



## Bret Terwilleger

Principal/Chief Creative Officer

# Does Creativity Matter in B2B Marketing?

September 2017

Yes, more than ever. In the past, B2B marketing relied on appeals to logic to sell a product. Today, that kind of straightforward appeal falls on deaf ears. Decision makers only make time for communications that are both informative and creative.

Creative B2B marketing can illustrate the inherent value of a product or service as well as the added value to a company's brand. A B2B product can be useful, and it can also enhance a company's office culture or resonate with its core values. However, this connection is not always obvious. It often takes a creative campaign to help decision makers envision the wider impact of a new B2B product.

To this end, current B2B marketing operates similarly to B2C marketing. It needs to be polished, succinct, and targeted. It needs to appeal to people's emotions and align with their sense of identity. It needs to differentiate a product from a slew of competitors.

The main difference is that B2B marketing must make people question the status quo. It must make a business reimagine business as usual. Could this service save us time? Could this product make us more productive? Could it make us more like the company we want to be? A successful campaign makes employees stop and reconsider familiar aspects of their companies—no small feat.

To produce these kinds of gripping moments, it's important to find creative ways to do the following:

- **Captivate** decision makers with an attention-getting presentation.
- **Anticipate** their needs and time restraints once a promotion has their attention.
- **Elevate** the perception of internal operations with the help of new B2B products.

## Captivate

With any type of marketing, the challenge is to get consumers' attention. In B2B, the arena is especially limited and crowded: a manager's desk piled high with promotional mailings hidden under towers of paperwork. Their email inbox is bulging with similar pitches. In these conditions, the conventional ways to stand out—color, gloss, witty copy—do work. For a second. The real challenge is to hold attention, to captivate.

At Oden, we work to present products or services in a way that is more than eye-catching. We want the presentation to be gripping and compelling. Sometimes we work with form. Sometimes we work with texture. And sometimes, we work with intangibles like anticipation.

With our longtime client Thomas & Betts, we used anticipation to escalate the impact of the release of a new electrical product. They had developed a universal wire connector cap. The days when electricians needed to carry multiple sizes were numbered. Like many B2B products, it was quietly revolutionary. However, we wanted to sound the alarm loud and clear.

“The storm is coming,” warned initial mailings. The Cyclone, a wire connector cap named for its conical shape, hit the electrical industry with a whirlwind of material. Key influencers received samples to test the caps before their release.

Because of the campaign, everyone realized the Cyclone was the equivalent of a hundred-year storm. At T&B, morale reached the heights of a disruptor startup.

The impact of the storm? The Cyclone sold out quickly after it touched down.

The success of the Cyclone's release is a testament to the power of B2B marketing. The products required for a business to run are often functional but underappreciated. However, with proper presentation to the proper people, they can be celebrated as breakthroughs and even, as in the case of the Cyclone, become industry-wide events. It takes a creative vision to imagine how to make them captivating.

## Anticipate

At work, people are busy. Information overload is a constant battle. More than B2C, B2B marketing needs to be quick and to the point. As marketers, we should anticipate customers' needs and anticipate the number of seconds they can devote to glancing at a promotion.

Our approach is to deliver messages simply. We respect people's time. We engage them with a message that is intriguing, informative, and brief. We find creative ways to fit into the time crunch.

A prime example is our work with ABB, a European technology company. ABB wanted to raise the profile of its low voltage products in the U.S. One part of its multipronged strategy was to attract key players to regional events.

No ordinary invitation would do. They're too easy to overlook, too easy to throw away. Even if someone opened it, who would read every word?

Instead, we mailed a video. Thanks to advances in video technology, we were able to send cards embedded with a thin screen. The medium was unexpected and more efficient than a conventional invitation. In a few seconds, we conveyed more about the company and event than possible with the most carefully worded card.

No one has enough time, especially in a business context. For that reason, B2B marketing must be extremely respectful of the moments professionals have to spare. Creatively making the most of those moments, like stretching time with video, is key.

## Elevate

People forget what makes their industry fascinating. In an effort to make everything work, they stress the details. They stop appreciating the big picture: the ballet on a factory floor, the choreography of teams coordinating across departments, the millions of human stories their products are a part of.

We rekindle that fascination by elevating the B2B products that make companies work. Part of captivating people with a promotion is making them see their industry with fresh eyes. Part of making them question business as usual is integrating a new B2B product or service into that vision.

RING Container is one of the leading providers of jars and other food containers. However, their image and web presence did not project their status in the industry or the importance of their product. Jars are a prime example of the unnoticed and unappreciated. They are part of the backdrop in any kitchen, the overlooked centerpiece of countless dinner conversations. Yet no one recognizes that they are beautiful.

To catch the eye of clients, our team created RING a website that celebrates the elegance of the jar. Artistic images from the factory highlight the sculptural qualities of the jar's form—translucent curves that catch the light, gleaming lines of jars whirling along conveyor belts, stacks of jars forming glinting mosaics.

The website is sure to make the most jaded industry insider stop and consider the appeal of a jar. Not only that, they will consider the importance of aligning themselves with a company like RING that understands the art and impact of packaging.

Creativity in marketing does not always involve inventing a new image for a product. In B2B marketing, we often find creative ways to make people take a second look at the products they use every day. With that look they can recognize the beauty of those objects and appreciate their role in the grand scheme of things behind the scenes. That refreshing take on internal operations can renew people's enthusiasm for their jobs and, in the process, for the B2B product that helped them remember.

## Vision and Value

B2B marketing is tasked with convincing employees to change business as usual. Such a challenge demands a tremendous amount of creativity. It takes creativity to help managers envision a different way of operating. It takes creativity to help them see the benefits of switching to a new product or service.

These days, B2B marketing can no longer rest on demonstrating value. It must appeal to not only the brain, but also the heart. We tap into employees' pride in their jobs. We rekindle their awe for the massive company undertaking they are a part of and the products that make it work.

To do this, Oden elevates the perception of internal operations. The inner workings of a company are mesmerizing. Decision makers appreciate this side of their companies, but it's not often reflected in B2B promotions. Proving a B2B product or service is valuable takes facts and figures. However, presenting B2B products or services in a way that enhance decision makers' visions of their companies takes creativity.



oden.com

## About Oden

Oden is an expert business-to-business marketing communications firm. We provide marketing, branding, and design solutions to help FORTUNE 1000 corporations and mid-size businesses adapt, progress, and remain relevant in the ever-evolving B2B space. We bring the combination of talent, experience, and tenacious service our clients expect and need in today's business environment.

Contact us at [hello@oden.com](mailto:hello@oden.com) or connect with us at:

