

UNDERScore

ISSUE 1 / 2018

THE RISE OF THE REVIEW

★★★★★
ECONOMY



+ THE HYPE VS. HARD
DATA ON MILLENNIAL
DECISION-MAKERS

+ ENTERING A NEW
ERA OF SECURITY
MARKETING

+ ARE WE
TRANSFORMED
YET?

Welcome to the first edition of **UNDERScore**, our new publication specially designed for modern technology marketers.

Why did we put this magazine together? Because great content is often overlooked in today’s digital melee. We skim blogs, empty inboxes, and glance through infographics at a rate detrimental to our attention span. This is why you’re holding something to engage with during your own time. No screens or electricity required — just valuable insights from our members, industry experts and guest contributors.

There’s always more out there

As we often joke, every company now perceives itself as a technology company. This unveils new forces at play between legacy providers and nimble startups who are rewriting traditional B2B marketing models. But we’re all fatigued — feeling overwhelmed in a sea of data and never-ending change. No matter how hard we work to stay ahead of the curve, there will also always be more skills to learn and problems to fix.

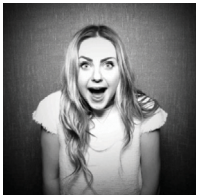
VALUABLE INSIGHTS
FROM OUR MEMBERS,
INDUSTRY EXPERTS AND
GUEST CONTRIBUTORS

The good news is that you’re not alone. We’re here to help. Here is what awaits in the pages ahead:

- + The latest shifts impacting technology marketers — from GDPR to younger, tech-savvy buyers
- + Taking advantage of the “Review Economy” — how to make customer reviews your new source of revenue
- + What’s so different (or not!) about the Millennial IT decision-maker
- + Marketing stories focused on real-life ROI strategies

Enjoy this first issue, and keep an eye out for future editions!

Meghan Brockmeyer Ashraf Kamel



Meghan Brockmeyer
Marketing Manager,
LinkedIn Marketing Solutions



Ashraf Kamel
EMEA Head of Sales, Tech Vertical,
LinkedIn Marketing Solutions



Did You Know We Have a Blog? Leverage our insights to engage 100M+ decision-makers on LinkedIn.

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TECHNOLOGY TODAY

Opportunities and Challenges for Marketers

When it comes to B2B technology marketing, it's hard to keep up with the pace of our practice. Here at LinkedIn we are continuously researching, analyzing, and producing content to help our audience stay updated on industry trends. Here's a quick cheat sheet of what we believe are key marketplace dynamics that will power the rest of 2018.

MILLENNIALS ARE DRIVING THE BUYING COMMITTEE

More than half of Younger Millennials (61%) and Older Millennials (68%) contribute to their companies' technology purchases — and one in three is already a decision-maker.¹

61%

Younger Millennials

68%

Older Millennials

Learn more on page 8!



SECURITY SOLUTIONS: TODAY'S ESSENTIAL BUSINESS SAFEGUARD

The top CISO concern in 2018: A "lack of competent in-house staff" (cited by 70% of those surveyed) outranks all other forms of cybersecurity worry, from data breaches to ransomware attacks.²

CSOs cite budget constraints, poor compatibility of systems and a lack of trained talent as the biggest barriers to advancing their security postures.³

Learn more about what IT buyers want to know about security on page 12!

87%

of CIOs believe their current security controls are failing to protect their business.⁴

IT BUYERS AND THE C-SUITE ARE GRAPPLING WITH CLOUD ADVANCEMENTS LIKE NEVER BEFORE

IDC research indicates that the number of enterprise organizations using multiple cloud providers will **grow to 90% over the next few years**. However, as hybrid cloud environments become par for the course, global organizations are grappling with complexities that comes with managing these multiple services.⁵

60%

of workloads will run through some form of **hosted cloud service** by 2019, up 45% from 2017.

Learn more on page 20!

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SEARCHING FOR ROI

"The glaring obstacle in adopting a data-driven marketing approach is the cultural shift needed to make it feasible. Data-driven business crosses and helps to break down silos, functions and boundaries and should be led by marketing."⁶

ABM CONTINUES TO DRIVE RESULTS

Organizations with aligned sales and marketing teams are **67% better** at closing deals and generate **208% more revenue** from their marketing efforts.⁷



NICK PANAYI

Head of Global Brand and Digital Marketing
DXC Technology

"Sales meets our clients almost every single day. If you make sure that the communication cascade is accurate so everyone is on message and knows what the key themes are, that can have a strong impact."⁷

TELCO IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Growth in business services is forecasted to surpass the consumer market and become a key growth engine for telecommunication companies. While analysts expect the consumer market to continue to grow at 0.6% annually, the B2B market could grow closer to 2.6%. This is largely due to demand for mobile data and addressable IT services.⁸

To help win consumer trust and loyalty, Telecommunication marketers should augment their content distribution strategies to gain more credibility.⁹ **Here are a few key tactics to do so:**

1. Recognize the value of thought leadership.
2. See the importance of touchpoint consistency within your brand.
3. Focus on "reach" as your most important KPI.
4. Measure cost per connection by tracking your connection density (CD).
5. Invest resources where content is delivering the most value.

The B2B Telecommunications market could grow closer to 2.6%



If you're looking for a deeper dive here, our "6 B2B Telco Marketing Trends to Master in 2018," has you covered.

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VALUE-ADDED RESELLERS (VARs)

It's Time to Take Charge

In today's competitive marketplace, VARs must embrace a marketing strategy that propels them out of the crowd and into the spotlight. What does that mean? Just saying you're "the best local storage interator" won't cut it anymore. Clients are savvier and OEM partners want to invest in VARs that deliver proven value. Now's the time for VARs to shift from simply carrying out product marketing campaigns to truly conveying a unique and insightful point of view.

PARTICIPATE IN YOUR CUSTOMERS' DISCUSSIONS

VARs can add value by becoming part of the conversation that's shaping today's technology landscape, including engaging with the industry they serve and their customers. To do this, staying on top of current industry and technology trends is key. So is recognizing the interaction between various products sold. For example, if a VAR sells virtualization, it should voice opinions on how that intersects with networking hardware options, which in turn impacts the cloud. It's about crafting a larger overall industry conversation to attract clients who value their expertise.

DEMONSTRATE THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

VARs must shift their marketing strategy. Instead of a straight product play — "Look at this amazing router our OEM has," try "We're seeing changes in the networking industry, and you'll need to adjust your infrastructure approach. We have products and services that can help, including a great new product from this OEM." This shift in thinking, coupled with thought leadership pieces and smart employee insights, will help reposition a VAR as a "solution seller" that's a value-added partner vs. just a product pusher.

4 STEPS TO BETTER YOUR VAR's BRAND VALUE

- 1. Scale your POV.** Build thoughtful, value-based content that shares your POV, features your subject matter experts and showcases client success stories.
- 2. Support social selling.** Encourage sales to use marketing content to deepen client rapport. Those who connect to prospective customers in "light-touch" ways increase their credibility.
- 3. Involve partners and clients.** Integrate key members of your industry to spark collaboration. Start the conversation by hosting client discussions in key markets, whether digitally or in person.
- 4. Participate in industry speaking opportunities.** Industry events and trade shows are great avenues to share insight, communicate your message and help drive the conversation!

ACTIVE MARKETING ENGAGEMENT = A VERY DIFFERENT VIEW OF VARs

Increasingly, VARs must change how they engage in the marketplace, becoming a trusted source for trends, education and industry insight. All VARs should be able to answer: Who are you? And what do you have to say?



