

## Prepare for the Recovery: A B2B Checklist

Economic indicators are pointing up, and there is a growing consensus that recovery is on the way. When, how strong and how fast remains to be seen.

What is clear is that, for 2010, business-to-business marketers need to change their focus from “marketing in a downturn” to “marketing for success in the recovery.” And that’s going to take more than just remembering what it’s like to have a real budget. Things have changed. Our thought processes, our strategies and how we use our B2B tools need to change as well.

The recession, combined with other changes in the B2B marketing landscape, has accelerated changes that were already gaining momentum when the downturn hit. For example, media has changed—some long-time print properties are no more, while at the same time, online communities of practice are growing, which may offer promising channels B2B marketers can use to reach specific audiences.

And those audiences have changed... although not in the ways one might expect. Staffs are smaller, attention spans are incredibly compressed and hiring of college graduates is at the lowest level in decades. Instead, many older decisions-makers in engineering, technical and management ranks are deferring retirement plans, and are trying to acquire skills in areas such as social media, blogs and podcasts to stay current and connected in a Web 2.0 world.

Given this changed landscape, it makes sense to look at your company, your competitors and your markets, and make some fundamental decisions about what *you* need to change in key areas of your B2B marketing strategy and programs to take advantage of the opportunities the recovery will offer. Use the following checklist to assess key B2B marketing areas significantly impacted by the recession. Consider what new and creative steps you need to take, to ensure your B2B marketing is ready for the recovery.

**Branding:** Where does your brand’s awareness and equity stand? What about your competitors? Who gained and lost during the downturn? Is there an opportunity to gain ground on them as the recovery accelerates? Now is the time to look at what players are left standing, and where they rank in the marketplace. This is crucial information for marketing in the recovery.

**Research:** There has been a lot of talk about a fundamental “reset” in the economy, in business and consumer sentiment and values. Use this time to research how your audiences and markets have changed—so you don’t use yesterday’s messages to try and connect with a new set of values and needs. Who are the decision makers on the buying team today? What has changed about where they get information at various points in the buying cycle? Most importantly, what has changed about what they want and what they now value? The answers to these questions may have changed.

**Strategic Media Programs:** Just as importantly, research what changes have occurred in your target markets’ communications channels. Publications may have folded, merged, reduced frequency or gone completely on-line. Some previously “must do” tradeshow events or conferences may have lost their imperative. Social media may be playing a larger role in distributing technical information and building networks. New web sites, e-newsletters and new channels such as online videos, mobile apps and social media are gaining use and acceptance. Using these new channels well—with the right mix of traditional and new tools—demands strategic integration.

**Social Media:** Entering the recovery, your audience isn't where you left them when the downturn began. Social media has created new dynamics in the way information propagates through the marketplace. Facebook and Twitter are adding millions of users, hundreds of mobile media apps are launched every week and niche communities are self-assembling in every corner of the economy.

Early evidence is compelling: In a recent survey of B2B ANA marketing audiences, 57% reported currently using social networks or media, 43% plan to use blogs as part of their strategy in 2010 and 21% plan to use social media or networks in 2010. This suggests that, during the recovery, social media sites may be the first place your audience will seek new product information, engineering advice and insights into industry trends. How do you make sure you're in the right place, all the time? A social media audit can help you determine where your audience is, and what is capturing their interest, so you can have the right social media strategy in place as the economy recovers.

**Public Relations:** One thing hasn't changed: Target audiences still value third-party editorial endorsement of marketing messages. This means public relations is a vital part of an overall communications program. What has changed is where your PR efforts need to be directed. Analyze what editorial channels are growing in usage and audience participation: Do the people you need to reach now prefer podcasts over white papers? Video over application articles? Mobile media alerts over traditional press releases or announcements? Content is still king, and PR thrives on content, but the type and distribution techniques have changed.

**Search:** Search has been the success story of the recession, but many marketers have taken shortcuts. To take advantage of the recovery, make certain your web site, the core of your B2B marketing program, is ready—in terms of usability, relevant content and search engine optimization. If limited resources forced you to let your site get stale, your customers may not find you as they begin to search for answers to new needs or information on new products. As you invest in your web site with new content, develop and implement a keyword strategy, add relevant links and implement the range of optimization techniques that will help get your site into the top search engine results for your important keywords.

**Direct:** Are you continuing to pay others to help you reach your audience, or are you building your own "circulation" so you can engage customers and prospects on a direct basis? Direct marketing is a low-cost, highly-viewed, easily measurable way to maximize the return on your B2B marketing investment. As a complement to other tactics, consistent, targeted direct marketing can help you find more prospects and build stronger engagement with prospects and customers. It's also crucial to integrate direct marketing with other program elements, whether for list-building or message consistency and impact.

**Mobile Marketing:** The explosive growth of web-enabled mobile devices—worldwide but even more pronounced outside of the U.S.—provides a platform for you to get ahead of your competition and build market share, brand equity and powerful, one-to-one relationships with your customers. Mobile marketing, texting programs and smart phone applications keep you connected with on-the-go "road warriors" whose input or approval may be crucial to the buying decision. The only thing better than having a customer in *your* pocket is to be in *their* pocket—with up-to-date product info, marketing messages and industry leadership information.

**Analytics:** If the economic downturn did anything, it created a new level of marketing cost-consciousness. Robust marketing analytics helped show what worked during the downturn and will be a crucial tool to help marketers stay smart with their budgets as the economy recovers. As the recovery takes hold, enhance your analytics effort so you stay on top of the metrics, analyze and quickly improve your tactics so every dollar spent generates the right return.

### Reset and Re-think: Your Marketing Landscape Has Changed

	Pre-recession Strategies and Tactics	Recovery Strategies and Tactics
Research	Not a focus: “We know our customers and markets.”	Audience behavior, sources of information, buying behavior, etc.
Advertising	Emphasis on print, some online.	Emphasis on online, some print.
Public Relations	Traditional editorial channel.	Self-publication, multimedia press releases, social media involvement.
Web	Static content, not many tools.	Dynamic, interactive content; engagement tools. Blogs, chat, webinars, podcasts, etc.
Search Engine Marketing	Brute force, lots of keywords, little to no refinement of keywords.	Targeted, refined, more emphasis on offers, landing pages, calls to action.
Search Engine Optimization	Low levels of optimization, unfocused keyword strategy.	Total optimization strategy but content is king.
Direct	Printed direct mail and E-mail blasts as “attract” tactics; no long-term list-building strategy.	Emphasis on electronic delivery; engagement and cultivation; segmentation and refinement.
Trade Shows	Untouchable; big bucks, low accountability.	Under the microscope, virtual alternatives, customer events.
Social Media	Not a factor; for kids.	The new “word of mouth”, lots of communities for professionals.
Mobile	Not a factor for marketing.	Worth a look; opportunity for applications.
Collateral	Print and PDF.	PDF, interactive tools, video/multimedia, some print.
Engagement	Sales force and distributors.	Web tools, blogs, chat, online collaboration, online advisory, etc.
Analytics	For math majors, maybe web and search.	Must-do, integrated marketing analytics.

**GET YOUR  
MARKETING READY  
FOR THE  
RECOVERY NOW**

Are you prepared to make the most of the opportunities the economic recovery offers? Our brief, focused recovery plan analysis will assess how well your current marketing aligns with the new realities of the B2B marketing landscape. To learn more, contact LANCE BAIRD at 717-393-3831. E-mail: [info@godfrey.com](mailto:info@godfrey.com) or visit [www.godfrey.com](http://www.godfrey.com)

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