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## B2B TELCO MARKETING TRENDS TO MASTER





## WHAT'S ON THE TELCO HORIZON?

# ELEVATION OF B2B CONTENT AND NEW WAYS TO THINK ABOUT ENGAGEMENT

The Telco industry is at a pivotal point, with unprecedented digital disruption and data flow poised to tip the scales for companies ready to seize the opportunity.

Those who fail to adapt their B2B marketing strategy will only increase the distance between themselves and those they most hope to reach. Why? Because with this digital evolution comes a customer evolution — one where B2B customers demand that Telcos prove their worth in an increasingly competitive landscape.

**OVER THE NEXT  
3 YEARS,**  
growth in business services  
is forecast to surpass the  
consumer market and  
become one of the key  
growth engines for  
telecom companies.

While forecasters expect the consumer market to continue to grow at about 0.6% annually, **the B2B market could grow at about 2.6%,** largely due to the demand for mobile data and addressable IT services.<sup>1</sup>



**Telcos have B2B marketing in place, but most still struggle to employ effective strategies to pull away from the competition:**

- All Telco services, including wireless, have become more commoditized, adding to competitive pressure and lagging growth<sup>2</sup>
- Telco wrestles with mobile data and how to capitalize on it from an advertising and marketing standpoint<sup>3</sup>
- There's been significant lag time in the modernizing of Telcos' marketing operations, in reducing marketing complexity and in embracing new digital strategies and tactics
- Less than 10% of Telco marketers believe they are highly advanced and rapidly evolving when it comes to being more data-driven, customer-responsive and digitally adaptive<sup>4</sup>

**A new approach to marketing is required.**


Not only do today's Telcos need to get serious about modernizing, digitizing and upgrading — they must get serious about revamping how they connect with B2B customers.





WORK SMARTER, NOT HARDER: EMBRACE RELEVANCY,  
CONSISTENCY AND B2B BLOCKBUSTER CONTENT

## THE APPROACH TO B2B MARKETING — WHAT TELCOS CAN DO BETTER



The spotlight is on B2B — with a wealth of untapped opportunities. So how do Telco B2B marketers best address this digitally disruptive market and turn the tables in 2018 to better connect with customers? Here are **six key trends and strategies** to help change the face of B2B Telco marketing:

- 1 Recognize the Value of Thought Leadership**

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- 2 Embrace B2B Blockbuster (not Lackluster) Content**

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- 3 See the Importance of Touchpoint Consistency**

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- 4 Hail the End of Hypertargeting**

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- 5 Make a Case for Cost Per Connection**

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- 6 Know the Rules of Brand Investing**



A man in a plaid shirt and glasses is standing in a server room, looking at a server rack. The room is dimly lit with blue and orange lights. The server racks have glowing blue lights and some have red lights. The man is holding a tablet or a small screen.

## KEY TREND AND STRATEGY #1

# RECOGNIZE THE VALUE OF THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Today, marketers in general tend to bombard customers and prospects with varied messages in myriad formats across multiple channels. But the fact is, we live in a world where trust is in increasingly short supply — and that lack of trust extends to B2B marketing. No longer can B2B marketers afford to act like spam, sound like everyone else and contribute to the content “noise.”

“In most cases, business customers do not relate Telcos and ISPs with B2B solution providers. In addition, due to the nature of the service provider business, Telcos often face negative sentiments, especially in social media, which affects their B2B brand reputation. **The only way a Telco or ISP can make a mark in the B2B space is to position themselves as a thought leader, or trusted advisor, through a robust content marketing strategy framework.**”<sup>5</sup>



B2B consumers, in particular, are looking for companies they can trust, and for the Telco industry that means connecting with customers in an honest, meaningful, engaging way along all points of the buying cycle. As a Telco marketer, you must produce thoughtful, relevant content that underscores your marketplace expertise. **Enter: an investment (or reinvestment) in thought leadership.**