These insights were contributed by Mike Weir, LinkedIn's Senior Director of Sales, to support technology companies in building long-term relationships with their clients and prospects.

The Rise Of The REVIEW ECONOMY AND ITS IMPACT ON B2B



With the rise of Yelp, TripAdvisor and a host of other consumer review sites, reviews have transcended the realm of B2C and made a strong case for relevance within today's B2B marketing landscape.



THE B2B BUYING PROCESS: Why Reviews Illuminate Risk Vs. Reward

With the buyer journey ever evolving, savvy customers expect nothing less than honest, exhaustive information about products and services — a level of transparency that can only be provided by real user reviews.

"How Online Reviews Influence Sales," new research conducted by Northwestern University's Spiegel Research Center in conjunction with PowerReviews, found that the "presence of reviews on websites and landing pages can significantly boost the likelihood of purchase. In fact, 95% of shoppers turn to online reviews — and a product with five reviews has a 270% higher purchase likelihood than a product with zero reviews."¹ These findings alone should spark urgency from marketers.

Why? Northwestern's research also uncovered that product reviews may have even greater importance in B2B vs. B2C due to higher-consideration purchases being made. B2B purchases also come with higher price tags and graver consequences for selecting the wrong product or service. According to the report: "Based on data from a gift retailer, when reviews were displayed for a lower-priced product, the conversion rate increased 190%. However, for a higher-priced product, the conversion rate increased 380%." B2B marketers cannot afford to let the opportunity for reviews pass them by.¹

MAKING THE MOST OF MARKETING CONTENT:

Considerations for Leveraging Reviews

For marketers to effectively tap into the power of B2B reviews, they must take note of key considerations along the customer journey.

Marketers Cannot Live by Branded Content Alone

Accept that brand marketing and vendor-supplied content cannot drive new business exclusively. With approximately two-thirds of customers steering clear of branded content altogether, B2B marketers must rethink how their brands build trust and condition consumers to champion their products and services.⁴ Sincerity and truth must underscore all consumer-directed content in a way that speaks with them, not at them.

Market Your Products and Services to Solve Problems

B2B buyers seek products that come close to realistically meeting their expectations and needs. Brand affinity alone will not place vendors on the short list. B2B marketers must evaluate how their products and solutions are positioned to solve business problems, and whether they complement existing technology ecosystems.

The reality is that B2B buyers aren't looking for the perfect product; they're looking for the product that best fits their needs. For instance, a small business won't immediately seek something designed for enterprise customers. That's why B2B marketers must evaluate how well their products or solutions are marketed to solve a variety of business problems and help prospects find the best fit. That's how you earn loyal customers. In reviews, authenticity wins.

Make Sure It's Not Too Good to be True

If there are too many good reviews, buyers won't believe it. The research from Northwestern University shows that products with an average star rating in the 4.2-4.7 range are more likely to be purchased than those with near-perfect ratings.¹ This tells us that buyers are keen for honest, real opinions. B2B marketers must embrace the good and the bad about their offerings — and use this as a discussion point to qualify the investment and how it can address customers' business needs. In fact, critical reviews are an opportunity for vendors to publicly engage with dissatisfied customers and exhibit their customer service, which is central to any business relationship.

Leverage Unbiased Reviews

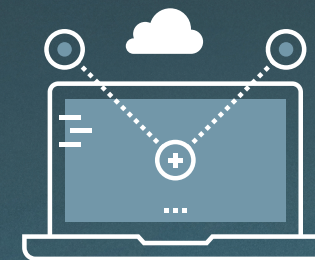
Vendors are embracing the huge potential of reviews. Buyers want unbiased information to help find their optimal solution. Brands that are ahead of the curve leverage B2B reviews to sell to customers who are educated and ready to buy. As the 2018 goal and budgeting season is upon us, it's crucial to prioritize and implement a review strategy. Competitors certainly are. Marketers: Try searching "(insert your product name) + reviews." You'll likely see customer reviews outranking your own SEO. That should be proof enough.

THINKING ABOUT QUANTITY AND QUALITY

While having many product or service reviews can be beneficial, the quality of your reviews is equally important to shaping purchase intent. According to Forrester, "A review's quality is the key to attracting readership and interest. For example, reviews such as 'It's great' or 'Don't buy this' lack enough detail to be useful for the typical B2B customer." B2B buyers want as much substance in a review as there is to the product they're considering.²

So what does this all mean for your B2B organization? Brands, products and services must adapt quickly to today's consumer-powered landscape. The fact is, peer-to-peer, influencer, practitioner, colleague, and authenticated and verified user reviews are today's primary sources for pre-purchase B2B guidance, education, and research. B2B marketers must take this into account and leverage the power quality reviews that positively impact purchase intent.³

REVIEWS RISE UP: EVEN MORE PEER-TO-PEER

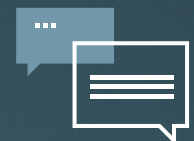


85% of technology decision-makers read up to 10 online reviews before making a purchase.⁵

61% cite opinions/reviews from experts as a top source of information when making a final decision.⁶



53% rely on peer recommendations to make a purchase.⁵



WHO ELSE DO TECH BUYERS TALK TO?

- 70% speak with professional peers.
- 51% chat with end users.
- 45% consult colleagues not directly involved in the buying process.⁷

HARNESSING NEGATIVE REVIEWS FOR GOOD

Take it from the experts — as user behavior on G2 Crowd recently showed, **negative reviews (those with 1 or 2 stars) receive nearly 200% to 300% more clicks and views than positive reviews.** For marketers, this reveals an untapped opportunity to leverage reviews without the stress of striving for perfection.⁵



01 Embrace the gamut of online feedback about your company, and contribute to these conversations. You can't prevent consumers from expressing negative opinions, so you're better off owning up to any shortcomings and positioning them as a learning experience.

02 Offer a response, clear up misconceptions, or provide further brand insights as a next step. Shoppers who seek out negative reviews are more engaged with pre-purchase research, viewing nearly four times as many products as the average visitor to a site.⁸

03 Build relationships with your community of reviewers. At this state, it's important to respond quickly, thank customers for their feedback, and explain how you'll fix the issue at hand. This shows that you care and will go a long way toward helping to build trust. A Harris study concluded that 18% of people became loyal customers after a company responded to their less-than-positive reviews.⁹

04 Recognize that solutions are rarely one size fits all. Some software is designed to help small businesses while other products are amazing solutions for enterprise players. Discussions with negative reviewers can often lead to a better product fit, more satisfied customers, and perhaps better reviews.

05 Proactively gather insight on what you can do better. It's possible that a complaint could expose real problems with your product or service. Use this information to fuel your customer experience feedback loop — and be sure to thank the brave person who submitted feedback.

06 Once an issue has been addressed or corrected, reach out and seize the opportunity to ask for an updated review. This is the most important step you can take to help influence future purchasing decisions.

THE CHALLENGE OF GETTING FEEDBACK: HOW B2B MARKETERS CAN ENCOURAGE REVIEWS

Attracting an optimal volume of quality reviews can be a challenge for B2B marketers. So what are the best ways to prompt customers to get involved? Here are a few suggestions²:

Actively solicit reviews and ratings. Don't be shy about asking customers to review your products so you can reach a critical mass of customer input. Forrester cites that, for its TurboTax product, Intuit solicited reviews "seconds after users submitted their taxes," while a healthcare division of 3M placed review submission screens into forums and communities. These two approaches were found to "increase review volume [in one online community] by 200% in just three days."

