

A Guide to the Modern Marketing Landscape

EXPLORING MARKETING OPTIONS FOR B2B COMPANIES

Introduction

The concept of marketing can be confusing for even the most seasoned businesspeople.

In today's ever-evolving digital world, it's tough to know what makes a great marketer and what should be expected of the marketing function. This is particularly true when it comes to the business-to-business (B2B) middle market, with its own unique set of demands and opportunities. In the pages that follow, we will explore the concept of marketing and summarize the most significant reasons for marketing failure in the B2B middle market. Then, we will outline traditional marketing solutions and explain why they aren't ideal for middle market B2B companies. Finally, we will showcase a new way of marketing – the Marketri way – that powers middle market B2B companies confidently and successfully forward through an integrated, comprehensive, and fresh approach. For these companies, Marketri delivers an undeniable return on investment and the measurable results that convince any naysayer of modern marketing's boundless potential.

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mar·ket·ing “Defined”

According to the American Marketing Association, marketing is defined as “the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large.” This definition and others that are popular leave lots of room for interpretation about how best to perform the marketing function. It seems that almost everyone has a different view of marketing, some stemming from the pre-digital era and others formulated from bits and pieces of information received through various communication channels. While there is no “right” definition, experienced strategic marketing consultants at the forefront of the industry are in the best position to understand the possibilities of modern marketing and give customized advice about how to leverage it.

What are some of these possibilities? Warm leads, engaged customers, and accelerated revenue – the outcomes most critical to sustainable business success.

The Middle Market’s Marketing Challenges

Most middle market B2B companies operate in highly competitive industries. They rely on marketing to stand out from the crowd, attract prospective buyers who are becoming increasingly sophisticated online researchers, and nurture leads so that sales professionals can shift from hunters to closers. Their main challenge is that non-marketing executives who don’t fully understand or know how to leverage modern marketing are largely making the decisions about marketing direction, hires, budgets, and third-party partners. This leads to junior staff turnover, wasted financial resources, and disappointing outcomes. Having an effective marketing function feels unattainable for many middle market B2B companies and some – having racked up one too many “war stories” – simply give up.

In addition to this dependence on non-marketing executives to lead the marketing charge, lack of marketing success in the B2B middle market can also be the result of:

- Dependence on one or two in-house tactical marketers with little ability to self-manage and make effective strategic decisions
- Dependence on an advertising agency, public relations firm, traditional strategic marketing consultant, and/or freelance specialty subcontractors – all ill equipped to deliver a comprehensive and integrated modern marketing plan capable of driving business growth in a demanding and complex digital world

The last scenario can be especially damaging. Selecting the wrong marketing partner can have serious budget repercussions and cause paralysis among senior management fearful of making another expensive marketing mistake. Unfortunately, this scenario is all too common. Looking closely at typical third-party marketing resources – advertising agencies, public relations firms, traditional strategic marketing consultants, and freelance subcontractors – it becomes easy to see why many, if not most, are not ideal partners for the B2B middle market.

Third Party Marketing Resources: Middle Market Misfires

Advertising Agencies

Prior to the Internet and advances in digital technology, middle market B2B customers relied on the marketing and sales efforts of companies for information about products and services. To have the most attractive brand, messages, ads, and collateral, these companies would partner with traditional advertising agencies – often referred to as creative agencies – to get their marketing “stuff.” Companies viewed these agencies as a necessity since they held the key to communicating with prospects.

Today, traditional advertising agencies typically employ a stable of graphic designers, media buyers, web developers, copywriters, and others to create their print and electronic marketing pieces. That translates into heavy overhead passed along to clients via price tags that can range from hefty to downright exorbitant. (We shudder at some of the bills our clients once received.)

Why most traditional advertising agencies are not ideal partners for middle market companies:

- Middle market companies often grossly overpay for marketing “stuff” because non-marketing senior management and tactical marketers don’t know what marketing materials should reasonably cost.
- Advertising agencies push this “stuff” because that’s what they know – the creative side – and what earns them the most profit. A pile of expensive brochures and flyers leaves well-intentioned but inexperienced executives and/or tacticians who commissioned the work with little left in the marketing budget for critically important outreach.
- Middle market companies often do not have a strategic marketing road map and/or Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) to leverage large investments in advertising agency products and services.



***Big expenses.
Frustrating dead ends.***

Public Relations Firms

Leveraged well, quotes, news, profiles, and bylined articles placed in national, regional, or trade publications can have real value for middle market B2B companies. That's why public relations (PR) firms typically charge big bucks on a monthly, retainer basis. Historically, these firms held the golden ticket – strong relationships with key reporters. PR executives just had to pick up the phone and boom! Client exposure. Companies viewed PR firms as intermediaries necessary to reach and persuade journalists.

