



THE ESG TECH OPPORTUNITY:
**SIX MARKETING &
PR STRATEGIES TO
SCALE**

HOW TO STAND OUT, LEAD AND INFLUENCE
IN A NOISY MARKET

corporate**ink**



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The environmental, social and governance (ESG) conversation gets more crowded by the day.

Buyers are inundated with different takes on what's most important and how to make an impact. Do they:

- Focus on climate change first or mitigating biodiversity risks?
- Prioritize carbon emissions reduction within their operations and value chains, or carbon offsetting?
- Boost diversity representation across senior leadership, or build from the bottom through entry- and mid-level recruiting?

For tech providers, capturing the attention of prospective buyers in a noisy space is hard. Getting them to embrace your vision for how to address ESG issues is even harder.

Securing budget for your tech – well, that's the hardest.

At Corporate Ink, we're passionate about helping tech marketers build their brand, trust and credibility with buyers. We've been enabling technology providers to grow and win for 20+ years and have found several effective strategies for the ESG and sustainability tech market.

SIX TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL ESG MARKETING

1

EDUCATE THROUGH CONTENT – BUT MAKE IT A DIALOGUE.



Seventy-seven percent of B2B marketers [use educational content](#) as the primary method for nurturing their audience. Your content should make your prospects smarter, speak to your vision and the problems you solve, and articulate why your approach to ESG is better than the rest. But if you're basing this off what you think is important and not sourcing insights directly from your audience, you'll struggle to gain meaningful attention and influence your buyers to act.

Resolve to be more customer-centric in your content. Do your research. Monitor LinkedIn groups and online communities to understand the topics prospects are actively seeking advice on from their peers. Talk with your customers at user conferences and industry events. Break down the marketing silo and involve external-facing departments in content planning discussions. The more you know about what's important to your audience, the more powerful and engaging your content will be.

LINKEDIN GROUPS TO CONSIDER



Then, as your buyers progress through their journey, make the purchasing process as easy as possible. According to Forrester, 74% of B2B buyers do more than half of their research online before making a decision. Address the big topics on your targets' minds – pricing, deployment timing, impact on existing data, customer references, time to ROI, and more through your content. Make demos, ROI estimates, pricing details and customer case studies easy to find and access. If you don't, one of your competitors will.

72% **PLAN TO INCREASE
CONTENT MARKETING
INVESTMENTS THIS YEAR.¹**

YOUR ACTION: **Create content that never misses.** Leverage your sales and customer success teams. They work directly with your customers and prospects and know their needs, pain points and biggest questions better than anyone else. Share your ideas and get their input regularly.

2**BRING CONTENT TO YOUR AUDIENCE.**

The ‘build it and they will come’ thought process is dead. It’s not enough to create great content. You also have to get it directly in front of your buyers at the right time – and that means doing more than posting content to your blog or tweeting out the link.

Paid targeting on content is a great way to promote your best assets to your ideal customer targets, drive traffic and generate leads. In fact, 36% of marketers Corporate Ink surveyed said they’re [considering elevating their content with paid social](#) ads this year. Beyond paid social on LinkedIn, Google Search Ads and retargeting (video and display) can also ensure your content and message reaches your buyers.

If paid programs aren’t in your budget, there’s plenty of opportunity on the organic side. Distribute your content in relevant online communities. If someone in a LinkedIn group shares that they’re struggling with aggregating and cleansing their ESG data, point them to your blog post with tips on how to make the process easier. Next, leverage your well-connected executives. Ask them to share your blog posts across their networks and add their point of view. Encourage these executives to interact with other thought leaders, customers, partners, and their content. The more active your executives are, the more visible they are – and the more likely they are to get your content directly in front of potential buyers.

YOUR ACTION: Prioritize content amplification. Identify the channels your buyers use most often. Understand how they like to consume content (video, podcasts, FAQs, media, bylines, reports, etc.) and create and distribute accordingly.

The ESG-related media landscape is growing and powerful. While many publications – ESG Today, GreenBiz, Environment & Energy Leader, Diversity Global, TriplePundit and more – have covered the space for a long time – new outlets, such as Sustainability Magazine and DiversityQ, have popped up over the past few years as the market has taken off.

ESG trade publications offer a valuable mix of editorial, video, thought leadership, lead generation, award and advertising opportunities – all with their own flavor. Several have ventured into newer mediums, such as podcasting and LinkedIn Lives.

Leverage these channels to generate awareness, educate the market on your unique approach and establish your executives as thought leaders. Showcase your team’s expertise on critical industry topics. This will build credibility and rapport with potential buyers, increasing your chances of being top of mind when prospects start considering vendors. A strong momentum of trade coverage can also prove your executives’ credibility as expert sources for the highly sought-after top-tier media opportunities.

YOUR ACTION: Start building relationships with these outlets. Offer contributed articles from your executives, book interviews, explore partnerships and share content and case studies. The key is to find the perfect middle ground between your expertise, the publications’ editorial coverage, your prospects’ priorities, your technology and what’s happening in the world. Focus on supporting their coverage by being educational versus only pitching product updates and company news.

3**SHOWCASE YOUR EXPERTISE IN THE TRADES.**



4

LEVERAGE THE NEWS CYCLE TO BREAK INTO TOP-TIER PRESS.

ESG stories are everywhere. Based on data Corporate Ink pulled, there was a 42% increase in stories in top tier business outlets on the environment from 2020 to 2021.² Gartner reports media mentions of ESG data, ratings or scores grew by 303% in 2020 alone.

Reporters in the business and mainstream press write daily about real issues facing your customers, from the SEC's proposed ESG disclosure requirements to the increasing pressure on companies to double down on diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) initiatives, and more.

The top five publications writing about these issues are:

1. Wall Street Journal
2. Bloomberg
3. New York Times
4. Reuters
5. Fortune

Securing coverage in the business and national media outlets creates a prime opportunity to build awareness with your target buyers, reach executive decision makers and investors and increase brand value.

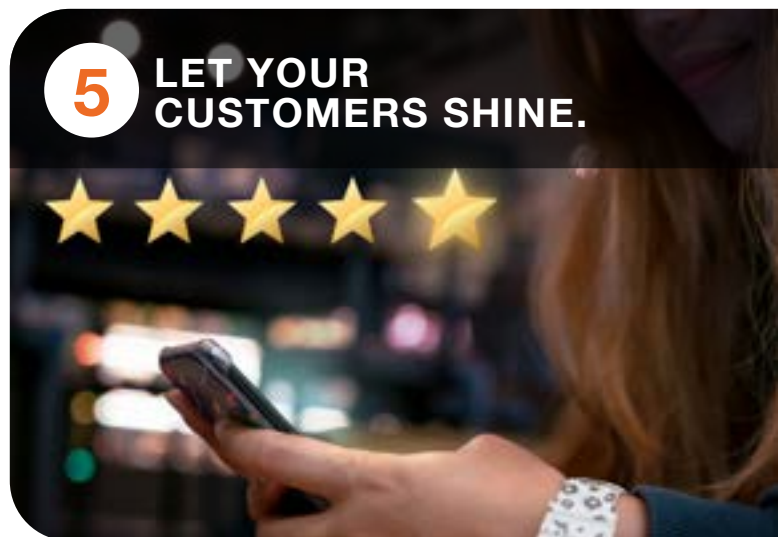
YOUR ACTION: Monitor for trending stories and economic events that impact your customers. Develop educational, differentiated and compelling takes that add value to the story. Think big – saying the same thing as everyone else won't get you coverage. When news breaks, engage your PR team to get you in front of the right reporters. Once you land the interview, share real-world experiences, customer anecdotes and data.

Social proof makes selling 100X easier. But that doesn't make getting customers to participate in joint marketing opportunities easy. In fact, it's very hard.

While the traditional case study remains very valuable, explore new ways to involve your customers. Third-party software review sites – such as Capterra, G2 and Software Advice – provide a trusted (and anonymous) way for your customers to share their experiences that doesn't always require corporate approval. Similarly, video and social media testimonials may be easier to get approved than the traditional press release. Another idea: Offer non-promotional, joint media opportunities that build your customers' brand and profile alongside your own, so the value is shared.

5

LET YOUR CUSTOMERS SHINE.



YOUR ACTION: Think creatively beyond the traditional case study. Understand your customers' marketing priorities and bridge their goals with yours to create mutual value. Consider using incentives, gamifying the experience and creating a framework for user-generated content.

6

INFLUENCE THE ANALYSTS AND CONSULTANTS.**ANALYSTS**

Analysts play a key role in the sales process. Nurturing the big influencers is critical for driving sales and referrals. The most effective strategy includes building partnership with both mainstream shops and targeted industry influencers. While paid relationships with firms like Gartner and Forrester never hurt, a targeted nurture and influencer program will put your brand on the analysts' radar, assuming you have the right technology mix and target fit.

YOUR ACTION: Formally brief your priority analyst targets at least once a year (and ideally, quarterly). Talk to them about the various opportunities they have, including research reports, events, technology reviews and more. In between, keep them up to date on what's happening – your wins, investments, product roadmap and more.

CONSULTANTS

Consultants, such as those at Accenture and McKinsey, are also a major competitive weapon. They play a big role across technology selection and deployment and typically lead major transformation initiatives and highly funded projects.

YOUR ACTION: Leverage your connections – investors, board members, analysts, partners – to establish relationships with consultants. Show the consultants what's possible with your technology and prioritize finding a project you can work on together to make the partnership real.



READY TO BREAK THROUGH THE NOISE?

You need to be bold, intentional and persuasive to break through in today's crowded ESG conversation. Capturing and maintaining the attention of your buyers requires an integrated and multi-channel strategy that meets your buyers where they are.

Gartner reports that most organizations' [sustainability spending is increasing](#) and will continue to do so in the next three years. Spending on DE&I initiatives is [projected to double by 2026](#). How will you get them to embrace your vision and choose you to help them meet their ESG goals?

Finding the right PR partner can make all the difference. At Corporate Ink, we have proven experience building and implementing strategic, buyer-centric campaigns that accelerate growth and lead to high-value exits.

TAKE THE NEXT STEP

- **[Request a complimentary marketing consult.](#)** As part of the consult, our team will review your objectives, share what's currently working in the market and offer three concrete ideas for building brand awareness and sales pipeline.
- **See where your peers are investing in 2022.** Download Corporate Ink's [2022 State of Marketing Report](#).

ABOUT CORPORATE INK

Corporate Ink is a B2B tech PR and content marketing agency focused on shortening the path to success for its clients. We have deep and proven experience across the ESG market, including sustainability, risk management and governance, diversity and inclusion, and more. With specialties that span marketing strategy, PR, content marketing and digital, we help our clients increase awareness, create demand and drive growth.

Learn more here: [ESG](#) | [Emerging tech](#) | [Risk and governance](#) | [Data and analytics](#)

¹Data from Corporate Ink's 2022 State of Marketing Report

²Data pulled from Cision Next Gen platform (formally TrendKite)