Take the extra step and encourage comments. Once a review is posted, it's not the end of the story. The best reviews — both negative and positive — can stand up to scrutiny by peers in the industry. Forrester posits that this kind of interplay between product users should be fostered and that "B2B sites must encourage other customers to validate or invalidate existing opinions."

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⁷LinkedIn Tech Research, "Beneath the Surface: Taking a Deeper Look at Today's Empowered Tech Buying Process," September 2015

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⁹Mackcollier.com, "New Research Proves That RESPONDING to Negative Feedback Online Benefits Companies," March 2011

“WITH 97% OF IT BUYERS indicating that they rely on peer recommendations, ratings, and reviews when it comes to buying business software, B2B sites must give **special status to reviews posted by power users** of a product.”

Make it easy for customers to submit reviews.

Noting that many B2B markets are small and competitive, Forrester encourages companies to ask customers to submit anonymous testimonials. Forrester also recommends "making it easy for users of the product to submit reviews by embedding reviews and rating opportunities as part of the installation or customer service process."

Strive for user authenticity. Ideally, marketers want reviews to be submitted by end users rather than purchasing managers. "With 97% of IT buyers indicating that they rely on peer recommendations, ratings, and reviews when it comes to buying business software, B2B sites must give special status to reviews posted by power users of a product," says Forrester.

Extend the reach of reviews. The syndication of reviews can create a multiplier effect. Several digital business pros have indicated that syndicating their ratings and reviews to supplier and manufacturer partners increased their total net number of ratings and reviews across the entire channel.

TAKE THE QUIZ!

Rating Your Company's Review Culture

You've just read about the power of reviews. Now let's see how your company's approach measures up:



01

How many reviews do you currently have on your site?

- a. <10 (1 pt.)
- b. 11-30 (2 pts.)
- c. 31-50 (3pts.)
- d. 51+ (4 pts.)

02

How many site reviews are 3-5 stars (or the equivalent)?

- a. None (1 pt.)
- b. One-quarter (2 pts.)
- c. One-half (3 pts.)
- d. More than 50% (4 pts.)

(If less than one-half, now's your chance to use what you've learned in this article to change how customers see and interact with you.)

03

Do you have both negative and positive reviews?

- a. No (1 pt.)
- b. Yes (3 pts.)

(There's no wrong answer, but if you don't have any negative reviews, you might want to consider polling customers separately to find out what they think you can do better. There's always room to grow.)

04

If you have both positive and negative reviews, what's the split/percentage?

- a. 90%+/10%- (3 pts.)
- b. 70%+/30%- (4 pts.)
- c. 50%+/50%- (2 pts.)
- d. More than 50%- (1 pt.)

(If the negatives are outweighing the positives, take that to heart and really look into customer issues. This could be a great opportunity to turn the consumer "perception tide" in your favor.)

05

How do you solicit reviews? (Select all that apply.)

- a. Only on our site (1 pt.)
- b. Follow-up purchase email (1 pt.)
- c. Social media (1 pt.)
- d. Other (1 pt.)

(If you only solicit reviews in one way, or the same old way, you're missing out on the customer full picture. Consider adding a few more surveys or feedback loops to your marketing mix to get a more accurate gauge of what customers think and feel.)

06

How many of your reviews are more than five words/one sentence long?

- a. None of them (1 pt.)
- b. Some of them (2 pts.)
- c. Most of them (3 pts.)
- d. All of them (4 pts.)

(Quality/more valuable reviews tend to be longer. If you find most of your reviews are short and sweet, why not incentivize lengthy feedback? Think about entering customers in a drawing or giving them a chance to win something if they rate your company/product using 20 words or more.)

SO HOW ROCK STAR ARE YOU?

17-20 points = Review rock star

11-16 points = Review pro (but just a little more review savviness could put you at rock star status)

10 or fewer points = Review amateur (but there's nowhere to go but up!)



A NEW ERA OF SECURITY MARKETING

As the demand for security talent and skills increases, protecting consumer and company data is a priority for every modern organization — especially with GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) fines impacting up to 4% of a company's total revenue.

In this era of greater regulation, marketers of security solutions can implement better always-on tactics that work to build trust with customers and organizations. In fact, there are more opportunities than ever to shine a light on how critically important safeguarding data and network infrastructure is to the modern business. Security marketers should differentiate their brand by effectively communicating the ease, flexibility and support that clients can expect to receive if selected as their primary vendor.

Businesses Investing in Security: By the Numbers

Cyber and security technology is evolving faster than most businesses can keep up. But while security has become a doom and gloom topic, new solutions and protocols are helping CISOs become more confident and capture internal trust. Consider these stats:

73%
of CISOs expect
to experience a
major security
breach within
a year.



of organizations
that experienced
a breach in 2016
are improving
threat defense
after attacks by separating IT
and security functions.

Source: Cisco 2017 Annual Cybersecurity Report



CMO'S CORNER: Marketers, You Are Now an Honorary Chief Security Officer

Holly Rollo, Chief Marketing Officer of RSA Security, offers her three biggest tips for today's marketers to own their security responsibility:

- 1. Document data infrastructure and security controls.** Make sure you're keeping track of processes and procedures to provide complete transparency to customers and prospects.
- 2. Understand data collection protocols.** Determine whether you can track all customer data back to a specific source. How is this process audited?
- 3. Work in tandem with security teams to develop strategy.** Remember that all departments across the organization are impacted by security, so lean on your internal security team for the best advice.

Transparency is the Tip of the Iceberg

As security matters more than ever to global business, marketers are responsible for translating these safeguards and policies into customer-facing realities. For security marketers looking to treat these changes as a golden opportunity for growth, here are a few tips to keep in mind:

Develop security-focused content. If your customers and prospects have any questions about security protocol, data gathering, or internal processes, make sure to have an abundance of content on hand. Proactively creating blogs, tip sheets, and case studies will only help in the long term.

Communication is key. Communicate clearly with enterprise customers and create strong, comfortable relationships. Keep them in the loop with engaging resources, and don't shy away from responding to pointed questions regarding security procedures.

Create accessible messaging. Ensure that you're speaking to all of your brand's constituents clearly, whether they're prospects, customers, vendors, partners, or even internal employees.

Embrace authenticity! What truly sets your security brand apart from competitors? Is it your hands-on approach to dealing with security issues? A best-in-class response time to customer questions? Turn these unique attributes into marketing gold.

Continue learning. Looking for more ways to compete and win in today's competitive security marketing marketplace? Subscribe to the LinkedIn Marketing Solutions blog and get relevant topics and articles delivered right to your inbox.



Q&A with LinkedIn CISO Cory Scott

Highlights from our recent conversation with LinkedIn's own Chief Information Security Officer, Cory Scott.

Q: As a security expert in today's Internet era, what value do you place on trust?

A: Trust is extremely important. We invest heavily in securing our infrastructure and applications to ensure we can detect when things go wrong — and that we're able to effectively reduce any damage caused when they do. But trust is not just about securing data. It entails keeping our promises to members, partners, and customers when it comes to their security.

Q: With the previous thought in mind, what can security and technology marketers do to build consumer trust in today's volatile landscape?

