

How to humanise your B2B marketing

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By humanising their brand, B2B businesses can unlock the connections they need to build trust and loyalty in their markets. They've got to go beyond solving customers' immediate problems, to becoming a trusted ally, who also happens to be interesting and amusing.



Image supplied. Ronelle Bester, MD of Red Ribbon Communications, SA: "B2B brands need to take a leaf from consumer marketing playbooks and humanise their communications"

The worlds of work and life have merged, meaning target audiences don't separate their work and personal identities as they once did. Now, to engage with business stakeholders, B2B brands need to take a leaf from consumer marketing playbooks and humanise their communications.

Business to Business (B2B) marketing has long had a bad reputation for being bland, full of whitepapers, specs, surveys, studies, and boring industry information. In contrast, consumer marketing was the 'fun' side of the coin – using snappy catchphrases and enticing visuals to influence behaviour.

The bland approach, using highly academic and technical communications, served its purpose for many years. It positioned a brand as knowledgeable and trustworthy, which ultimately brought in business.

But times have changed. Attention spans are shorter, everyone suffers from information overload, and very few people have the time to plough through lengthy white papers.

Tap into emotions

B2B decision-makers are humans first. They are pet lovers and care about the environment and diversity. So your B2B brand should develop human attributes too.

Your brand identity should care about issues, and have a consistent persona that carries through all your communications – are you humorous and informal, straight-talking and technical, or a caring partner?

Use the genuine culture and values of your organisation as the persona that speaks to your market across social media, releases and direct communications.

Consumers want to build an emotional connection with the brands they buy from, and it is no different when they are buying a business product.

How does this humanised approach translate into marketing and communications that work?

A clear marketing and messaging strategy, in which the brand persona is identified, should inform your copywriting, advertising, social media planning, and events. Every component of the marketing mix should strike the right note.

You might even create an internal cartoon character representing the brand, to remind your marketing team who they are channelling. For example: “This is George. He’s a straight-talking guy who likes sport and braais. He can also fix any network on the planet. George says ‘no problem’. He does not say ‘implement an end-to-end turnkey solution’.”

Get important insights through social media

With the right brand persona, you’re ready to build a social media community that works for you and your customers. This means talking to them and listening. It’s social – so it should be a two-way engagement.

In the B2B environment, potential customers are often challenged with complex problems. To learn about these pain points and determine where they can help, companies need to listen.



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In B2C, it is part of the standard repertoire of entire social media departments to observe, build on and guide customers’ interactions with the brand. But many B2B companies still fail to prioritise social media within their overall business strategy. It’s worth remembering – the better you know your customers, the better you can sell to them.

You should also be targeting specific buyer groups with relevant and informative storytelling. Giving free advice and information allows sellers to build a real connection with their buyers, which goes beyond the mere offer of a product or service.

Get creative

There’s no reason for B2B communication to be dull and factual when consumer brands are proving the value of exciting, fun campaigns. Use shorter, snappier payoff lines and eye-catching visuals. If you have a lot to say, break it up into a series of succinct ads rather than cramming tons of information into a single ad.

In social media – even LinkedIn – use videos and visuals in carousels to bring your brand alive and give it personality. Be funny and interesting. Surprise and delight. Share and respond.

Liven up your events and webinars using the most engaging MC you can find, with unexpected highlights, prizes or surprise goodie bag deliveries. Don't make any event longer than it needs to be, just because that's how it's always been done.

Consider replacing lengthy videos with a series of shorter videos, each one entertaining and leaving audiences wanting more.

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