

SHORTEN THE PATH TO RELEVANCY

A GUIDE TO BUILDING RELEVANCY
IN YOUR MARKETING PROGRAMS

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It's noisy out there. Marketers, you're not just competing with similar solution providers and their budgets, you're competing with updates from the Dow, President Trump's latest tweet, the newest Marvel movie trailer release and every other blog, Facebook post, news article, update to: email, or podcast in existence.

How do you stand out? **RELEVANCE.**

This guide book will show you where and how to build relevance into your marketing efforts and capture the kind of attention that drives results.

This guide is for you, if:

- You're in the technology, supply chain, procurement, or marketing tech space
- You have a great solution with a challenger brand, and limited resources
- You need to reallocate your spending for more impact
- You're a marketing / PR nerd (like us!) or you just like to learn things

Check at least one of the boxes above? **Great, let's dig in.**

AN INTENTIONAL, BALANCED EFFORT

There is no magic formula to infuse relevancy into your marketing program and campaigns. While you might get lucky and stumble into being interesting – and relevant – luck is not a strategy because it's not predictable, or repeatable. Rather, relevancy needs to be intentionally and consistently deployed across these four pillars:

AUDIENCE: Selecting the right people.

CHANNEL: Where to spend.

THE STORY: What they'll remember.

TIMING: Why it counts more than ever.

In the next 12 minutes, you'll get specific ideas to improve each area, but if you only remember one thing, it's this:

You purposely build relevancy
INTO EVERY ASPECT
of your marketing program.
IT'S ALWAYS
CHANGING, AND IT'S
NEVER DONE.

AUDIENCES: IDENTIFY & PRIORITIZE



Your target audience is not the global marketplace – and that's good. Because your budget is never big enough and narrowing your focus to the most relevant audience yields better business results.

Building relevancy into your audience selection means first having a realistic understanding of your buyer and who most influences buying decisions – then prioritizing the two to three segments and allocating programs and budgets to those highest impact groups. Most marketing teams have enough research and relationships with sales to understand the buying behaviors and key demographics of their

prospects, but adding relevancy goes beyond knowing age, job title and location. It's knowing what those people read, what they stress about and what motivates them personally and professionally.

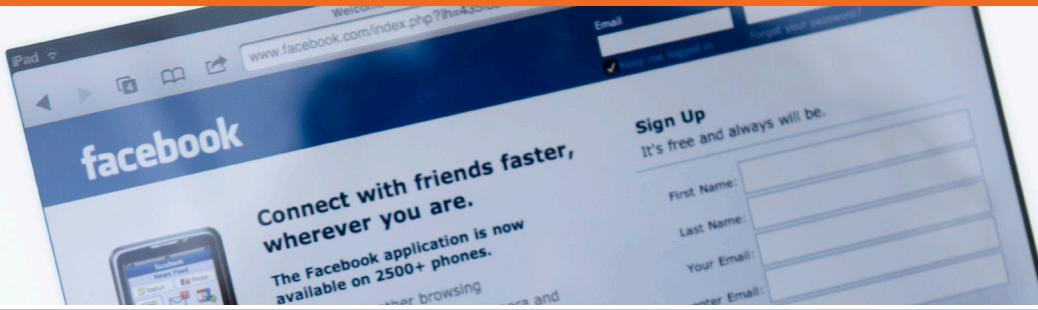
Once you can speak to these nuances, you know where your best prospects are likely to be, and what drives them to connect. This lays a smooth track for where to reach them, and the ideas, phrases and stories will make them stop, pay attention, and take action.

Here's how we think about audience identification and prioritization. For this example, we're looking at a Chief Procurement Officer at a large, marketing technology organization as our highest priority target buyer.

