

The Business-to-Business Marketing Maturity Model

Version 1.01

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Introduction

Wasting time and resources at your organization is not acceptable and doing it needlessly should make you frustrated and even angry. Wasting time and resources on Marketing should be no exception.

They say it takes 10,000 hours to become an expert (or “phenom”) at any particular role but ultimately it is up to the “audience” and the numbers to decide. Over 25 years we have clocked nearly 100,000 work hours in the distinct field of business-to-business (B2B) marketing, so “phenoms” or not we are experienced and specialized. In that time, we have also worked with hundreds of B2B marketers and senior managers and learned from their experiences across hundreds of corporations, agencies, non-profits, universities and government organizations. We have also performed extensive primary research, come up with new approaches, tools and ideas which we have tested, used, tuned, and taught along the way. We have, through these experiences and research, created a model for how B2B businesses (as well as other organizations) can more efficiently mature their marketing capability to match their needs and avoid wasteful, low ROI expenditures.

This paper introduces and describes the Business-to-Business Marketing Maturity Model. It is intended for executives, investors and practitioners but may be of interest to anyone who “touches” Marketing or is invested in its success. We developed it for B2B and B2B-B2C companies but the integrated nature of the approach and model suggests other potential applications as well.

Business-to-Business (B2B) Marketing Primer

Before we delve into the maturity model, it is worth laying out some key fundamental truths and rules of working in the B2B world that are central to marketing capability. Please note that there is also a “Glossary and Key Definitions” section in the Appendix.

B2B vs. B2C: B2B marketing (and demand generation) is very different than its consumer marketing (B2C) counterpart. The impacts of the differences, nuances and B2B-specific “rules” become more pronounced as companies mature and grow (or in many cases, fail to grow at the desired rate).

Problems vs. Wants and Needs: Consumers buy for a multitude of reasons while businesses purchase to solve a business problem they deem must be solved. Those problems will have been very carefully considered, and the entire process (or “buyer’s journey”) will take months if not years for the business to traverse before the business ultimately chooses from a “short list” of 2-3 options. Getting on that short list is the job of Marketing, and ensuring that your entire target audience has you on that short list when they are ready to evaluate, choose, and buy is perhaps the top B2B marketing challenge.

The Four Questions: Any successful response to that challenge must begin with validated answers to the first three key B2B marketing questions:

1. *What business problem do we solve?*
2. *Who exactly has this business problem?*
3. *How do these defined people want to solve that defined problem?*

These questions may seem simple and easy to answer, but ask a variety of people in your company to answer them and you’ll quickly see that the answers will be slow to gain, with a huge variance in answer content. Also note how many (or few) of your colleagues stated the business problem from a potential customer’s perspective using their terminology (often plain English). Then ask yourself, “If my own company’s managers can’t answer these questions (or even agree on the business problem statement), how on earth can I believe we’re prepared for market success?”

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When you do the required research and targeting drill and can confidently answer these first three questions for your company, then (and only then) can you attempt to adequately answer the company-defining fourth question:

4. *“What business are we truly in?”* [From the all-important perspective of your target customers]

The great Peter Drucker asked this question of all his CEO and Chairman of the Board clients and worked them and their teams through the painful but necessary self-awareness process to get to the true, customer insight-based answer. The exercise to answer and validate these four questions requires gaining the deepest possible knowledge of your market, your prospective customers and your competitors as well as mining the collective talents, culture, and intellectual property of your company and its stakeholders. It is also, we believe, perhaps the most important single exercise your company (and Marketing) can perform and its outputs will inform, if not drive, future decision-making.

The Buyer’s Journey for B2B

Fundamental to the art (and science) of B2B marketing is a method of describing the specific process through which a business makes a decision to purchase a solution to a problem. We refer to this process and its distinct phases as the “buyer’s journey.” An understanding of the buyer’s journey and a common language for its phases helps you frame the goals and measurement of every aspect of your B2B marketing. It will ensure that what you deliver is both understood and actionable by your sales organization.