Today, PR is basically a "self-serve" discipline. Want to build a relationship with a reporter? Follow him or her on Twitter and build rapport virtually. Need a list of reporters in a certain region or within a specific market? Subscribe to Cision or other media contact databases and create targeted lists in a matter of minutes. In-house or outsourced marketing professionals who know how to pitch subject matter experts and stories make PR firms and their big retainers obsolete. Need more proof? **Star Group Communications Shuts Down**

Why most PR firms are not ideal partners for middle market companies:

- A PR firm retainer only covers one marketing tactic – PR – and tends to gobble up a disproportionate share of a marketing budget.
- PR firms might open doors for middle market companies, but those doors often lead nowhere. Those intrigued by PR placements are often directed back to lackluster websites and/or social media profiles that aren't set up to convert anonymous visitors into prospects or, better yet, customers.
- Many middle market companies lack original thought leadership and true subject matter experts, two of the foundational elements of a successful PR campaign. PR firms get paid regardless of whether they get placements. Without these foundational elements, precious dollars can be used up in no time.
- As with advertising agencies, middle market companies often do not have a strategic marketing road map and/or CMO to leverage large investments in PR campaigns.



***Whopping retainers.
Trivial outcomes.***

Traditional Strategic Marketing Consultants

Traditional strategic marketing consultants are generally marketing professionals who have been in the field for a while, but who are no longer working in house because of retirement or downsizing. They aren't quite ready to hit the tennis courts full time, so they "consult." They can certainly talk a great game – branding, awareness, positioning, and the like – but many are bogged down in marketing models that reflect a bygone era. They often don't understand the latest methods and technologies and how to leverage them to generate warm leads, build alignment with sales and operations, close business, and create optimal customer experiences. Regrettably, they fool many middle market companies into paying top dollar for highly flawed marketing plans that fail to deliver measurable value to the top line. Strategic marketing consultants who vigorously work to stay ahead of the marketing curve and who know how to navigate in today's increasingly demanding and sophisticated digital world are indeed rare.

Why traditional strategic marketing consultants are not ideal partners for middle market companies:

- Traditional strategic marketing consultants are often grounded in once and done, "old school" marketing such as direct mail, advertising, and event marketing. These tactics are expensive, especially for middle market companies, and they are becoming less and less effective as today's B2B customers balk at invasive outreach that interrupts them rather than attracts them.
- Traditional strategic marketing consultants typically take a "cookie cutter" approach to marketing planning and often fail to account for individual company circumstances such as budget constraints and in-house marketing talent.
- Traditional strategic marketing consultants can quickly become obsolete when they aren't working dynamically within an organization. Hands-on experience is especially critical when it comes to mastering newer marketing methods and technologies.
- Marketing plans created by traditional strategic marketing consultants are generally void of the modern marketing methods and technologies that enable middle market companies to create scale within the marketing function.
- Middle market companies can easily overpay for marketing plans from traditional strategic marketing consultants, believing these plans are the Holy Grail.
- Even if traditional strategic marketing consultants manage to deliver reasonable plans, the plans tend to bounce off middle market companies lacking the infrastructure and personnel for full implementation and measurement of results.



Costly promises. More doors leading nowhere.

Freelance Specialty Subcontractors

Social media marketers, graphic designers, search engine marketers, content creators, and web developers... The list goes on and on. There are solo practitioners for every specialty area of marketing. Whom to hire? In what order? For how much? With what goals? Some are experienced, top-notch professionals. Others talk a great game, just as traditional strategists often do, but they fail to deliver on promises. The challenge – especially for middle market companies – lies in vetting freelance subcontractors, negotiating their fees and scope, and integrating their efforts into an overall program that delivers results. Non-marketing executives and/or inexperienced tacticians trying to oversee multiple, independently operating subcontractors can easily become overwhelmed and are often surprised at how quickly projects can go over-budget and over-scope.

Why attempting to hire and manage multiple freelance specialty subcontractors is not an ideal strategy for middle market companies:

- Middle market companies typically don't have in-house personnel qualified to source subcontractors and know what to pay them.
- Without a knowledgeable CMO who understands how to pace and integrate the efforts of multiple subcontractors and tie those efforts into an overarching strategic plan, the efforts can easily become disjointed and ineffective in delivering desired outcomes.



***Bills coming in from all sides.
A hodgepodge of stunted results.***


The Middle Market's Ideal Partner

Strategic Marketing Consultants: Modern Marketing Leaders Who Know What's Possible

Marketri isn't an advertising agency, PR firm, traditional strategic marketing consultant, or freelance specialty subcontractor. We are charting our own course in the marketing industry as a B2B Strategic Marketing Consulting and Fractional CMO firm backed by a formidable Outsourced Marketing Network. We have served the B2B middle market for years, and our strategists and tacticians understand its unique set of demands and opportunities. We are also avid learners, working diligently to stay at the front of the marketing curve and knowing well that today's digital world has no patience for marketing stragglers. From technology companies to packaging companies, from environmental consultants to law firms, we guide our clients with a keen eye on the strategic big picture and a team of master specialists seamlessly managing the tactical specifics. We deliver start-to-finish, integrated marketing solutions

that won't leave clients asking, "Nice brochure. Nice article. Now what?" And because we are a one stop marketing shop with all necessary resources under one umbrella, we can do all this while offering unsurpassed value for the marketing dollar.

