

How to prepare for B2B marketing in 2022

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an executive knowledge-sharing roundtable
hosted by **The Ortus Club**

the synopsis

In this exclusive invite-only virtual whiskey-tasting, business leaders discussed how to drive conversion across different platforms and content types, redefining the role of virtual as both a product-centric function and a space for knowledge-sharing among relevant audiences.

Industry experts shared thoughts and ideas on:

- Changing consumer behaviours as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak
- The challenges of how to connect with clients using new tools and techniques
- The potential of B2C initiatives to deliver personalisation customers respond to

This report includes data on:

- Key trends reshaping B2B marketing
- How companies can adapt to shifts in B2B marketing
- The role networking will play in helping organisations achieve their sales needs

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the moderator



[Samuel Adcock](#) | Founder and Managing Director at The Ortus Club

Sam is redefining networking among the C-suite. He leads the creation and management of pitch-free executive events across the globe that focus on providing senior decision-makers with the right opportunities to share expertise and business insights.

the topic

How to prepare for B2B marketing in 2022

Consumer behaviour has changed drastically since the outbreak of COVID-19, and it is expected to continue doing so in the post-pandemic landscape. Businesses must face the challenge of adapting how they connect to their clients, embracing new tools and techniques to not just regroup from the previous years but also set their organisation on the path to future success.

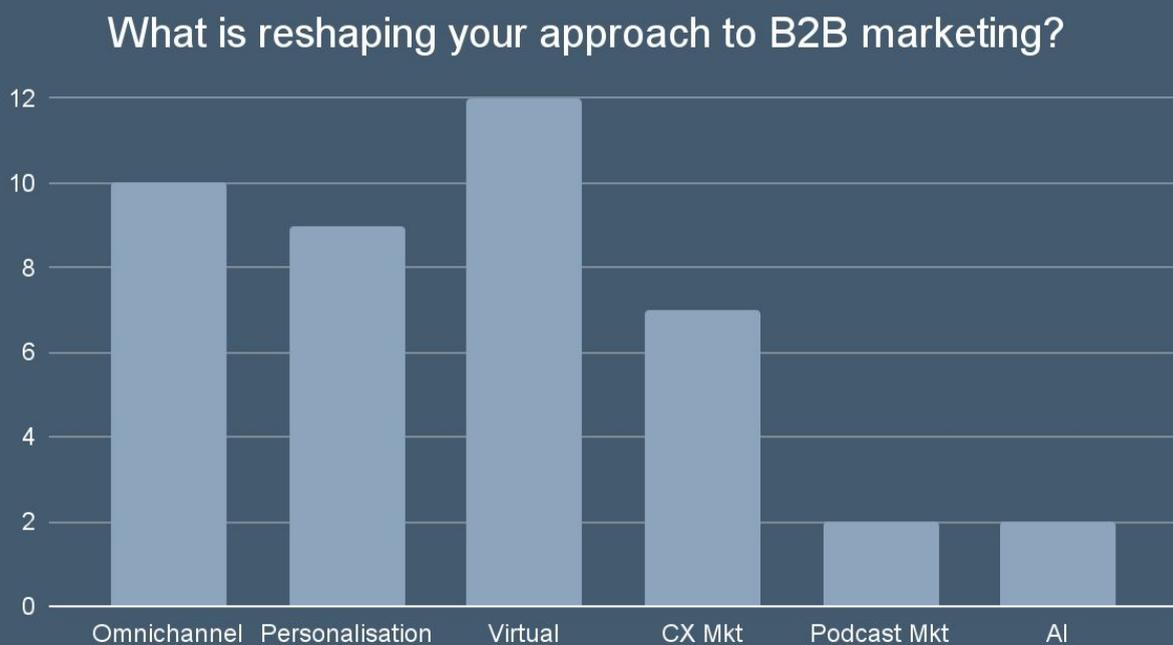
B2B marketers are now exploring the potential of B2C initiatives to deliver the same degree of personalisation that customers respond to. Their ability to drive conversion across different platforms and content types may redefine the role of virtual as both a product-centric function and a space for knowledge-sharing among relevant audiences.

- What key trends are reshaping B2B marketing?
- How can companies adapt to shifts in B2B marketing?
- What role will networking play in helping organisations achieve their sales needs?

the discussion

Senior decision-makers discussed changing consumer behaviours as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, the challenges of how to connect with clients using new tools and techniques, and the potential of B2C initiatives to deliver personalisation customers respond to.