A: Lead with transparency. Demonstrate what you're doing and show as much as you possibly can to ensure your products represent those commitments. In the security space, it's very important to also represent your security talent as a brand. At the end of the day, it comes down to documenting what you do in a way that your potential buyers believe is appropriate — in addition to having the team and talent to execute that vision.

Q: What are the personal security habits you've developed to keep your data secure?

A: As far as things that I do personally to stay safe and secure, it's really the adoption of a multi-factor authentication on all my online accounts and whenever possible U2F or a one-time hardware token. I [also] run and apply automatic updates to all my systems so that when a security patch comes out, it's automatically updated.



HYPE/HARD

data

The Evolution of the Tech Buying Committee from CIO to Millennial

Technology today is ubiquitous across every organization. As a result, defining the modern technology buyer — and, in particular, their motivations and key influences — is more difficult and nuanced than ever. If you are a marketer of technology systems, solutions and services, then you are intimately familiar with the responsibility of guiding your customers through a highly complex and digital purchase path.

To close winning deals and exceed new customer expectations, understanding the latest interpersonal dynamics powering purchasing decisions within organizations today — and why — is paramount. This is why LinkedIn conducts annual research into the ever-evolving technology buying committee, examining the committee's distinctive characteristics, objectives, information consumption habits and outside influences. Each year, we strive to present a much clearer version of today's technology customer to help marketers best reach and engage them with both their marketing and sales efforts.

HERE IS WHAT WE'VE LEARNED OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS:

1. The technology purchase path is more inclusive and fluid than ever — meaning marketers must be capable of adapting and modifying their products and strategies to meet each customer's needs.
2. The buying process is cyclical, so your marketing efforts should be too (don't neglect the importance of caring for customers post-sale and through renewals).
3. More than 78% of the technology buying committee works outside IT, so you must now reach and win over stakeholders in marketing, sales, finance, operations and even HR.
4. Each committee member possesses their own purchasing expectations and content consumption habits — carefully monitoring these nuances is critical to a vendor's success.
5. Nearly half of the buying committee is comprised of Millennials, and they are changing the way organizations make technology investments and work with vendors. 34% of Younger Millennials (ages 19–25) and 41% of Older Millennials (ages 26–35) already possess technology decision-making responsibilities. Millennials are asserting their representation by providing influential input on a purchase or relaying the impact of implementing and managing that technology product or service.
6. Millennials and Gen Xers really aren't that different after all. A strong majority (80+%) of Gen Xers mirror their Millennial counterparts when it comes to trying new technology brands, asking colleagues for advice, providing recommendations about technology products or services and sharing opinions about technology with friends outside of work.

TODAY'S TECH COMMITTEE | BUYER INSIGHTS

MILLENNIALS ARE ACTIVE MEMBERS OF TODAY'S BUYING COMMITTEE	Younger Millennials	Older Millennials	Gen X
Decided on a tech product/service to buy	34%	41%	48%
Managed the budget for a tech product/service purchase	20%	27%	37%
Provided input on a tech product/service purchase	61%	68%	67%
Implemented or managed a new tech product/service	53%	58%	57%

Source: 2016 LinkedIn survey of Millennial/GenX IT committee members (global data)

PUTTING RESEARCH INTO ACTION

Given these key trends, how should marketers strategically think about standing out from the crowd?

Step 1: Be always on. With many members of the buying committee participating in multiple stages of the purchase process, your content must go deep and wide. Today's decision-makers consume traditional marketing content, but are also looking for much more. This means that subject matter expertise, educational tools, views and opinions from actual users, and even details about your company's business model should be covered in your content strategy.

Ultimately, it's important to be there for your buyers every step of the way. Ask yourself: Are your social channels responsive? Have your sales and support teams engaged with your buyer at every touchpoint?

Delivering the right resources at the right time will propel the feedback loop to ensure that your buyers pick you when it's time to purchase.

Step 2: Build personalized, relevant content for each customer on the platforms they trust.

No matter what age, technology decision-makers prefer easily accessible content that resonates with their individual needs. Our research finds that different content formats are preferred at each decision-making stage (identifying needs, research/spec/funding, vendor selection, implementation, management, and renewal).

When it comes to implementation, learning guides (47%) are sought above all else — while opinions/reviews (40%) and product information (32%) are referenced more heavily during the budgeting process. Overall, technology buyers of all ages prefer short articles or posts that provide a mix of general news, expert opinions, learning guides, videos and white papers along the purchase and post-purchase path.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE!

When it comes to making purchasing decisions, the different generations have more in common than you may have thought. Can you distinguish the Younger Millennials (professionals 19–25), Older Millennials (professionals 25–35) and Gen Xers (professionals 35–50) from one another in the following statistics?

1. **56% prefer to learn about new products via social media:**
A. Younger Millennials
B. Older Millennials
C. Gen Xers
2. **78% prefer personalized communication from marketers:**
A. Younger Millennials
B. Older Millennials
C. Gen Xers
3. **50% appreciate insights-driven social selling behavior:**
A. Younger Millennials
B. Older Millennials
C. Gen Xers

Answers: 1. C, 2. A, 3. B

Step 3: Unlock the gates.
Another way to foster much-needed trust with buyers is to reconsider the common strategy of gated content. A full 82% of Gen Xers, 80% of Older Millennials and 78% of Younger Millennials decide not to download gated content or will enter false information when downloading. Privacy and relevancy were primary motivations.

To become a trusted vendor, you must understand their specific business needs and break away from marketing strategies the new tech committee finds too invasive — such as gated content.

HOW DO TECH BUYERS RESPOND TO GATED CONTENT?	WHY ENTERED FALSE INFO	WHY DECIDED NOT TO DOWNLOAD
I wasn't comfortable sharing my information with a vendor	71%	60%
I didn't know how the vendor would use my contact information	71%	59%
I wasn't sure that the content would be useful or relevant to me	44%	47%
I didn't want to take the time to type my information in the form	32%	46%
I didn't want the vendor to think I was interested in their products/services	34%	28%
I am not the right person at my company for the vendor to contact	17%	15%

Step 4: Engage your sales team early and often.
Consider this: Approximately three in five technology buyers want their reps to use LinkedIn for social selling actions. Globally, most buyers (72%) say it's important their sales rep demonstrate key social selling behaviors across four distinct categories: having a professional brand, having a network of trusted connections, taking a relevant approach to the sale, and leveraging valuable insights.

Personalization remains vital, yet respondents — of all ages — are less than impressed with their average sales rep's capabilities. Across generations, when considering new technology products/services, buyers overwhelmingly prefer sales reps who understand their business needs and provide relevant content. Also, Millennials highly value reps who share content applicable to their roles and provide personalized communication.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Technology allows us to communicate and collaborate in powerful ways like never before. It's a place where every department and generation can find common ground — and come together to adopt new work tools, drive innovation and revolutionize connection.

The “language of tech” is a great equalizer. Our research findings indicate less difference and greater similarity across decision-makers and generations when it comes to choosing, funding, and implementing business technology. The implications for tech marketers are powerful.

Take some time to truly understand your customers' needs and the questions they want answered, build trust through personalized timely content that is easily accessed and be available to customers at all stages of the decision-making process.

MARKETING MUSTS

- Millennials and Gen Xers want to believe you care. Personalize your content with relevant insights mapped to job function and career stage.
- Technology buyers of all ages prefer short articles from credible news outlets and industry experts when seeking information before the sale.
- Ungating > gating — always!