Thought leadership content helps remove risk from the buying process by giving your buyers and prospects confidence that you know what you're doing. For Telcos, it shows that there are people behind the brand, people who recognize the challenges (rapid pace of digital transformation, regulations) and are dedicated to addressing the issues (oversaturation, shifting focus from B2C to B2B) of this industry in flux. If done well, this builds trust. At a time when Telcos struggle to separate themselves from the competition and leverage marketing and digital platforms to their greatest advantage, **a renewed dedication to thought leadership content can make all the difference.**

**In Edelman and LinkedIn's 2017 joint survey of B2B business decision makers (BDMs) and C-suite executives (CXOs), thought leadership (TL) rose to the top in terms of trusted marketing content:<sup>6</sup>**



**9 in 10**

BDMs, including almost an equal number of CXOs, believe that it's **important, very important or mission-critical** that organizations produce TL



Approximately 50% of BDMs and CXOs are spending an **hour or more a week consuming TL** — often prompting them to share contact information or reach out



A large majority — **82% of BDMs** — say TL increased their **trust** in an organization



About 50% of B2B marketers believe their TL builds trust in their organization. But **among actual buyers, that number is more like 83%**. In other words, marketers are massively underestimating the impact that TL can have on buyers' confidence in their company





## KEY TREND AND STRATEGY #2

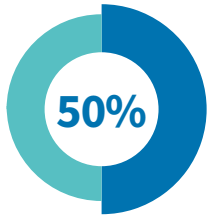
# EMBRACE B2B BLOCKBUSTER (NOT LACKLUSTER) CONTENT

**Creating more thought leadership is a solid place to start.** But thought leadership is only one type of content, and it can't stand alone.

Today's Telco B2B marketers must rethink how they go about producing valuable content that stems from their thought leadership. That's where using the Hollywood "blockbuster" model of content planning makes sense.

**You may have asked in the past, "How do I create thought leadership in a sustainable and profitable way?" You wouldn't be alone.** Telco B2B tech marketers (along with other B2B industry counterparts) have historically spent enormous sums of money churning out low-quality content. Why? Because the way they're producing thought leadership is flawed.





**IN FACT, OUR RESEARCH SHOWS THAT 50% OF B2B BUYERS ARE DISAPPOINTED WITH THE QUALITY OF THOUGHT LEADERSHIP COMING FROM VENDORS.<sup>6</sup>**

This is because B2B marketers, including those in Telco, are thinking like publishers and producing content for the sake of quantity vs. quality, inevitably getting lost in the “noise.” And even when they do break through the clutter, the shelf life of such real-time content is incredibly short. There has to be a better way, right? There is.

**Telco B2B marketers should be thinking the way Hollywood approaches a blockbuster, instead.** This is one way Telco companies can “break through the noise” and simplify their content strategies.

B2B Telco solutions can be complex. The blockbuster approach **gives you an opportunity to demonstrate your firm’s unique knowledge and expertise** to navigate this complexity via compelling and relevant content. It also then becomes more about selling solutions and know-how, and less about selling products.

But how can a Telco B2B marketer specifically apply the blockbuster principle? Let’s say you begin by **creating one big trends report** each year in the form of a “blockbuster” eBook, which you publish for the industry as whole. For the coming year’s installment, you might cover *The Impact of 5G in 2018*. **You can then leverage its content to create multiple additional customer touchpoints** — for example, a blog post, a slideshare and a Q&A on your website.

