learn or because they're preparing to make a buying decision. In which case maybe they're deciding whether they can do the work themselves, or maybe they want to better understand your solution, and how it could impact their business.

When training is used as a marketing strategy, companies can usually measure ROI by the amount of new business gained through the attendee prospects.

Compared with a long-term sell or highdollar deal, it's a relatively quick conversion to get customers and prospects to commit to a workshop. Customers who sign up are better prepared to be sold to, and can better appreciate the value of the solution when the time comes to say yes to working with you.

Discover how we can help

We can help you set up a pilot to test your training activities as a marketing tool. **Contact Søren today.**





Viva the culture!

10 steps to improve your global B2B marketing

There are several ways in which a positive corporate culture can help a business grow sales, retain employees longer, and add value to the business.

First and foremost, it's easier to keep good people when you provide a work environment that's fulfilling and meaningful. When employees feel valued, they are more likely to stay with the company longer.

Of course this reduces turnover costs and increases employee engagement. But it also enhances the reputation of the business as a good employer and a responsible corporate citizen, factors which are increasingly important to many customers and investors.



A positive culture also encourages employees to go above and beyond – not just for their own self-worth, but also to deliver customer satisfaction. When employees are happy and motivated, they provide better service, which in turn leads to increased customer loyalty and repeat business. A team that feeds on success is more likely to be engaged and productive, which translates into increased sales and profits for the business.

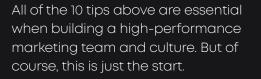
As innovation and creativity cannot be dictated, you have to provide an environment that fosters collaboration, experimentation, and risk-taking. When employees are encouraged to share their ideas and contribute to the company's growth, they're more likely to come up with innovative solutions to problems, which can lead to new revenue streams and growth opportunities. Ensuring that corporate values and culture are shared throughout the organisation will make your marketing and communication a lot more authentic. If you're truly customercentric and genuinely focused on creating value for your customers, it's so much easier to create marketing that drives business. If your business is more about mass production and cost management, make that your story.

Company culture is such an integral part of how your company, service and products are perceived that you should see this as a key part of your marketing toolbox. The best marketing campaign will not compensate for a bad customer experience, especially if there is a big gap between who you say you are and what the customer perceives you to be.

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In summary, a positive corporate culture

can help businesses to grow sales and retain employees longer. It also adds value to the business by attracting and retaining top talent, improving customer satisfaction, encouraging innovation and creativity, boosting productivity, and building a strong brand reputation.



Here at Fox Agency, we help marketing organisations become value drivers to the business in B2B tech environments. If you want to demonstrate business growth via successful global marketing, let's chat about how we can help.

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