For our common language we’ll utilize the B2B buyer’s journey stages as first named and defined by noted author and B2B strategist Hugh Macfarlane; they are:

1. Untroubled and Unaware
2. Interest Established
3. Acknowledge Problem
4. Looking for a Solution
5. Evaluate Solutions
6. Customer

More details of the buyer’s journey methodology can be found at b2b3.org and from Mr. Macfarlane himself at <https://align.me/>

What is a Maturity Model?

Put simply, a maturity model is a framework that guides organizations in improving their key functions and processes over time. First popularized at Carnegie Mellon University’s Software Engineering Institute (SEI) as a means for improving software development processes, capability maturity models have since been developed for improving additional technology-related and other complex business and organizational functions.

For business-to-business (B2B) marketing organizations, it is now a framework for managing and developing their marketing, establishing a program of continuous improvement, setting priorities for improvement actions, and establishing a culture of excellence.

Like other actionable maturity models, this model consists of maturity levels that establish successive foundations for continuously improving key competencies. Each level represents an increased ability to manage the function and impact the business. Establishing all of each level’s foundational elements is critical to both near-term marketing improvement and to enabling successful adoption of the next level’s elements. All elements of previously achieved levels are continued (or even improved), as elements of the next level are achieved and validated. Without all the appropriate foundational elements in place, attempted adoption of advanced tools and other elements from higher levels of maturity is ill-advised and will likely yield a predictable negative or low ROI result (as we’ve gathered from our research and from our own experiences); we have no doubt that you know of or have experienced this yourself.

Why a B2B Marketing Maturity Model?

“Half of global execs rate capability building as a top 3 priority.” -2015 McKinsey & Co. survey

“More than 70% of organizations cite capabilities gaps as one of their top five challenges.” -Bersin by Deloitte, 2014

“While the average CMO tenure at large B2C companies is now 48 months, it is closer to half that for B2B challenger brands. –Overheard at 2015 industry conference

7 of 10 senior executives say that developing capability is a top priority for their organization. -CMMI Institute, 2015

For decades now, we have repeatedly encountered unfocused, mis-targeted, low-impact and/or non-improving marketing efforts combined with unpredictable marketing results at B2B and B2C-B2B companies. Through observation and research, it became clear that this condition permeates virtually the entire sector and the disappointment expressed by B2B leaders as to their ROM (return on marketing investments), became a familiar topic as we spoke with more and more of them.

Those experiences included seeing otherwise successful companies (often with very intelligent marketing leaders and talented agencies on board) constantly fail at adding innovative new tools to their immature marketing organizations. This and a long familiarity with SEI, CMMI, and similar efforts made it clear that the capability maturity model concept was appropriate for attacking this pervasive B2B conundrum.

With a goal of addressing this with a relevant, actionable model for B2B and B2C-B2B organizations, the Business-to-Business Marketing Maturity Model program was undertaken and this version of the model was developed.

While written with the senior leadership and investor audience in mind, it is appropriate for a number of other audiences as well, including marketing leaders and practitioners and their agency counterparts.

B2B Marketing Maturity Model Levels

To set the stage, below are brief descriptions of the levels of the maturity model and Marketing's key role at that level:

Level 0 (Survival)

When a company is first founded, it is generally based on the enthusiasm for an idea or product. For the company to attract attention, some basic information must be presented in ways that are considered culturally normal. Today this means having a presence on a website, a company name and logo along with a PowerPoint (PPT) deck and/or other basic presentation explaining what the company does and establishing an identity for it. Investors and prospective customers and employees demand these basic elements. Every company founder needs these and related props to show that their business has viability and standing in their community. This is the most basic, "survival" level for a B2B company and its marketing function.

Level 1 (Enable Sales)

Once a company has built an offering which is commercially viable, then the focus becomes selling the "product." The company must develop a sales model and hire a sales force either directly or by outsourcing this function to third parties who represent the company (partnerships/channels, etc.). Simply identifying people who will have the responsibility of selling the product(s) is not enough; these people must be educated on the "product" and equipped such that they can be effective. Enabling "Sales" (the sales team) requires a mix of giving them knowledge and giving them tools to help educate and convince prospective customers. At this 1st level of maturity, Sales enablement is the critical success factor and the focus for the marketing team. Once Sales is properly enabled, they are in a position to effectively negotiate a sale. Enabled salespeople therefore close deals more quickly.