Perhaps you’d previously published content on networking that’s been popular with buyers. You could repackage it with the new research from your 5G eBook to create a compare/contrast piece on how fast the industry is changing. You can even **use your “blockbuster” to inform cross-channel promotion, social selling and more.**

## THE HOLLYWOOD BLOCKBUSTER APPROACH

- **Focus on doing less, bigger and better.** Studios concentrate on creating a handful of films each year, but in doing so they have a better chance at making a “hit.” B2B marketers can do the same with content.
- **Leverage familiarity.** Very few films these days are net new assets. Most are part of franchises folks have already heard of, or remakes of past hits. By monetizing a back catalog, Hollywood studios can replicate success. B2B marketers can take the same approach with past popular content and serialized content. No need to reinvent the wheel.
- **Embrace extensibility.** Hollywood studios don’t just make a movie and move on. They extend the movie’s brand with merchandising (posters, lunch boxes, games, etc.) that monetizes movie “content” into new channels. For B2B marketers, this is likewise a more profitable approach than creating one-off pieces of content.



## KEY TREND AND STRATEGY #3

# SEE THE IMPORTANCE OF TOUCHPOINT CONSISTENCY

We've established that thought leadership supports greater trust. And we've covered how packaging it into blockbuster content that supports messages across multiple formats/channels is a better way to build on trust while providing buyers with the information they demand. However, you'll want to avoid one side effect that can occur from such an "explosion" of channels — brand inconsistency.

With B2B buyers across the board being bombarded by ads, content and images, keep in mind that there's a psychology to pattern recognition. Repeated exposure to a consistent content look and feel can help you avoid the costly repercussions of taking a scattered approach. **Repetition is the cure to forgetfulness.** For B2B marketers as a whole, but especially for those in Telco striving to stand out from the competition and become known in the industry, blockbuster content must drive recall through pattern recognition. That means logo design, color and formatting design, typography and even tone. **The goal is to get buyers to visually recognize your content on sight by essentially branding it in a uniform way.**



Only 14% of people can remember **the last ad they saw**, just 8% have any idea **what company or product** was associated with that ad, and only 3% think the ad actually had **anything to do with them**<sup>8</sup>

# 5,000

The average consumer sees something like **5,000 ads a day**, a number that **30 years ago was only 500**<sup>7</sup>

## Execution of Blockbuster Content: Better Understand Your Audience, Revamp Marketing Structure and Tactics

Creating consistent blockbuster thought leadership content is an important start for Telco B2B marketers, but to really connect and resonate with buyers you have to understand your audience — that means the challenges they face and how your company can best help, as well as where to find them — and then employ appropriate targeting and measurement tactics to reach them and assess that communication.

**The where: It's often overlooked that Telco consumers make up a large segment on LinkedIn, and they want to hear from Telco marketers on the platform!** This is an undeniable opportunity to build trust with key business decision makers and gain an edge on the competition. Your target audience is looking for great thought leadership content, and reaching them on LinkedIn is a great place to start.



**2X MORE  
LIKELY**

Buyers are 2x more likely to trust information provided by LinkedIn than other social networks — and this drives purchases!<sup>9</sup>

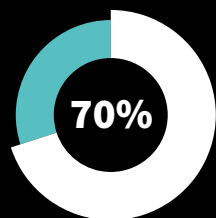
In the BI Intelligence Digital Trust Report, LinkedIn was found to be twice as trusted as the nearest rival, and three times as trusted to **protect users' privacy and data** and to be clear of rogue content<sup>10</sup>

**3X  
AS  
TRUSTED**

A greater percentage of buyers is influenced by information published on LinkedIn than on Facebook and Twitter<sup>11</sup>

**3 in 5**

Approximately three in five tech buyers want their reps to use LinkedIn for social selling... in particular, for providing/sharing valuable insights<sup>11</sup>



LinkedIn members have a deep reliance on technology and value quality over prices, yet only 1 in 4 Telco marketers always include LI in their media — **while 7 in 10 (70%) buyers expect to see Telco companies advertising on LI**<sup>12</sup>

Knowing where to reach your B2B audience is important, but understanding how to target them with relevant content is just as important. That's why, to successfully execute on a blockbuster content strategy, **Telco marketers must recognize the value of intent in what they produce, for whom they produce it and how they measure it. And that's exactly what these next three trends cover:**



## KEY TREND AND STRATEGY #4

# HAIL THE END OF HYPERTARGETING

All the recognizable, trust-provoking content in the world means nothing if it never gets in front of the right eyes. When audience scope becomes too narrow, marketers actually begin excluding potential buyers and driving up advertising costs in the process.

