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White Paper

How tech companies
can break out of
business-as-usual
marketing



A company stands out from its competition when it easily conveys uniqueness. Especially in the technology industry, where there is pride and pressure to innovate, there are few examples of products that are so distinctive from their competitors that buying decisions are based on features alone. Often what sets your solution apart is discovered once a prospective buyer has been sold on you. That means, before you even have a chance to show off your creation, you must first gain their attention and intrigue.

Here are some common pitfalls that the even the biggest tech brands grapple with. Do any of these sound familiar?

- **Everyone is an innovator.** While rightly proud of what you create, keep in mind that everyone is. Positioning yourself singularly as an innovator may hurt more than help, especially if your company cannot defend that positioning fully compared to competitors.
- **We're proud of the product and lead with it in our communications.** Final buying decisions often come down to more than just a particular product or service and customers want to know who they are doing business with.
- **The notion "if you build it, they will come".** This only happens in movies. There are numerous examples of inferior products beating out technically superior alternatives.
- **The belief "if we give it a cool name" it will be successful.** Launching a product is not a moment in time and success does not hinge on a name alone.
- **We get bored saying the same thing over and over and always want to mix it up.** Mixing it up can result in a lack of prospects knowing what you presume they know. For example, one press release on a new product does not mean every customer has heard the news or cares.
- **We don't want to disappoint our customers by telling them we're discontinuing or altering a product.** Frankly, not communicating changes is more upsetting to customers.

While a marketer's toolbox is largely universal, each industry has unique tendencies, challenges, and opportunities. Peers and competitors often function similarly in what they do or how they do it. These commonalities lead to troubles differentiating your products and services, or struggles attempting something new because there isn't a familiar model.

The following highlights ways leaders can evaluate their marketing performance to avoid these pitfalls. Here are some ways to step back, weigh all factors, and determine what should be done differently or anew. Consider the following:

Take time to self-diagnose.

You may have already identified many areas to improve your marketing, but go deeper. This is a time to check ego at the door and gather a few trusted voices who understand Marketing, the customer, and your business strategy. This is not a solutioning session. Simply identify potential gaps or areas of improvement, so stay focused. Ask specific questions; here are a few examples:

- **Do you feel good about your team's [expertise, ability to execute, show results, and demonstrate creativity]?**
- **Do you look, sound, and act differently from your competition?**
- **If you remove your name and logo from your collateral, would prospective customers know it was you versus your competition?**
- **Are you able to communicate complex information easily?**
- **Are you confident that the market understands who you are and what you do?**
- **Are your campaigns focused on your customer's needs?**
- **Aside from your products, do you create great experiences with your customers?**
- **Are you confident your customer experiences leave a positive impression?**

Pay attention to internal and external influences.

Marketing is mission-critical for tech companies. Despite being amongst the most innovative companies in the world, products and services rarely sell themselves. Your marketing systems, processes, and people need to be just as cutting-edge. Here are a few things to consider when making strategic decisions and prioritizing work:

- **Reputation management is increasingly complex as companies are combating misinformation about brands and products.**
- **Customer attention spans are short so communicating complex information in a simple way is essential.**
- **Attitudes and regulations around data privacy and access to information are undergoing a renaissance. Things are changing fast on both sides of this topic (what information is expected to be shared and what information is meant to be kept confidential).**
- **Labor shortages have you competing for industry-experienced marketing talent.**

- Marketing skill-sets are increasingly diverse (digital, operations, messaging and content creation, branding, account-based marketing, and more).
- In a dynamic market cluttered with new entrants and technologies, staying ahead of the competition is critical.
- Sometimes tech or product-driven companies are not marketing-driven companies. Resources may reflect this.

Have a north star. Look to companies who have done things well.

The idea isn't to mimic but learn, model where appropriate, and build an approach that is right for your audience and company. Here are a few examples of top tech brands demonstrating how using their technology makes their customers more capable, connected, or conscious:

Schneider Electric, an energy and automation company, has been globally recognized for the brand-building launch of its sustainability initiative: "Green Yodha". This mass climate initiative set ambitious goals aligned with the government of India for the company and its end-to-end supply chain. This collaboration increased their customer intimacy and boosted their reputation.

British satellite communications company **Inmarsat** looked to augmented and virtual reality to introduce their commercial airplane Wi-Fi solution, GX Aviation. Bringing a commercial airliner to every trade show wasn't an option, so they created the 'Connected Air' exhibition to give customers an idea of the experience. Users were transported into a simulated flight and experienced how the journey is enriched by connectivity via tablet. The campaign also appeared on social media and in the press resulting in increased engagement, leads, positive customer reviews, and a surge in their stock valuation.

Intercom, a communications platform that simplifies the connection between businesses and customers, has found a unique way to understand and identify buyers. Instead of targeting buyer personas, Intercom targets the jobs it's being hired to fulfill. Its philosophy: Knowing the job or need helps find the audience, how to message, and market to them. This strategy has produced increased conversion rates and tripled top-of-funnel traffic.

Workforce productivity company **Slack** produces an annual State of Work report to carve out a space as a thought leader. Within the report, they make a compelling case for streamlining office communications without being overt, but any reader will clearly conclude that Slack is the industry leader and innovator.

Assess your capabilities to ignite the changes you desire.

Sometimes the best thing to do is tackle the “low-hanging fruit”. Other times, it may be making a bold move and focusing your efforts and resources on substantial investments to take your organization forward. But before those decisions are made, organize your opportunities. Create three lists:

1. You know what you want to do and know how to do it. But you need a more efficient or creative approach.
2. You know what you want to do, but don’t know where to begin.
3. You wonder what a third party would recommend.



Figure 1: The results-driven leader’s circle of knowledge

Knowing what your team can accomplish and what needs extra muscle can help you plan. Don’t let skill-set gaps sway you from action. If it’s a priority, find outside resources to help. They offer extra hands, bring in new perspectives, challenge the status quo, help avoid common marketing pitfalls, and ensure quicker action.

Contact Wild Plum to help you prioritize, plan, communicate, and elevate your tech marketing from the status quo.



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