Level 2 (Demand Gen)

When a company has the basics of corporate information available and a sales model that ensures products (and/or services) can be effectively sold, the next issue is one of providing Sales with enough prospects that are interested in potentially buying products/services. The primary focus for Marketing becomes identifying a quantity of prospective customers and passing their information to Sales. We call this level 2, demand generation ("Demand Gen" for short) and while Marketing is doing some other activities, its main job is generating new demand (or "Leads") for Sales so that the company can grow.

Level 3 (Strategic)

At level 3, Marketing has evolved beyond being primarily a Lead discovery and generating machine and becomes a more strategic function. At this level the business recognizes that the quality of the Leads generated is as (if not more) important than the volume of Leads; processes are implemented to ensure that Leads are "worked," ensuring the highest quality ones are passed to Sales while the rest are "nurtured" until such time as they are truly Sales-worthy. Doing this requires a categorization exercise which differentiates between just target names with only contact details, prospects, actual Leads ready for Sales, and Leads that Sales have accepted as true opportunities to work and track in detail. The simplest and best models often use four key named stages; such as (but not necessarily) these: (1) Contacts, (2) Inquiries, (3) Leads and (4) Opportunities, where each stage has a specific definition and requirements. Keep in mind that the definition of each stage (rather than the name) is most important:

1. A Contact is a person who has been identified as a viable target to which to market your offering.
2. An Inquiry is a Contact who has chosen to actively engage in your marketing.

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3. A Lead is an Inquiry that has provided information about their decision making process that lets you understand that they are actively looking to engage in a commercial relationship with someone like you.
4. An Opportunity is a Lead that has been accepted by Sales as one that they plan to expend salesperson effort on and have (or will) attach an estimated deal size, decision date, etc.

There are more detailed definitions that each company can apply to each, and there are sublevels that may make sense in allowing the true value of each prospect to be monitored, but the basic contact-inquiry-lead-opportunity (or CILO) model is the critical success factor that turns demand generation into Sales-actionable work that Sales, Marketing and management can track and understand. Also, doing the intense “4 Questions” strategic targeting drill and deeply understanding the journey that buyers go through en route to making a purchase (and creating very specific messaging and content for each stage in that journey), is a big part of Marketing’s now-strategic role at level 3.

Level 4 (4th Domain)

Once a business has a viable way of generating high quality, “qualified” Leads that are actionable by Sales, the issue becomes one of delivering this at increasing scale, and ensuring that the overall delivery of them to Sales and conversion of them can be as efficient, effective, and predictable as possible. At the same time, most companies will recognize that including Marketing in the leadership process alongside product development, finance and Sales enables better coordination which can allow for faster adoption of new products that better fit the market requirement, which will lead to higher revenue, a lower cost-of-goods-sold (COGS) and much longer customer lifespans (retention). At this level the head of the marketing organization typically becomes part of the executive process and Marketing is considered the 4th critical domain within the business (and just as important as any of the other business functions or “domains”). This level also includes moving to the “black box” marketing model in which Marketing has complete ownership of its function and deliverables and its inner demand generation workings are “walled off” from the rest of the company (much like finance and development), and only C-suite and Sales-relevant marketing metrics are projected out from the black box machine.

Level 5 (Forecastable Asset)

Once the business has a positive experience of having Marketing as a core business function (as opposed to a sub-element of Operations or Sales where Marketing is generally seen below Level 4), then the marketing function will be able to play a much more dynamic role in the future direction of the business, as the true “ears” (as well as the voice) of the company. The knowledge gained from the market by the marketing team becomes an intrinsic part of the decision-making process for all future products and services (and for company strategy in general). This allows the company to measure any new proposed “product” or product change against the potential revenue with a predicted cost of Sales and Marketing. For example, technologically exciting products for which there is no tangible market can be quickly identified as such and efforts can be focused on just the areas in which the company will get the highest return. The goals of the company, the research and development investment, the financial envelope of the business and the Sales capacity of the company are all aligned through careful and accurate forecasting of the true future shape of the market. This allows risk and reward to be very effectively controlled and leads to a truly healthy business model. At level 5 Marketing becomes the “divining rod” and every unit of effort and expenditure can be accurately forecasted, allowing the business to innovate in ways that would have previously seemed far too risky.