SALES STRATEGIES

- Adopt a social selling approach that leverages personal connections and demonstrates your knowledge of a buyer's business.
- Don't always prioritize senior-level decision-makers. Millennial practitioners and individual contributors are active in the buying committee and their input is often trusted most.
- Ensure the content and insights you share with contacts are relevant, personalized and genuine. Millennials will respond poorly to (or worse yet, ignore) traditional selling tactics.

TECHNOLOGY FORTUNE TELLERS

LinkedIn Influencers Look into 2018 and Beyond

Technology moves fast, with more advancements on the horizon than one can imagine. For a reliable look into our digital crystal ball, here are five perspectives from LinkedIn thought leaders who have shared what they are seeing in the world of B2B tech — and what it means for the future of marketing.



DAVID LINTHICUM, Chief Cloud Strategy Officer at Deloitte Consulting, is a leading cloud influencer and author of LinkedIn Learning's most popular courses on cloud computing. According to David, “Learning is a highly multidimensional process these days!”

Inside David's crystal ball: “If you're part of IT and do not have mad cloud skills, you're part of the problem. It's time to become part of the solution.”¹

BOB CARVER, Manager of Network Security at Verizon, knows his material when it comes to risk management, cyber resiliency and strategy, incident management and threat intelligence — he's monitored tens of thousands of infected endpoints.

Inside Bob's crystal ball: “It's clear that when it comes to security, time is of the essence. To help you prioritize, here's a handy acronym you can share with your teams when it comes to your cybersecurity initiatives: S – Situational Awareness, P – Patching (Cyber Hygiene), E – Evolve Continuously, E – Event Monitoring, D – Detection.”²

CHUCK BROOKS is a top security voice and technology evangelist covering a variety of topics, including cybersecurity, government, and emerging technology — showcasing information from myriad sources (including LinkedIn groups!).³

Inside Chuck's crystal ball: “The pace of innovation is so rapid and exponential that it can be quite overwhelming just to try to keep up. But social media does offer a pathway.”

JOY TAN, President of Global Media and Communications at Huawei Technologies, crafts tech-specific content on behalf of her enterprise — and her first-person perspective lends authenticity to local and global tech themes alike.

Inside Joy's crystal ball: “Technology changes fast and as the year winds down, it can be hard to say definitively which trends generated the most buzz. My vote goes to artificial intelligence. AI will put basic network functions on autopilot, handling operations and maintenance quickly while reducing down-time and maintenance costs.”⁴

AHMED BANAFI is an IoT expert sharing insights into the latest trendy tech including IoT, blockchain, AI, cloud and big data. Ahmed dives in past the myths, buzzwords and hype that so often come with these topics.

Inside Ahmed's crystal ball: “Given the state of cybersecurity today, the implementation of AI systems into the mix can serve as a real turning point. New AI algorithms use machine learning (ML) to adapt over time and make it easier to respond to cybersecurity risks.”⁵

Sources:
¹“Cloud is the Hottest Skill in the World (Again). Here's How You Can Benefit.” Published on January 3, 2018
²“Cybersecurity: The Need for SPEED.” Published on July 20, 2017
³“Using LinkedIn As A Marketing Fulcrum For Emerging Technologies In 2018.” Published on February 10, 2018
⁴“AI and other tech trends, plus a look ahead to 2018.” Published on December 31, 2018
⁵“First Line of Defense for Cybersecurity: AI.” Published on February 20, 2018

STEPPING INTO NEXT- GEN COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT

How Lauren Gerstner, Global Director of Social Media at HP, Tackles Social Media 2.0

As the social space evolves and becomes a key channel for businesses to interact with their customers, enterprises must focus on the interplay between social media and community management more than ever before. Gone are the days of primitive listening tools and overbearing, outbound marketing tactics. Instead, savvy social marketers keep a strong pulse on customers through compelling content, advocating the brand, and building meaningful relationships with both existing clients and prospects.

We got in touch with HP's Global Director of Social Media, Lauren Gerstner, to highlight her innovative technology marketing techniques.

Q: The HP social team is new, given you previously outsourced this community management function. Can you explain this transition and how it supports the integration of your marketing team?

A: Last year HP decided to move our community management in-house. As a result, my team was born. To support HP's overall effort to become increasingly social and digital first, we're now focused on extracting the value of being closer to the customer in today's social space. We aim to drive engagement and consideration through our marketing campaigns and through the conversations we're having across our social landscape. Ultimately, this direct proximity to customers generates insights that drive more impactful marketing efforts across the organization.

Q: It's impressive to see all you've accomplished within a year. How did you manage the shift from external to internal social and community management within HP?

A: When an organization outsources community management, even to a strong agency partner, there is distance between the brand and its customers. Our transition wasn't the easiest, but it was driven by a strong desire to own the customer relationship in a more serious way. This upside outweighed our upfront challenges. By taking community management on internally, we now have full-time resources dedicated to social. This translates into stronger listening capabilities and more time to respond and engage.

Q: How does HP's organizational structure impact your social activity? What goes into incorporating HP's key themes and messages into social conversations?

A: Our social team partners very closely with HP's broader marketing organization. While our business unit marketing teams and PR teams design campaigns, create content and own the messaging, my team owns the execution and helps shape the way activations come to life on localized social channels. The key is to meet our marketing and PR partners far enough upstream so that our social expertise can help impact the way campaigns are designed at the outset.

Q: What KPIs are most important to you?

A: KPI definition in social is a constantly evolving conversation. This is great because we're always trying to get closer to a measurement system that reflects what we're trying to impact and achieve. My team continues to focus on refining our content performance and paid social metrics through a primary social CMS and measurement platform. Naturally, we're looking at awareness metrics (reach) and engagement metrics (click, shares, likes, and comments), engagement rates and cost per engagement or cost per action. As we produce more video, we're looking at cost per view and view duration to understand how engaged viewers are with our video content. When we're trying to take customers off platform and drive them to our website or another destination, we're looking at how effective social posts are in terms of driving clicks or driving traffic. And where applicable, we're looking at how effective social is at driving leads. We are also tracking social listening, like conversation volume, volume by geography, share of voice, sentiment, etc. and look forward to getting more sophisticated in this space throughout 2018.

Q: How do you quantify social media's impact on higher-level business ROI at HP?

A: Like most social marketing organizations, we're working to zero in on quantifying the value or impact of social on the business. And it's an everyday measurement challenge we strive to make progress on. For now, the most tangible ROI measurement opportunity to test this out is through social posts that drive a purposeful buying journey — directing to either HP.com product pages where people can make a purchase or directly to another online retailer.

“By taking community management on internally, we now have full-time resources dedicated to social. This translates into stronger listening capabilities and more time to respond and engage.”

Q: What are you focused on for 2018?

A: As a new operation, there's so much opportunity we still have out in front of us to capture. As we get more established inside the marketing organization, we're better positioned to drive the evolution of social strategy at scale. We will continue to build strategic assets that keep us focused on our key social audience segments, help us prioritize our resources and efforts across social platforms and drive content development that supports marketing priorities. We're also continuing to evolve our social measurement capabilities to ensure we're producing valuable, actionable reporting that helps our marketing partners understand how social activations are performing against objectives.



Lauren Gerstner is the Global Director of Social Media at HP and a leader in social media, community management and paid social.

4 WAYS TO SUCCESSFULLY MARKET

Cloud Solutions

• IN A FLOODED MARKET •

Cloud marketers face massive responsibilities ahead, which will only increase as newer, more complex solutions are introduced into the marketplace and competition continues to thrive.