### How should Telco B2B marketers go about reaching buyers? By considering an alternative to hypertargeting.

Brands tend to spend where they can hypertarget buyers. And although Telcos do need to make progress in the digital evolution, hypertargeting can prove detrimental to marketing efforts, leading to “wasted” impressions and the exclusion of potential buyers.

### WHY?

**Because, simply stated, hypertargeting drives up costs — cost per impression (CPMs), cost per click (CPCs), cost per lead (CPLs), limits reach and limits sales.** What can you do instead? Refocus on “reach” as your most important KPI. Even if going broader means you waste a few impressions on the wrong buyers, you still end up reaching more of the right people, at a much better price.

### CASE IN POINT:

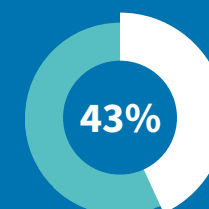
We’ve seen clients who have reduced their CPL from \$300 to \$10, without compromising lead quality, by optimizing toward broader targeting segments.

But don’t misunderstand. We’re not saying you shouldn’t use targeting. We’re suggesting that you shouldn’t *overuse* targeting or use it to the point of hyper-segmentation. What does that mean for Telcos?

### HERE’S ONE EXAMPLE:

Instead of using LinkedIn to target CIOs at larger companies with 10,000-plus employees (which equates to three layers of targeting), try focusing on just seniority targeting (where you can choose to target only one layer to guarantee creative relevance). Chances are, you’ll see your costs will go down without a dip in performance.

## KNOW WHO TO TARGET:<sup>12</sup>



Most companies buy wireless for their employees; **only 43% of B2B wireless is purchased by users**

Wireless buyers become less senior as companies grow: **At 10+ employee companies, half of buyers are director level or below**

## KEY TREND AND STRATEGY #5

# MAKE A CASE FOR COST PER CONNECTION

Let's face it, it's not just B2B content models that are broken. Marketers' measurement models are just as problematic. For Telcos' marketing efforts to be effective, it's crucial to uncover a more sophisticated form of measurement that better identifies purchase intent.

Today, the vast majority are tracking superficial metrics like CTR (click-through rate), CPC and even CPL. Only a small minority are measuring metrics of real value, like lifetime customer value. Why is this point important? Because research has shown that things like CTR don't actually correlate with purchase intent — *so Telco B2B marketers are wasting time measuring things that don't matter.*<sup>13</sup>

At the same time, correlating online metrics with offline activity is especially important in the B2B world, where the majority of sales activities happen offline, in meetings, at events, etc.



**What can Telcos do? Are there online B2B metrics that correlate with offline B2B sales activities? The answer is “yes.”**



There's one metric we've started to track for top clients, called "connection density," which we think would greatly benefit Telcos. Connection density (CD) measures how connected certain groups of professionals are. For instance, how many connections exist between your sales force and your prospective buyers/clients? And are they densely connected or sparsely connected?

We've found that, unlike CTR, CD is actually a leading indicator of sales. We're even starting to see clients influence CD by using account-based marketing to "prime" buyers with content, then have their sales colleagues reach out to those same nurtured prospects. For Telcos, we see this as a great opportunity to leverage blockbuster thought leadership to more meaningfully inform sales and engagement.

**FOR EXAMPLE:** If a salesperson sends a mobile data-focused InMail to a small business CEO who hasn't yet been contacted, they may see a 16% response rate, on average. But if that prospect is exposed to blockbuster thought leadership (perhaps an eBook on the *Top 10 Virtualization Trends That Matter for Small Companies*), there is a 150% lift — and the response rate jumps to 40%.

