

# Business Marketing Face to Face

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## The Theory and Practice of B2B Marketing

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## The Business Marketing Communications Mix

### Overview

Digital technologies have had a profound impact on the way in which organisations communicate with each other. However, this is not to suggest that the influence of the traditional offline communication tools has waned, indeed it can be argued that marketing communications have been augmented by the application of new technologies.

In this chapter each of the three elements that make up the marketing communications mix is considered; tools, media and messages. Consideration is given to the key characteristics and effectiveness of each of the primary tools used in B2B marketing communications. The chapter then examines each of the main media from a communication perspective and concludes by considering the type of messages used to reach business audiences.

### Aims and objectives

The aims of this chapter are to explore the main characteristics of each of the elements of the marketing communications mix and to determine their contribution to business-to-business marketing communications.

#### **The objectives of this chapter are to enable readers to:**

- 1 Introduce the elements that make up the marketing communications mix.
- 2 Examine the characteristics of each of the primary tools of the marketing communications mix.
- 3 Comment on the use of secondary tools in B2B marketing.
- 4 Consider the range and forms of media used in business marketing.
- 5 Explain the way in which digital media can be used in B2B marketing.
- 6 Explore how messages and content can be used in business marketing.
- 7 Describe the principles of demand generation.

## A Slice of Life – The Importance of Pants

The Internet has changed the marketing communications mix. We have progressed, at speed, from a relatively straightforward model using the '5 tools' to something more complex. The last time I looked, it includes countless media, including social media and various digital applications, plus, of course, an array of different ways of messaging. Our communications have changed.

It is no longer acceptable to apply the traditional methods and models of marketing exclusively to a world that no longer engages with communications in the traditional way. The introduction of social media and the advancement of new digital channels means the audience has shifted – from the offline world to an online one. The audience now expects to engage with its own online network(s) long before it ever engages directly with the brand. Sources of information have shifted – from communications supplied by the corporate entity, to 'friends', 'followers', 'likes', 'diggs', 'contacts', 'bloggers'. The shift affects every area of the marketing communications mix.

Print advertising circulations have fallen as the customer elects not to read newspapers or magazines, preferring 'news' from blogs, RSS feeds and social network channels. Direct mail has been reduced to almost zero, data companies now sell 'insight' not mailing lists. Even email is 'old'. Personal selling has less to do with the territory offered to a salesperson and more to do with the brand's ability to maintain a viable and compelling YouTube broadcast channel. Advertising and public relations professions are still attempting to redefine their respective roles in the new digital economy. Marketers, and specifically B2B marketers, have been slow to accept and make changes to the marketing mix. In other words, we haven't been listening to our customers – and that can be fatal. The impression is that the changes in the market have come quickly. They haven't. We may have been slow to respond, but the writing's been on the wall for years...

I was invited to a meeting with the Chief Executive and Financial Director of a medium-sized IT support and technical staffing company in London way back in 2006. I was there to help Sir and the bean counter articulate their marketing needs better than simply telling me they wanted, "more leads". The company offered broadly commoditised services and showed little appetite to invest in a brand strategy that might identify an area of competitive differentiation. To the company's credit, however, a 'creative' solution was briefed as the requirement. They hoped that a creative interpretation of their service delivery would generate the required leads. I agreed that a creative approach would help, but I was concerned that the company's prescriptive reliance on a traditional communications channel, namely direct mail, would restrict the opportunity to fully engage a wider audience and attract the large response the company was hoping for.