Cloud computing has disrupted IT spending since the early days of the digital age as the race to win new business and protect market share accelerates among cloud service providers (CSPs). For those tasked with marketing cloud, storage, and infrastructure solutions, many shifting buyer habits — toward hybrid in particular — will translate into untapped opportunity. Are you preparing to rise to this challenge?

A TEMPERATURE READ

83% of data centers are projected to be cloud-based by 2019¹

2-3 Businesses use an average of 2-3 cloud services for both IT operations and non-IT business functions.²

CHANGING INVESTMENT FOCUS WILL SETTLE ON DIVERSITY OF SERVICES AND INTEROPERABILITY ACROSS PLATFORMS.³

TOP REASONS organizations choose a vendor over in-house IT:

AUTOMATIC MAINTENANCE (50%)
SPEED OF DEPLOYMENT (45%)
LOWER COST (45%)²

NEW opportunities to be of value:

71% of IT decision-makers believe their orgs have lost revenue due to a lack of cloud expertise.⁴

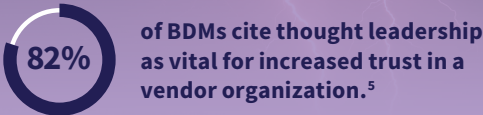
REAL TALK: WHAT ARE CLOUD MARKETERS UP AGAINST?

Here are four unique challenges to consider when tackling the modern customer's shifting approaches to CSPs.

1. Weak decision-maker relationships

If your organization lacks existing relationships with primary decision-makers and their influencers, breaking outside of the IT room can be difficult.

Building stronger relationships with business decision-makers (BDMs) starts with trust.



2. Security risks and demands

Cloud services have a bad reputation when it comes to security risk. It's your responsibility to proactively address concerns early and often with prospective clients.

3. Information overload

The cloud technology market is awash with players, and it's tough to cut through the noise and tell a different story. Hone your pitch into a few key pieces of engaging and concise content. Keep in mind that the best content will be educational.

4. Falling behind the curve

The market is rapidly evolving. For cloud-based organizations that get caught behind the times, the results can be disastrous.



#WINNING: 4 OPPORTUNITIES TO STAND OUT AS A CLOUD MARKETER

Cloud marketers have a very complex workload, but here are some ways to stay ahead of the pack.

1. BE MORE THAN A CLOUD VENDOR; BE A DIFFERENTIATED IT PARTNER

Consumer CSPs have made cloud computing a household name, but there is a lack of cross-model expertise when it comes to public, private and hybrid solutions. As CSPs become an integral part of IT strategy, marketers must make known that they are more than just another vendor. Show how your product will lead to stronger, more successful IT organizations — and showcase your unique factors.

2. LEVERAGE ACCOUNT-BASED MARKETING (ABM)

Adopting an account-based marketing (ABM) strategy is one of the most powerful ways to increase your brand's relevance and drive ROI from your marketing efforts — enabling you to become a stronger, more visible force within cloud's competitive landscape.



3. EDUCATE CUSTOMERS ON YOUR LEVEL OF CLOUD SERVICE SECURITY

Many consumers still believe that cloud services do not have the same level of security that the data center ensures. Marketers should educate customers on the ways their solution can provide enterprise-grade security that extends beyond the capabilities of the data center.

4. FILL IN YOUR CUSTOMER'S STORAGE GAPS

This relates back to positioning your organization as a strategic IT partner. Your customers have holes in their offerings around storage. By understanding their unique needs, you can fill the gaps and provide a more holistic service.

Cloud computing spending is expected to grow at 6 times the rate of IT spending through 2028. By positioning yourself as a valued vendor, you can better understand the nuances of your customer's needs and come out ahead.

Sources:
¹Expandedramblings.com, "10 Interesting Cloud Computing Statistics and Facts," December 2017
²Techrepublic.com, "Everything as a Service: Cloud providers solve problems in-house IT can't and do it more quickly and for less money," November 2017
³CioDive.com "5 Trends Shaping the Cloud in 2018," January 2018
⁴infoworld.com "Lack of Cloud Skills and Training Begin to Take a Toll," January 2018
⁵business.linkedin.com, "How Thought Leadership Impacts Demand Generation," August 2017
⁶business.linkedin.com, "Catching Customers at the Right Time: It's More Than Just Luck," August 2017

THROUGH THE LENS

U.S. COMPUTER AND NETWORK SECURITY & COMPUTER NETWORKING

With 460M+ members in over 200 countries, LinkedIn has the ability to analyze professional movement and content interest across the world. Glance at highlights from our targeted data that showcases trends to better focus your marketing plans when it comes to the Computer and Network Security and Computer Networking industries.

EMPLOYMENT IS ON THE RISE

Over the past year, strong growth emerged in these professional sectors:



↑ 4.7%
COMPUTER AND
NETWORK SECURITY



↑ 1.4%
COMPUTER
NETWORKING

Recent grads are taking this working world by storm:
11,000+ in Computer Networking
10,000+ in Computer and Network Security

11.4%
of Computer and Network Security recent graduate hires hold a postgraduate degree



9.8%
of Computer and Networking recent graduate hires hold a postgraduate degree

REMEMBER: Not all tech professionals are created equal. Keep in mind that within every tech category there's an ever-growing population of decision-makers with niche goals and pain points.

BUT TALENT EBBS AND FLOWS BETWEEN INDUSTRIES

Top talent comes from other hot industries as Computer Networking employees migrate from:

- + Info & Tech Services
- + Computer Software
- + Telecommunications

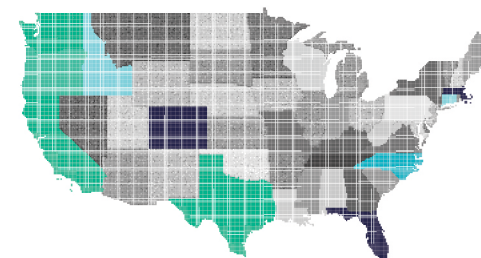
And Computer and Network Security employees matriculate from:

- + Info & Tech Services
- + Computer Networking
- + Financial Services

REMEMBER:

- **Tech pros bring their collective experience to the table**, so don't pigeonhole them in marketing communications or inaccurately assume their level of involvement in the buying committee.
- Speaking to an ever-evolving tech industry means **staying up to speed on the purchasing habits of ITDMs** in key industry roles and building a rapport via close alignment with sales.

WHERE'S EACH INDUSTRY EXCELLING? IT'S ALL IN THE GEOGRAPHY



Computer Networking:
Raleigh-Durham, NC;
Boise, ID; Hartford, CT

For Both:
Austin, TX; San Francisco, CA;
Pacific Northwest

Computer and Network Security:
Denver, CO; Tampa/
Saint Petersburg, FL;
Boston, MA

REMEMBER: *Where* is as important as *who* when targeting ITDMs. Use this information to focus your efforts on the areas likely to provide the greatest return

WHAT'S MOST APPEALING IN A JOB?

Computer and Network Security candidates say:

- + Excellent compensation & benefits
- + Good work/life balance
- + Culture that fits their personality
- + A good relationship with superiors
- + Challenging work

While Computer Networking professionals say their biggest turnoffs are:

- + Lack of advancement opportunity
- + Dissatisfaction with comp
- + A need for greater challenges

REMEMBER:

Satisfaction is not only a key factor in job success, it's a key factor for technology sales and content – if ITDMs don't think the marketing message they're receiving is relevant, they won't give you the time of day.