They also shared insights and experiences on key trends reshaping B2B marketing, how companies can adapt to shifts in B2B marketing, and the role networking will play in helping organisations achieve their sales needs.



**feedback from participants prior to the discussion*

How have you adapted to the current environment?

- 'Deploying intent data and content automation.'
- 'Greater emphasis on inverting the funnel and focusing on key strategic accounts versus mass lead generation.'
- 'Omnichannel is now employed in the context of time-sensitive ABM.'
- 'There is now a stronger focus on engaging customers regularly and interactively via digital (everyone) and offline channels (selected local clients).'
- 'Digital campaigns, digital events, and digital engagement strategies are centre stage now.'

**feedback from participants prior to the discussion*

The past 18 months saw marketers knee-deep in discussions concerning shifts across the industry due to ever-evolving consumer preferences and the global economic crisis. Leaders were quick to share opinions on how best to navigate the changes, with many suggesting it was simply a waiting game. The business landscape would surely settle down, and companies could begin planning their next steps unhindered. They soon realised, however, this would not be the case. 'One thing we see is a move from

features and benefits-focused marketing towards insights-focused marketing,' said an executive. The former is arguably identical among competitors, which can make the latter a more viable strategy. As a result, sales organisations are rethinking their relationships with content. It is no longer just about creating flyers and brochures but rather the end-to-end experience. In addition to these emerging best practices, some decision-makers reflect on transforming their sales relationship with marketing leads, driving new conversations and-

-opportunities forward with speed, responsiveness, and a clear ROI.

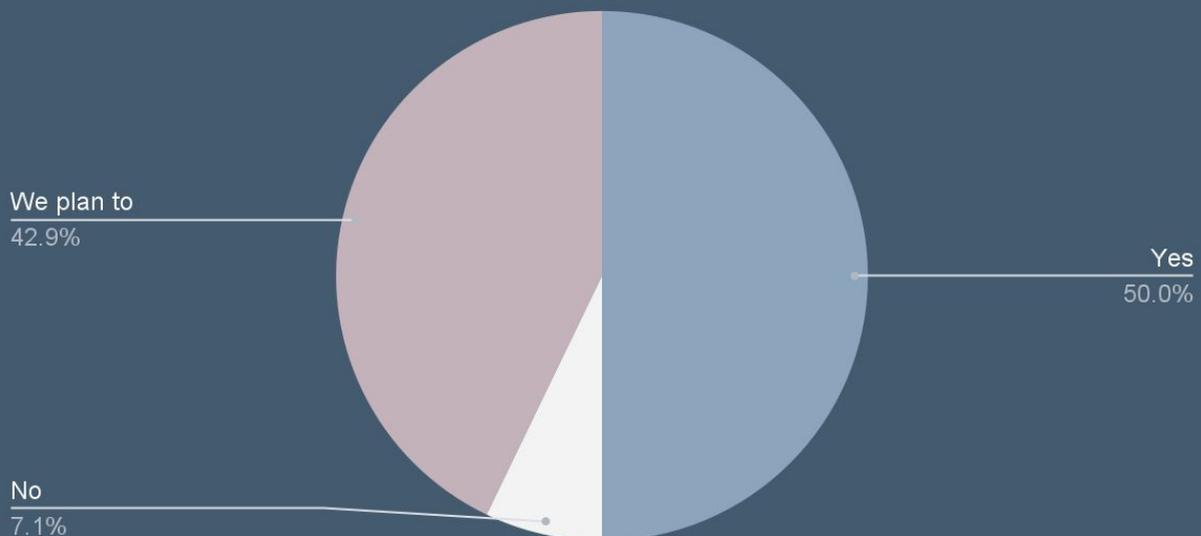
‘To be effective, you have to think like a publisher and act like a journalist.’

Digital content is paramount to success, but it is not simply a matter of publication. Education must be at the forefront if brands are to cut through the noise for partners and customers alike. ‘Our team sought marketers who could create thought leadership content,’ said one senior executive. ‘To be effective, you have to think like a publisher and act like a journalist.’ Such

an approach can power a marketing engine using insights, engaging consumers with curated material and giving organisations a competitive advantage. Subsequently, traditional content production methods are up for redesign. ‘I do agree things have changed, but the objective is still the same. We are just working towards achieving it differently,’ another leader concluded. Hence, many communication strategies now favour lead generation instead of awareness programs, which has shifted attention away from target stakeholders to target audiences.

Does your organisation currently employ networking initiatives to help achieve your sales needs?

**feedback from participants prior to the discussion*



How have you adapted to the current environment?

- ‘As physical barriers have been blurred further by digital ubiquity, it is getting more and more important to remain relevant and customer-centric. B2B Marketing strategies are evolving to ensure we are connecting with businesses efficiently to drive qualitative and commercial growth.’
- ‘Obviously, we pivoted fully to virtual events during COVID. For the foreseeable future, virtual events will continue to play a large part of the strategy while gradually re-introducing in-person events, and eventually finding a nice balance between the two. Having evolved into a CX platform, we need to practice what we preach, so CX has become increasingly important for us and our strategy is evolving to become more personalised at every touchpoint a consumer encounters us.’

**feedback from participants prior to the discussion*

‘We found ourselves moving quickly from thousand-word articles to short, sharp, and snackable content,’ said an executive. Marketers widely distribute videos and infographics but the emphasis can be lacking, and granular hyper-targeting with a keen focus on channel distribution may have the potential to address this. ‘No more blasting stuff out on LinkedIn across all of Asia Pacific. It should be per country, city, and biotype,’ the same executive added. Content pieces become smaller, but more work goes into each

one. Interestingly, some that follow suit across the broader marketing function do not see themselves immediately reverting to exclusively long-form soon. ‘Physical boundaries have blurred. Now we have a state of virtual ubiquity,’ said a senior decision-maker. Content is no longer limited in its capacity to be disseminated, consumed, used, and shared, giving rise to what they called ‘scalable localisation’. Relevance remains high on the agenda, but it is the ability to speak the language of specific customers that will help maintain a-

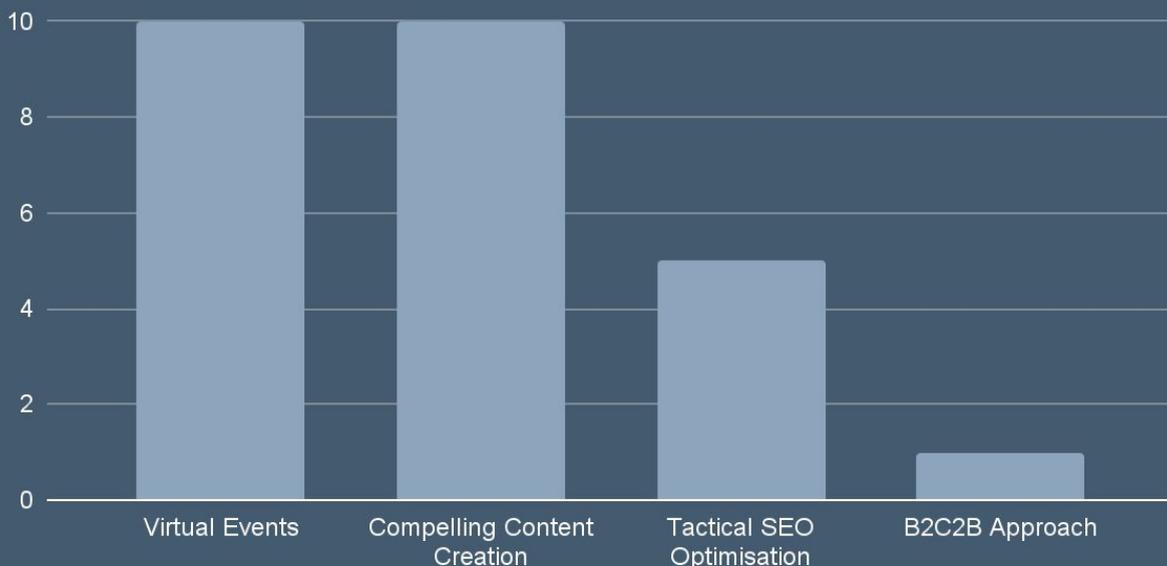
-a hyper-targeted system. The alternative is quite daunting: resources and bandwidth run out on a broad, one-size-fits-all scope.

‘Even within B2B, you are going after decision-makers who are human beings.’

