

Email Is Still King (and 4 Other Big Insights Into Effective Tech Marketing)

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Before becoming an entrepreneur, I had a lengthy career as an in-house marketing leader. During that time, I started closely following a few companies that stood out as thought leaders in B2B marketing. One of those is Gartner. So, when I saw recent analysis from Gartner about how to drive better demand generation, I had to dive in.

The challenge with these reports is that they're typically very enterprise-focused. In my work as a small business marketing consultant, I'm much more interested in what these findings mean for small business leaders. With that in mind, here's a look at what entrepreneurs can learn from this report.

1. Email is still king

Every year, you hear plenty of people predicting the death of email. Well, email marketing continues to shine – in fact, it was the single best performing channel in 2021. If you've scaled back on email, or it just hasn't been a priority for your business, now's the time to start investing.

2. But, you need to think beyond

email blasts and newsletters

Gartner notes that respondents mentioned challenges “in aligning their email strategy with the right messaging.” This is why you need to create more sophisticated nurture campaigns (also known as “drip emails”) that are closely aligned to the problems and challenges your customers experience – and how you uniquely solve them.

Most of the time, small businesses only do basic email marketing, like sending a monthly newsletter plus an occasional list-wide “blast” when they have something big they want to say. Buyers today expect more, and if you don’t provide that, one of your competitors will happily do so and take the business from you.

Related: [Why You’re Using Drip Emails All Wrong \(and What to Do Instead\)](#)

3. It’s time to diversify your marketing mix

Your current marketing plan may focus on a small handful of areas. Many small businesses I work with are doing a few foundational tactics, like trade shows, emails and social media; maybe they also have a blog where they occasionally publish an article. It’s great to start somewhere, but the most successful companies are diversifying where they’re spending their time and money.

So, how do you decide what to try next? A good guideline is to start by looking at what you’re already doing that’s working best. Then, think about what marketing tactics you can use that would supplement them. For example, if you do a lot of trade shows, you could start doing more content marketing – so you can offer your eBook or whitepaper to people you meet at the show. If social media is working really well, try another

angle you're not already doing, like creating video content or posting polls to get even more engagement.

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4. You probably don't understand your customers well enough

Of the dozens of small businesses I've worked with, I can count on one hand those who put in the effort to deeply understand their customers. Without a deep customer understanding, you are going to spin your sales and marketing wheels without getting results. Every customer has different needs and desires, and you can't just guess them. Take the time to step back and deliberately understand customers by creating buyer personas. What you learn from this process will dramatically increase the results you get from your marketing efforts.

5. Activating your entire funnel is more important than ever

When I start working with a new business, the most common thing I see is that their existing marketing efforts only focus on one part of the sales funnel. They might be publishing on their blog and social media, which enables the top of the funnel, but they're neglecting to create case studies and demos that can improve the bottom of the funnel. Or they might be really good at creating sales collateral and data sheets, but they're struggling to create helpful, educational content.

When you're only doing one part of the funnel well, it's going to severely limit the results you see from your sales and marketing. If you've prioritized the bottom of the funnel

while neglecting the top, you don't have a lot of prospects with whom you can share your great brochures and data sheets. And conversely, if you're really doing great with the top of the funnel but the bottom is somewhat forgotten, you're going to attract a good amount of leads, but very few of them are going to turn into customers.

Using their buyer personas, business leaders must begin to better understand their entire funnel that their prospects need to go through to buy from them. Creating a content map is a great way to do this: You identify content at the top, middle and bottom of the funnel that you should have to enable your buyers. And then you can evaluate what assets you have and what still needs to be created. Put simply: An incomplete funnel will only drive incomplete results.

Learn from the best to level up your small business marketing

One of the best ways to thrive at marketing your business is to understand what the heavy hitters are doing, simplify it, and apply it to your own business. Those big names are dialing in on a handful of key trends, and the small businesses who follow along will reap big rewards. Step on the gas with your email efforts. Diversify beyond the marketing you're already doing. Grow your customer understanding, and use that to build a full funnel experience. If you can do this, you'll stay ahead of your competitors to win the new business you need to grow.

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