WHAT DOES ENGAGEMENT ON LINKEDIN LOOK LIKE?

Both Computer Networking and Computer and Network Security pros showcase above-average rates of engagement:

Mobile views: 1.2–1.5x greater

InMails: Computer Networking 1.2x more likely to check

Companies followed: Computer and Network Security 1.4x more

Connections: 1.3–1.5x more

Most followed companies for both industries include:

TED

Harvard Business Review

Microsoft

Google

WHAT ARE THE HOT CONTENT TOPICS OCCUPYING THEIR MINDS?



Computer Networking pros love:

- + **Software platforms/providers:** Juniper, VMware, SAP, Brocade
- + **Employee engagement**

Computer and Network Security pros enjoy:

- + **Vulnerability/cyber warfare/antivirus**
- + **SQL**

And both groups are interested in:

- + **Cloud Computing**
- + **Security**

LINKEDIN GROUP POPULARITY STAYS INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC

Networking Top Groups:

- + Cisco
- + Cloud Computing

Computer and Network Security Top Groups:

- + Information Security Community
- + Information Security Network

FINAL REMINDER: Know your audience and create content that speaks to their tech challenges and needs at every point along the purchase journey. You can never underestimate the power of a well-timed, highly relevant message.

This infographic uses a combination of anonymized LinkedIn member and survey data.

A STORY OF ENHANCED TARGETING & OPTIMIZED REAL-TIME METRICS:

**How FireEye, Highfive and Spigit
Delivered Meaningful ROI Through
Better Content Marketing**

Marketers continually seek new and effective ways to connect with customers through content, yet the playbook for success always seems to evolve. When delivering relevant content to purchasing professionals on LinkedIn, it should always be supported by a strategy that effectively leverages the platform to attract, convert and close new business. In this article, we examine how three very different technology companies used LinkedIn to take their marketing efforts to new heights.

SPIGIT TARGETS PROSPECTS AT THE MICRO LEVEL WITH SPONSORED CONTENT

The world of digital marketing opens up infinite ways for marketers to connect with audiences with unprecedented scale. However, tracking these macro-level campaigns can result in unnecessary work and data analysis headaches for marketers.

When it comes to running a revenue-generating marketing campaign, the more that messaging resonates with the target audience, the higher likelihood of conversion. On LinkedIn, rather than throwing updates, announcements or random ideas into a massive prospect pool, marketers see the greatest success with Sponsored Content when they tailor their creative, original content to highly specific audiences.

Spigit, an idea management platform company based in San Francisco, used several key features of the tool to filter out and target a specific audience with their ads, resulting in a lifetime record CTR of 0.517%.

FIREEYE OPTIMIZES CONTENT BY LEVERAGING CONVERSION TRACKING

Once the target audience is set, delivering content to these individuals throughout their customer journey is the next step. As a security-as-a-service leader, FireEye knew that in order to reduce the overall cost per lead, they needed to attract their target prospects without wasting resources on continuous cycles.

The team worked to deliver the right content to the right person by targeting enterprise-level managers in specific geographic regions using Conversion Tracking on LinkedIn. This allowed them to see what messaging resonated most with specific groups — and then duplicate the content for scalability and insights. The FireEye team also worked with AdStage, a LinkedIn API Partner, to customize content pacing based on intelligent data analysis, which allowed them to reuse meaningful insights to create even smarter campaigns.

LinkedIn Marketing Best Practices from Tableau

Innovative data analytics company Tableau is changing the way they target and engage prospects with LinkedIn Sponsored Content using the following best practices:

- #1 — Target highly specific groups:** Tableau has worked to narrow down target audiences to a granular level, which allows them to send the right message to the right audience at the right time.
- #2 — Test out retargeting capabilities:** By retargeting users who visited tableau.com, Tableau was able to reduce their CPL by 30%.
- #3 — Value quality over quantity:** While Tableau strives to garner clicks, they ultimately care about conversion rates — especially those prospects with an A-level rating.

HIGHFIVE EXECUTES SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGNS BY IMPLEMENTING A/B TESTS

A/B testing is an integral part of the modern marketer's playbook. However, it can be difficult to take results from A/B tests and implement the findings when optimizing campaigns.

Highfive, an intuitive cloud-based collaboration platform provider, leveraged LinkedIn Marketing Solutions to create optimized ads for maximum conversion and success, bringing in two organic search leads for every one incremental LinkedIn lead. They were also able to drive additional brand awareness through comments, shares and likes on their ads.

With LinkedIn Sponsored Content, Highfive was able to identify a direct correlation between organic search, lift across native channels and LinkedIn conversions. And, thanks to intuitive A/B testing, the company can now update and optimize ads and content to continuously bring in new leads and increase marketing ROI.

TIPS TO MAXIMIZE YOUR LINKEDIN MARKETING SPEND

Need a few best practices to develop winning marketing campaigns on LinkedIn? These do's and don'ts will make your efforts more impactful:

Create engaging content

To ensure long-term success, content should be valuable and relevant to its intended audience. If your targeting is segmented, craft differentiated messaging to boost conversion rates.

Embrace the power of cross-channel marketing

When it comes to cross-channel marketing, it can be easy to dismiss subsequent metrics as coincidental. Identifying cross-channel correlation can help strengthen future integrated campaigns.

Take advantage of unique integrations

Marketers live and die by data, but there's a ton to cut through. With the help of partners, marketers can use LinkedIn data to help improve their content's reach and also boost ad performance.