Title	Cares most about...	Worries most about...	He/she reads...	Most active, socially, on...
 Chief Procurement Officer (CPO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Controlling costs and risksStrategically using risk to drive bottom line resultsTangibly connecting work to the company's overall performanceBuilding a strategic role and having a "seat at the table"	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Supply chain disruptionsLack of visibilityMaverick spendingSurprisesNew or changing laws or regulationsEconomic and geopolitical uncertainty	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Ardent Partners analyst reportsCMOCPO RisingForbesHarvard Business ReviewMarTech AdvisorsProcurement LeadersRisk ManagementSpend MattersWSJ Morning Risk Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none">LinkedIn <p>Attends...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">The World Procurement AwardsProcurement Leaders' World Procurement CongressHubspot Inbound

Know your best audience? **Then you're ready for the second pillar: channels.**

CHANNELS: A BALANCING ACT



Channels are where marketers need to start spending money and where measurement and performance becomes critical. Choosing the most relevant channels for marketing is a balancing act of being where your audience is, where your story fits most naturally, and where you can afford to be present in a meaningful way. Luckily, if you're really honest in selecting relevant audiences, it's easier to narrow down channels that will have the greatest impact.

We think about communication channels and their associated tactics in terms of where and how they fit in on a relevancy spectrum:



Consumer's Choice

The audience has chosen the channel, ensuring its relevance to them. Marketers' work to have a deliberate and meaningful presence here.

News Coverage
Analyst Reports
Events



Dialogue

The audience has opted into virtually engaging with you. You can lose relevancy quickly here, but since they target has engaged, it indicates a good level of relevancy.

Subscriber-based Emails
Gated Content



Passive

This is content an audience member might come across and read, but not enough to give up their contact information.

Company Website
Blogs



Unsolicited

At its worst, this is spamming someone's inbox. At its best, great advertising.

Paid Social
Email Marketing to a Purchased List

MOST RELEVANT

LEAST RELEVANT

Like audience prioritization, channels also need to be prioritized – by budgets, time and talent to maintain quality and channel-appropriate content.

PRO TIP: Have a measurement strategy up front, tracking and analyzing the data that validates channel investment decisions and performance. This can look differently, depending on the tools and level of marketing automation you have access to, but a good start is some form of website analytics and goal/conversion tracking that's tied to a CRM system. Honestly, we could talk for days about measurement and data, so stay tuned for "Shorten the Path to: Measured Impact" coming soon!

Once you have channels picked out, it's time to define and match up the story most appropriate to each channel to have the best chance of success. **Read on.**

SOCIAL continues to be pervasive in reaching target audiences, but marketers need to back up those clever posts with some budget or no one is going to see them. Only 2% of the followers of a Facebook page see organic posts, so as Jerry McGuire would say, "show me the money!"

EARNED MEDIA builds credibility and brand but is becoming harder to obtain. Company-written content is becoming the norm, especially with editorial staffs continuing to shrink. Opportunities to create great content have never been better – that means that slideshows and interactive content are especially appealing, but it does put responsibility on companies to use their own time and resources to create intriguing digital properties.

PAID AND PROGRAMMATIC are likely part of your mix but be extra critical of the vanity metrics that inflate the impact of this channel. Impressions and views could mean nothing if corresponding sales results don't line up



We love and remember stories – hearing them, telling them – especially when they relate to us. It's how our brains are wired.

While your marketing materials don't need to be Shakespearian masterpieces, they do need to be objectively interesting, easy to digest and engaging to your audience. Putting the customer at the center of the stories you tell may seem obvious, but it's surprisingly absent from most B2B content. Find the words a customer would say, and you'll be well on your way to a relevant narrative.

So how do you tell a relevant story? **We have a list for that:**

- Focus on pain points and solving problems:** The best way to have a relevant story is to connect to stressors or fears and offer help. It's why negative headlines get more traction and the self-help industry is worth billions.
- Get out of your product:** A spec sheet is one thing, but a list of features, no matter how you spin it, is boring and self-centered. No one likes a show off.
- Be timely:** Connecting your company's solution, expertise or perspective to current events is a great way to add relevancy.
- Get an objective opinion:** It's easy to get caught up in the company or solution we work with every day and it's great to be passionate about it, but relevancy is driven by more objective points of view. Getting a fresh set of eyes from another department or agency partner is good way to ensure your story will be interesting to those outside your organization.