Considering the amount and complexity of challenges marketers face, going back to basics could make all the difference. ‘Even within B2B, you are going after decision-makers who are human beings,’ said one leader. Acknowledging this creates a baseline

for content, helping strike a balance between investment, time to market, and what kind of personalisation to mix in. ‘We need to look beyond traditional channels and explore partnerships a lot more,’ another senior executive added. Amplification is key, and a strong ecosystem of partners coming together to deliver an end-to-end experience can redefine any sector: payments, logistics, and cybersecurity, to name a few. With the addition of contextual, interactive content like podcasts and short videos, companies can uniquely position themselves for new levels of optimisation and, consequently, -

What measures have you taken to ensure business continuity?



**feedback from participants prior to the discussion*

How have you adapted to the current environment?

- 'At a strategic level, it is becoming increasingly important to map and follow the multi-touchpoint journey of our users. Our users are not only on B2B channels but also B2C, and developing contextualised journeys and content to match is of utmost importance to deliver successful campaigns. It also means teams need to do more, and prioritisation and organisation of activities becomes more important. Some level of personalisation helps, but I don't think B2B is as equipped for hyper-personalisation yet, given data availability is low.'
- 'More market intelligence and data driven insights. The need to build/tap on shared resources expertise.'
- 'COVID changed the way we communicate. Data analytics to curate content, strategies in engagement rate. Tougher road in curating engaging content.'

**feedback from participants prior to the discussion*

-reporting. 'You don't have to change what you're doing completely. You just have to prioritise,' an executive concluded.

To establish a whole view of their end-users, organisations leverage basic data and A/B testing for SEO and hyper-targeted conversations. 'When you ensure all your content is addressed to the right audience, at the right time, and with the right segmentation, the quality of leads go through the roof, despite digital

fatigue,' said one executive. These highly personalised activations, sometimes existing campaigns tweaked with industry-specific messaging, elevate the experience of consumption and pave the way for a new breed of business model. 'The pandemic is an opportunity for Marketing to connect to Sales,' said a senior decision-maker, insisting that increased collaboration between the two leads to unique content and new opportunities to maximise social and digital channels.

Companies know they must remain agile and pivot quickly to survive, which necessitates the curation of hybrid events. However, replacing physical touchpoints with conference tools does not automatically solve the problem. ‘We can get our information out, but the engagement is not there,’ said one leader. Reports underscore this, with attendee rates in the US at 20 to 30 per cent. ‘You almost have to quadruple your registration just to hit your target,’ said an executive. Yet, in the face of cancellations, conversions to virtual, and an overall decline in new client intake, marketers must find smarter

ways to do the same things. Take, for example, an organisation that hired a comedian to host a webinar and achieved record-breaking results. They took advantage of unbeatable reach and an engaging narrative, demonstrating how to succeed while everyone fights for the same attention. Alternatively, experts said, ‘Look at what B2C is doing.’

What challenges and opportunities have you faced?

- ‘General fatigue amongst participants on virtual networking.’
- ‘Networking or highly targeted events are helping create brand resonance and drive commercial growth across the funnel.’
- ‘Challenges: skillsets gap, marketing tech stack, real-time customer insights. Opportunities: marketing as the growth enabler.’
- Resourcing and support. Also to managing and complying with data requirements.
- ‘Budgetary constraints remain as well as changes in rules as a result of the pandemic.’

**feedback from participants prior to the discussion*

What challenges and opportunities have you faced?

- 'Covid makes it hard to network and my Sales team does not believe in virtual networking. Networking requires a budget. Cultivating the networking mindset in Sales and developing networking skills to tactfully turn these into opportunities without coming across too 'sales-y.'
- 'Impact is not yet clear. Creating adequate, high-quality content to feed through the various channels, especially if time-sensitive.'
- 'I think planning engaging online networking events is very hard today—people are fatigued with online sessions, so finding ways to engage is #1 priority. Alternatively, social selling.'
- 'Networking is a core part of marketing in many professional services firms. Social distancing and travel restrictions have resulted in the curtailment of many of these in-person networking activities. Hence, we have turned to digital marketing (e.g. video, webinars, podcasts) to overcome these restrictions. Our digital marketing efforts aim to increase interactivity and engagement, as it is getting challenging to stand out from the crowd.'
- 'Discomfort with digital networking is a huge challenge.'

**feedback from participants prior to the discussion*

the participants

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