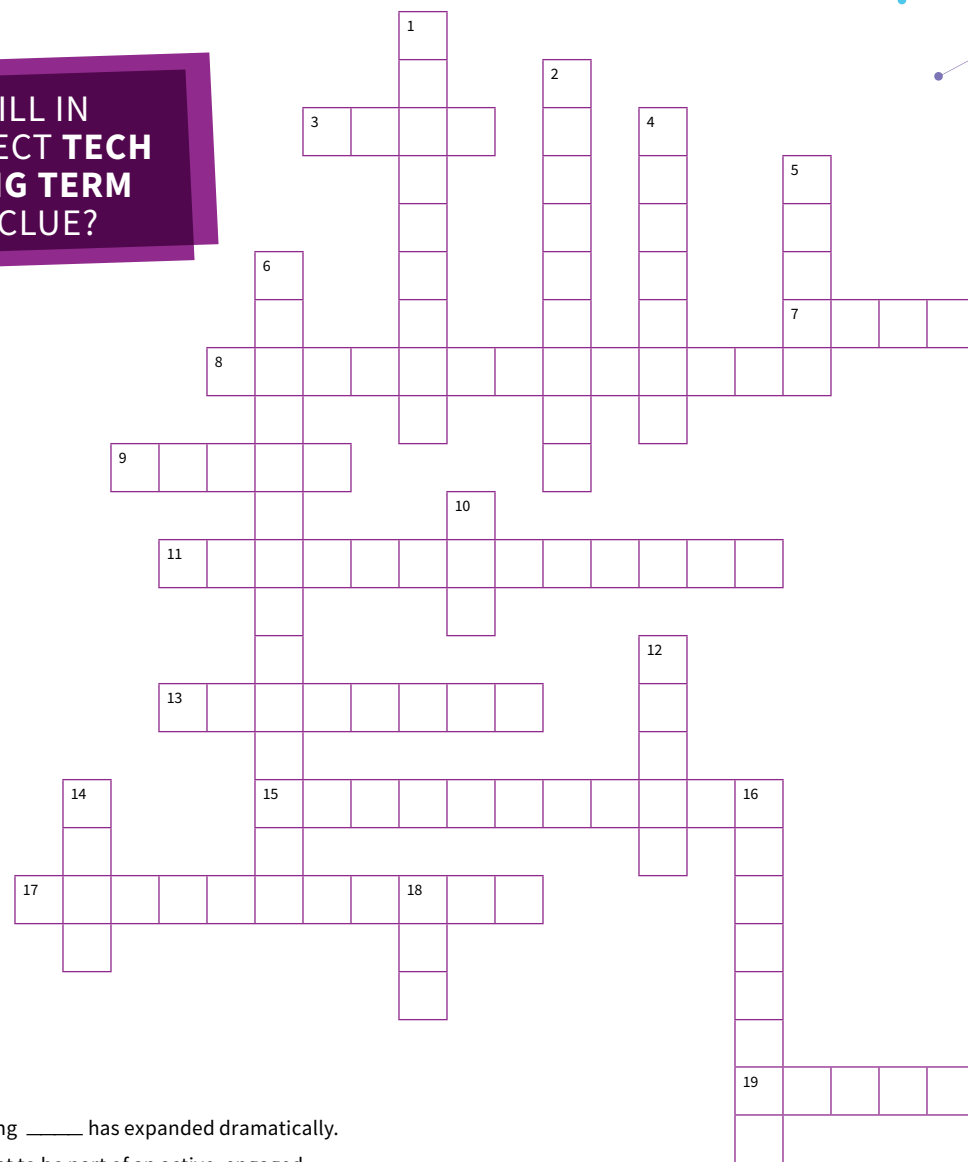
Combine campaign assets for maximum ROI

Instead of wasting precious marketing dollars on separate engagement tools, insight solutions and content promotion platforms, marketers can use LinkedIn's suite of marketing tools to quickly and efficiently combine campaign assets into a single solution for maximum ROI.

Cast a "high and wide" net

It can be tempting to create one-size-fits-all campaigns to try to capture as many leads as possible, but this can actually negatively impact overall metrics. Weak leads can cause conversion rates to plummet over time, which is why adopting a blockbuster approach to gain marketplace authority on key trends is so important.

CAN YOU FILL IN
THE CORRECT **TECH**
MARKETING TERM
FOR EACH CLUE?



DOWN

- 01** The traditional IT buying _____ has expanded dramatically.
- 02** Tech professionals want to be part of an active, engaged _____ that provides relevant info for their skillsets and careers.
- 04** To win the trust of potential customers, marketers need to augment their _____ distribution strategies to gain more credibility.
- 05** When it comes to _____, quality over quantity counts!
- 06** A majority of surveyed IT pros identified technologies relevant to security (73%), _____ (65%), cloud (61%), and networking and infrastructure (52%) as key areas for further development.
- 10** _____, whether monetary or not, must be a forefront discussion to demonstrate value. (Acronym)
- 12** Marketing and _____ can work better together!
- 14** Within each sector within tech, there's an ever-growing population of decision-makers with niche goals and _____ points.
- 16** With market share expected to grow to \$170 billion by 2020, _____ marketers work tirelessly to position their companies as hacker-proof, breach-patching, trusted leaders.
- 18** Adopting an _____ strategy is a powerful way to increase your brand's relevance and drive marketing ROI. (Acronym)

ACROSS

- 03** Right content, right person, right _____.
- 07** Marketers should use controllable, targeted demographic _____ to reach their audience at the heart of where they are online.
- 08** LinkedIn can help you target the right _____.
- 09** _____ computing was recognized as among the world's most in-demand skill from 2015 to 2017.
- 11** Social selling is effective and drives key sales outcomes because it's built from trusted _____.
- 13** With LinkedIn, marketers can unleash the power of online _____ that speaks to their audience's appetite for mastering new skills.
- 15** In addition to seeking advice from those in their professional networks and other individuals on the buying committee, decision-makers also turn to the POV of _____.
- 17** Sharing relevant content on social media improves trust, especially for Younger _____.
- 19** 82% of business decision-makers say thought leadership increased their _____ in an organization.

ARE WE TRANSFORMED YET?



By: Meghan
Brockmeyer

"Digital transformation" is all the rage of late. But much like how technology is ubiquitous across business today, marketers will ultimately realize that the "digital" in "digital marketing" was overhyped — we've really just been marketing all along. Looking ahead through the never-ending noise surrounding disruption, technology and transformation, I anticipate that marketing will realign its north star toward objectives that drive real business improvement. Here is how that future might play out.

MEETING CUSTOMERS WHERE THEY ARE

Relevance and proximity matter more than ever, but sometimes we confuse relevance with personalization. Every day, marketers sacrifice interesting opportunities to build customer loyalty in favor of over-indexing on flair and compromising on substance. It's time to focus on where your expertise lies and articulate the problems you're solving for.

One viral tweet is not a long-term brand story. Instead, make customer touch-points meaningful and do away with the fluff. Opt for omnichannel consistency and find new ways to delight customers to build their trust each day. While marketing's key group of stakeholders only grows larger and larger, you should still own your brand's story and its perception in the marketplace.

OBSESSING OVER EXPERIENCE

By 2020, customer experience will overtake price and product as the key brand differentiator.¹ In the technology sector, this equates to prioritizing how you nurture and build trust with prospects and clients — especially since less than one-third of today's technology buyers will place a new vendor on their short list.² Customer experience is the paramount factor impacting whether you retain customer loyalty or send them fleeing to the competition.³

As a brand, you must make it nearly impossible for your customers to find a reason to go anywhere else. Begin by practicing a customer-first approach, which includes:

- + Finding out (sometimes by just asking directly!) what customers want
- + Making your interactions personal to key decision-makers
- + Telling a consistent and engaging story throughout the entire journey

Sources:

¹business.linkedin.com, "Tech Buyers and Trust: Challenging to Get, Even Tougher to Get Back," March 2016

²business.linkedin.com, "Beneath the Surface: Taking a Deeper Look at Today's Empowered Tech Buying Process," September 2015

³marketeer.kapost.com, "10 Customer Experience Stats That Will Impact Your 2016 Content Strategy," January 2016

⁴edelman.com, "How Thought Leadership Impacts B2B Demand Generation," June 2017

OWNING YOUR NARRATIVE

Working with trusted vendors is an integral part of the purchasing cycle. But as online reviews, peers and influencers play a greater role in the product and service selection process, your company and product narratives must withstand new credibility checks.

The best way to proceed down the right path is the right investment in thought leadership — in fact, recent research from Edelman and LinkedIn found 82% of BDMs say thought leadership increased their trust in an organization.⁴ When planning a thought leadership strategy, always be open, honest and relevant. Decision-makers value timeliness and relevance of thought leadership content more than pure originality of ideas.⁴ Content also doesn't need to come from the C-suite — your entire sales force can share powerful perspectives and fill key channels with interesting, engaging insights!

The road ahead won't be without its challenges, but technology marketers are poised to lead the way if we get honest, embrace the uncertainty and recommit to what we do best — helping people in challenging environments do their jobs better.



Founded in 2003, LinkedIn connects the world's professionals to make them more productive and successful. With 560 million members worldwide, including executives from Fortune 500 companies, LinkedIn is the world's largest professional network.

**For more information,
visit marketing.linkedin.com**