The ultimate test to see if a story or a message is relevant to ask “so what?” Be critical — to the point of dismissive — of the stories you tell, because if a story doesn’t resonate with you, it probably won’t with your buyers.

TIMING



You've probably heard the saying that "timing is everything, but timing is a b**ch." For marketers, timing is especially important.

It's the reason why you don't want to announce major news the day after an election or launch a tech product campaign on a major holiday in the U.S. Your marketing efforts will not be relevant unless your team is aware of what's happening in the world – not just with your company's industry or market, but around whatever might impact your audience's personal and professional lives. If it's the end of a quarter and your target audience is a CEO of a publicly traded company, there is a good chance you're not getting on his or her radar until after earnings.

There are ways to take advantage of current events and happenings of the world, using good judgement of course, but the point is to always include timing as part of your planning and relevancy intentions. It can make or break your efforts.

The perfect story delivered on the right channel to the exact audience will DO ABSOLUTELY NOTHING IF THE TIMING IS OFF.

THE RELEVANCY MIX

If you've made it this far, you've probably noticed that all the core areas involving relevancy interconnects. Like all successful marketing and PR programs, everything intersects and builds off each other. It's easy to see this when we think about tactics, but even abstract concepts like relevancy act the same way and it needs to be present in all our planning and execution to generate results that matter.

As a marketer, think about the things you read and watch and why they capture your attention. Look through your best performing campaign or content and analyze what made it so successful. More than likely, relevancy will be near the top of the list.

Still need help getting to relevancy? **Print and use our handy relevancy cheat sheet below or contact us – we're always happy to have a conversation.**

ABOUT CORPORATE INK

Corporate Ink is an integrated B2B PR and content marketing agency based in Boston. We shorten the path to success for our clients through impactful programs that drive measurable results. Founded in 1989, the agency is boutique on purpose - ensuring every client has senior-level strategic involvement, while being nimble and focused on the work that matters, not the billable hour. An active WorldCom partner, we bring our clients access to the top communications talent across the globe and creative thinking every day. Find us online at www.corporateink.com, on LinkedIn and on Twitter @Corplnk. Contact us at talktome@corporateink.com

CHEAT SHEET: FINDING THE RELEVANT

Use this tear sheet to help you focus your attention and find your relevant audiences, channels, and stories.

AUDIENCE

My target audience segments are: (think job function or role, not broad categories like “Investors” or “employees”)

My team can only be responsible for three of these groups. Ask yourself the following and choose your top three audiences.

