

## The B2B Marketers' Irony

### 3 Ways Marketers can Better Communicate their Plans Internally

By Mike Gospe

*The following article reinforces the concepts found in the new B2B marketers' playbook, [The Marketing High Ground](#). To download the Kindle version, [click here](#).*

The biggest irony with most B2B marketers is their inability to successfully communicate internally. By and large, we marketers are experts in our functions of press relations, advertising, direct mail, social media and the like. But, when it comes to sharing our plans internally across the marketing department or aligning a master plan with sales, the act of communicating clearly and succinctly could stand a fair amount of improvement. One of my first bosses pointed this out to me early in my career after a campaign snafu that resulted because the press relations and advertising teams were out of sync. ([Read that humbling story here.](#))

#### **Failure to communicate**

Someone (could be anyone in a business unit or a corporate marketing team) produces a 50-page marketing plan and emails it to a long list of folks with a short introductory sentence: "*Here's the plan.*" On the distribution list are folks ranging from various marketing functions to sales leaders. The email is sent once. There is no cross-functional kick-off meeting. And, there's no executive summary. No follow-up Q&A. Weeks pass. Worst of all, the plan sits on a shelf and is never actively referenced. Then, in the midst of executing a set of marketing activities, frustration erupts when the copywriters are fired because they "can't get the messaging right". Sales people continue to wonder what the heck marketing does. And executives decide to change the direction of the campaign largely because they don't know (or remember) what the objective was in the first place. What's going on here?

The short answer: the marketers in charge of the planning process failed to clearly communicate the plan internally, lobby support, and provide helpful short-hand reminders about its strategy. These are sure-fire symptoms that the plan was not communicated clearly enough or defined properly enough to ensure that the larger team responsible for its implementation understood it. The good news is that this common tale of woe can easily be avoided.

#### **3 steps on how to socialize the plan**

Development of the go-to-market plan is a team sport. No single person working in isolation from corporate marketing, sales, the business unit, product management,

and customer support should develop the marketing plan. If so, the plan is instantly worthless because nobody else has a stake in the output. Shared ownership is a requirement. So, the development process needs to harness the creativity and ownership from across the company. But once the plan is drafted, the marketing team leader's job is far from over. *Everybody* in marketing and sales needs to know about the campaign, its objectives and goals, and the timing of key tactics that will unfold. But how can you communicate the essence of your plan so the entire extended team will a) understand it, b) remember it, and c) echo the plan's objectives and themes in their own work?

Here are three tactical ideas to help you socialize the output and invite colleagues to join you on the [marketing high ground](#):

- 1) **Think small: share only a few key slides.** More is not better. Avoid the temptation to share your entire 42-page plan. No one will read it. Only the marketing core team needs to know the full details of the plan. For everyone else, share the executive summary. If folks want more information, they will ask for it. Here's the basic slides that I use every time I'm launching a new product:
  - a. Objective of the marketing campaign
  - b. [Target audience & persona priorities](#)
  - c. [Positioning statement](#)
  - d. [Message box](#)
  - e. Description of Key Activities and Offers
  - f. Timeline for ExecutionOnce you've created these 6 key slides, encourage everyone to tack these slides to their cubicle walls. Imagine walking down the hall where you see the persona slide tacked to the PR manager's wall, or the positioning statement slide tacked to the wall of the product director. It's powerful stuff.
- 2) **Be seen: become a guest speaker.** Just because you draft a few slides and email them doesn't mean that anyone has read them or understood the implications. You need to engage the organization by making the plan visible. This means getting out in front of groups to talk about the plan and answering their questions. It's what marketers can do better than any other function, yet it rarely happens. I encourage marketing directors and integrated marketing leaders to make the rounds to key staff meetings, starting with regional sales, product management, engineering and customer-support teams. No other outreach effort on your part will work as well to establish your credibility with internal audiences. Ask for 15 minutes on their agenda. Not only is this extremely valuable to bringing your marketing plans and programs to life, it is a powerful skill set to hone for your personal career growth.
- 3) **Lead the way: facilitate a marketing-sales summit twice a year.** Being the ambassador for your marketing plan is very effective when it comes to

sharing information. However, to pursue effective cross-organizational alignment, a different tactic is needed. Carefully structured summits are “working meetings” attended by marketing and sales leaders. They are the perfect venue for sharing plans, gathering feedback, and solidifying a shared understanding of sales’ expectations and marketing’s goals and objectives.

### **Interested in learning more?**

When it comes to creating an effective go-to-market plan, there is no substitute for creating a clear, concise, and compelling persona, positioning statement, and customer-ready messaging. These three steps will put you on the path to the marketing high ground. For more details please see [\*The Marketing High Ground\*](#), [now available on Amazon.com](#).

**About the Author:** [Mike Gospe](#) is a marketing strategist, co-founder of KickStart Alliance, and the author of [Marketing Campaign Development](#). His new book, [The Marketing High Ground](#), is a B2B marketer’s playbook describing the best practices surrounding persona development, positioning statements, and messaging. The book is loaded with illustrations, figures, templates, and examples. Both books are now available on the Kindle.

*June 2011*