We have worked with most of our strategic marketing consultants, fractional CMOs, and specialist subcontractors for years and feel confident in saying that they are some of the best in the business. All meet the highest industry standards and are carefully matched according to a client's needs, sector, and, when relevant, geographic location.



***No frustrating dead ends.
No trivial outcomes.
No doors leading nowhere.
No hodgepodge of
stunted results.***

As noted, the greatest marketing challenge facing most middle market B2B companies is the lack of experienced strategists to lead the marketing charge. Marketri's rigorously vetted strategic marketing consultants address that challenge head on, stepping in to relieve non-marketing executives of the burden of marketing leadership. With their proven track records as CMOs who built thriving marketing departments, these consultants have shifted gears and revved up at the forefront of the modern marketing field. They hit the ground running and can design state of the art strategic marketing plans, outline clear implementation steps, recommend and oversee the best people to bring plans boldly to life, and regularly monitor and measure plan results. They can also structure or restructure marketing departments and mentor any in-house junior or mid-level marketing personnel. They provide just the right amount of guidance while leaving the bulk of a marketing budget for building infrastructure and advancing communications.

Instead of delivering a stack of overpriced "stuff," a few bylined articles, obsolete advice, or an array of disjointed products and services – all of which lead to a strategic dead end – these consultants fully leverage and integrate all aspects of modern marketing to drive the outcomes most critical for sustainable business success – warm leads, engaged customers, and accelerated revenue. With these professionals at their service, clients see a higher return on marketing investments and benefit from fresh, objective marketing perspectives. And they are no longer repeatedly left on the marketing 20-yard line, with the end zone of robust business growth always frustratingly out of reach.

Fractional CMOs: Taking the Strategic Marketing Consultant Model One Step Further

Marketri's fractional CMOs – otherwise known as outsourced CMOs – are strategic marketing consultants embedded into a company's executive team, either full time for a short engagement or part time for a longer one. They offer the insight and leadership of a veteran marketing strategist at a fraction of the cost it would take to hire a full time implementation from a vantage point that is always close to the action. The benefits of a fractional CMO mirror those above, with the added plus of this closer, day-to-day working relationship.

Outsourced Marketing Network: Tactical Implementation by a Team of Master Specialists

Middle market B2B companies typically don't have the human or financial resources to search for, adequately vet, negotiate with, and manage freelance specialty subcontractors. Marketri's Outsourced Marketing Network of master specialists does all of this for them and more. With one easy Marketri point of contact to keep projects on budget and on schedule, companies can tap proven experts from across the marketing spectrum for rates that they would never be able to secure on the open market. Moreover, Network specialists are not relegated to operating within the typical B2B middle market leadership vacuum. Instead, Marketri's strategic marketing consultants and fractional CMOs structure their assignments and vigilantly monitor their contributions to the collective marketing effort that supports a client's greater strategic plan.

From brand development to search engine optimization, from website creation to graphic design, from public relations to marketing automation, Marketri's Outsourced Marketing Network delivers all the necessary tactical pieces. Then, our strategists put those pieces together and ensure that every dollar spent on specialists moves a client closer to the warm leads, engaged customers, and accelerated revenue that are marketing's ultimate strategic goals.

A Final Word about Scale

The financial value that Marketri brings to the table is not just about the discounted rates we aggressively negotiate and pass along to clients. We also deliver value because we understand how to scale the marketing function using modern marketing technologies. We constantly scout and test these technologies and then utilize them to set up "evergreen" processes for our clients that can deliver for years with few demands on in house resources. We never thought we'd wind up calling ourselves techie nerds, but we'll proudly do so in the name of client service!


The Marketri Way

Middle market B2B companies face especially relentless pressure in today's demanding digital world. As the middle market's ideal marketing partner, Marketri helps these companies level the playing field with their bigger or more marketing savvy competitors. Through our unique value proposition of strategic marketing consultants, fractional CMOs, and an Outsourced Marketing Network, along with our commitment to the most effective, cutting edge technologies, we believe that Marketri stands alone in our ability to deliver high value, low cost, comprehensive, and integrated services to companies that have struggled for too long to find their marketing footing.

About Marketri

Marketri is a modern-method B2B strategic marketing consulting and fractional CMO firm that helps clients obtain and retain customers to reach growth goals. We offer a range of services that cater to B2B middle-market and fast-growing startup businesses more effectively than traditional models.

Marketri leads clients' strategic marketing efforts through start-to-finish, integrated marketing solutions that support long-term relevance and success. We develop cost-effective, scalable marketing strategies and measurable programs that consistently drive qualified leads and lower the cost of new customer acquisition. Our model, our network, and our experience provide our clients unsurpassed value for the marketing dollar.



**Ready to take
the next step?**

**Contact Marketri today
to build your Strategic
Marketing Plan.**

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