1. Who signs the contract when buying my product or service?
2. Who will use my product or service on a regular basis?

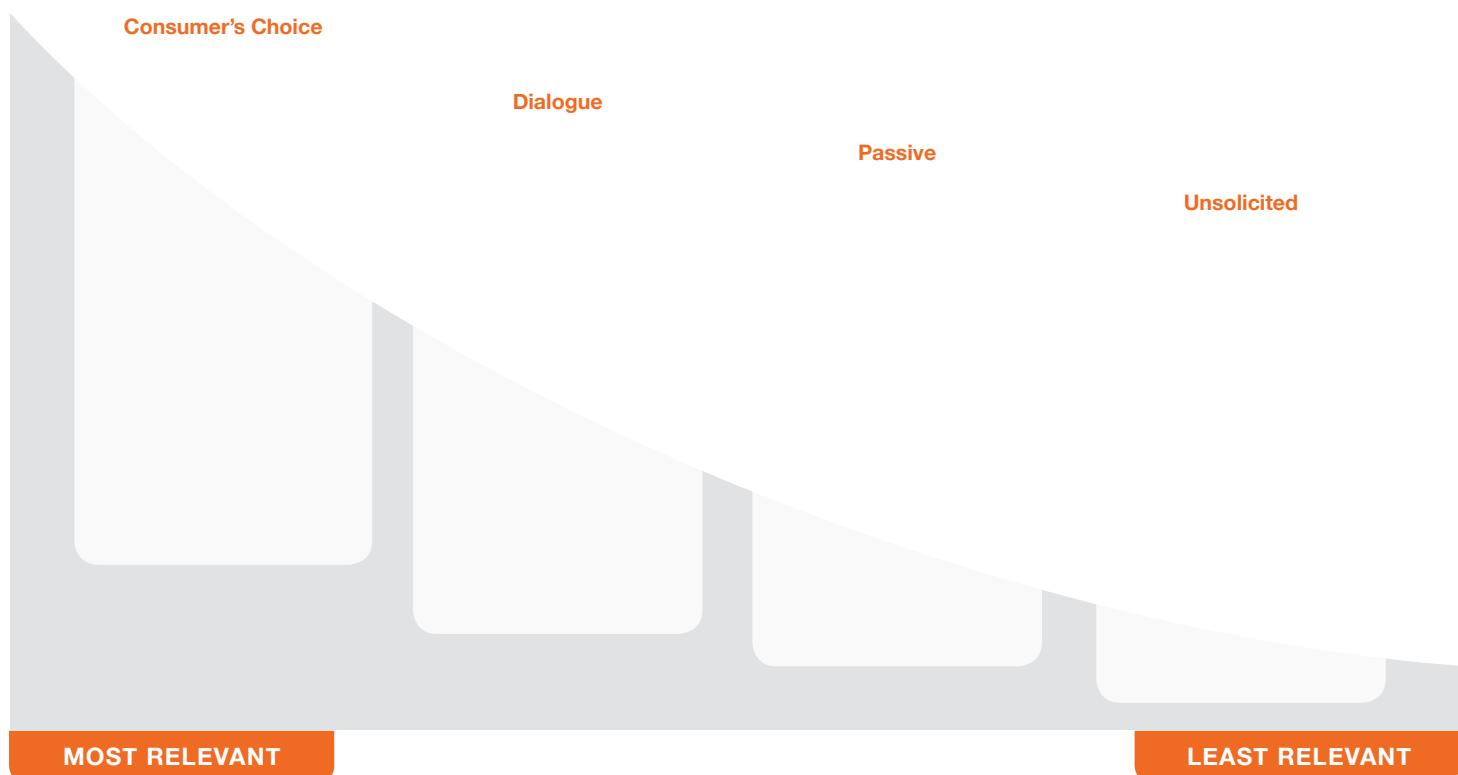
Priority Audience 1: _____

Priority Audience 2: _____

Priority Audience 3: _____

CHANNELS

Fill out the matrix below for each audience segment



FURTHER READING:

[Checklist for successful email marketing programs](#) | [Blog: Are we ready for thought leadership?](#)

CHEAT SHEET: FINDING THE RELEVANT (CONTINUED)

Use this tear sheet to help you focus your attention and find your relevant audiences, channels, and stories.

STORY

Finding a relevant story is the hardest part of the process and it's different for every organization at any given point in time, but the prompts below will help you start thinking about messaging and positioning in a way that will be relevant.

In jargon-free, simple, language – what does my company / product/service do? (Don't think of this in terms of your brand, but the function of your product/service)

Why does the world need the function of our product?

What are the top 3 reasons why our product/service is better than our biggest competitors?

What problems or stresses cause my buyers to search for our product/service? (Not specifically your company, but the function of your product/service)

TIMING

Ask yourself the following questions to nail the timing of your campaigns.

1. What time(s) of year do we get the greatest influx of new business or close the most deals?
2. What time(s) of year do we lose the most business?
3. What external events or factors influence our buyers the most?
4. When does my team have the most and least capacity to handle inbound opportunities?

It's also best to visualize your quarter with a content calendar that includes known or planned activities/events so you can see where your campaigns might overlap with other industry or world happenings.