**16%** AVERAGE  
RESPONSE RATE

**40%** BLOCKBUSTER  
RESPONSE RATE



### **BONUS TIP: Harness the top content distribution strategies that build trust.**

To help win the trust battle, Telco marketers should augment their current content distribution strategies to gain more credibility.<sup>14</sup>

- Use social selling to build trusted relationships
- Tap employees' networks
- Don't forget about influencers



## KEY TREND AND STRATEGY #6

# KNOW THE RULES OF BRAND INVESTING

We've looked at how Telco B2B marketers can create trusted, relevant content efficiently, with greater reach and more effective measurement. But how do they mirror top-performing brands in terms of knowing how to best allocate budget between top- and bottom-of-funnel messaging?

**This sixth trend highlights a few ironclad, quantitative rules for distribution — rules that help maximize ROI — that you should keep in mind.**

## THE 60/40 RULE

A famous study<sup>15</sup> found that high-performing brands invest about 60% of budget in thought leadership or branding, and 40% in more bottom-funnel messaging — what the researchers call **“commercial activation,”** and we call **“buy now!”** advertising. If you follow the 60/40 rule, you should spend 60% of your budget driving awareness and engagement with blockbuster content (for example, an eBook on *Navigating Telco M&As* or a research study on the *Top Telco Tech Topics of 2018*) and 40% of your budget following up with the buyers who were exposed to your thought leadership, raising consideration of your products and services.

## THE 10:1 RULE

The rule goes like this: For every \$1 spent on creative development, \$10 should be spent on distribution. In today's B2B content marketplace, where competition is infinite and no one remembers anything, it's just not enough to have great creative. Telcos especially need to spend money to turn an unfamiliar brand franchise into a familiar one. However, the good news is that if you take a more focused approach to content creation — that **Hollywood “blockbuster” approach** — you can reduce content development costs, freeing up funds to put your content in front of as many buyers as possible via the 10:1 rule.

## THE 80:20 RULE

This rule will be familiar to most marketers. It states that 80% of effects tend to come from 20% of the causes (for example, today's venture capital firms know 80% of their returns will come from 20% of their investments). B2B marketers across all industries, including Telco, are starting to apply the 80:20 rule to their media planning efforts. As a Telco marketer, this means **you'll invest in a lot of content and a lot of channels**, while keeping in mind that only 20% of your investments will deliver 80% of your returns (but that's ok, since the blockbuster approach allowed you to create content more efficiently and cost-effectively in the first place!). And you'll be prepared to spend the majority of your budget on the 20% of tactics that deliver exceptional returns.



Now's the time for Telco to revisit who they are and reimagine how they connect with emerging customers to gain trust and reach targets.<sup>16</sup> Here are some of the steps Telco companies can take to further build trust with digital:

- **Invest in omnichannel sales.** Expanding your digital sales presence can increase revenue by 30% and reduce commercial costs by a similar proportion.
- **Lean into digital.** Websites, mobile apps and social channels are all integral to the customer experience and journey. Telco must soon be ready to use real-time 360-degree data on individual customers to personalize promotions, campaigns and service interventions.
- **All hail analytics.** Leverage analytics to reduce customer churn, make better marketing-spend decisions, improve collections and optimize network design.

## TELCO B2B MARKETERS + LINKEDIN

# LINKEDIN PROVIDES TELCOS WITH A TRUSTED B2B SPACE TO REACH BUYERS

Telco B2B marketers can improve trust with overwhelmed buyers by more thoughtfully leveraging content to connect with customers. And they can do it best by utilizing the LinkedIn platform.



# GET STARTED NOW

The Telco industry is changing fast. Stay ahead of the curve by forming deeper connections with current and potential customers, especially those in B2B — get started on that journey with LinkedIn today.



## About LinkedIn

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

For more information, visit [marketing.linkedin.com](https://marketing.linkedin.com)



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