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Intent, Outcomes (and Unintended Consequences)

At the heart of any actionable maturity model-based program are the primary intent and actual key outcomes at each maturity model level. The outcomes, both positive and negative, are realities of increasing the level of maturity and addressing the current priorities of the organization; they can be predicted and therefore be part of the overall plan. The below chart summarizes those for each level of the model:

	Level 0 Survival	Level 1 Enable Sales	Level 2 Demand Gen	Level 3 Strategic	Level 4 4th Domain	Level 5 Forecastable Asset
Intent	Basic company presence and identity established	Provide Sales with tools and knowledge to close deals	Create additional opportunities for Sales to drive desired growth	Optimize the efficiency and effectiveness of demand and engage more deeply with prospects (and Sales)	Marketing now understood as a true scaling factor of the business and is used alongside Development, Finance and Sales to create long-term success	Market understanding and data-driven insights from Marketing drive the business R&D risk lowered Long-term forecast accuracy
Outcome	Provides management with content to be able to show the company exists Helps “ego” and ability to source employees and funds	The Sales team’s skill increases and they close deals faster and improve the winning %, but few, if any, new deals come from the Marketing effort	A large number of “Leads” are passed from Marketing to Sales (but many are unqualified Contacts and Inquiries) Sales’ ability to effectively “manage” this new demand is minimal Revenue increases, but often not to forecast	The concept of a qualified Lead (QL) is codified for the business MQLs from “Buyer’s Journey” campaigns are efficiently converted by Sales Company is well positioned with target audiences	New products succeed faster - Existing products generate higher, predictable revenue - Customers are retained longer and average CLV grows	The cost of Marketing and Sales is better understood and efficiency and effectiveness are measured and continuously improved Faster market adoption cycles Profitability is maximized

Key Marketing Functions (Across Levels of Maturity)

The Marketing organization in any sized B2B company must perform a series of key functions. As Marketing needs mature, the list of processes and work that each of these separate functions needs to perform will increase, and many of the operations that were performed at a lower level of maturity also have to be enhanced to take into consideration additional requirements.

Before we discuss the specific operations and processes that need to be performed at each level of marketing maturity, we will define the key different functions (and sub-groups) of Marketing into which we'll group the specific elements. These sub-functions or sub-teams in the Marketing organization may take on different names, depending on the culture of each organization, but for our purposes we'll use these names:

Brand

A core function of any marketing team is to consider the way in which the company is presented to the world. As a company matures, the level of detail will increase as will the understanding of how the market reacts to your brand. Unlike B2C-type thinking, B2B companies will increasingly recognize that their brand is not so much owned by the business, but is owned by the prospects and customers. A B2B business will be able to influence their brand by showcasing positive aspects of their existing and desired relationship with the market while recognizing any inherent weakness in how they are perceived and trying to diminish these negative perceptions by providing examples of positive behavior. Beyond initial brand awareness work, decisions will be made as to whether it makes sense to "brand" particular products or even the company itself or go the "white label" route and associate it with the leading brand.

Sales Support

A key B2B marketing function is in providing effective training and selling tools to the Sales organization. As the B2B marketing organization matures, the level of communication and "interlock" with Sales will increase, to the point that in the demand generation process it will be unclear to any outsider where Marketing ends and Sales begins.

Content

The B2B marketing team must provide product and marketing "content" (and associated messaging) that will appeal to prospects and customers (as well as partners and your Sales team). Often this knowledge content creation function is primarily provided by a Product Marketing team (and your other subject matter experts (SMEs)), but as your marketing matures and the "job" of the content evolves, it is critical that people with professional writing and editing skills, graphic designers and experts in layout, etc. are included in the process.

Digital Execution

Some of the most cost effective methods of communication and content presentation and delivery are in the digital medium. Websites, social media, virtual events, applications (apps), and "search" for all types of devices today form critical parts of the user/prospect experience and it is imperative that as you move up the maturity model that the skills and resources included in your digital team are matched to your need (and to the expectations of your target audiences). Mastery of SEO is now a minimum B2B requirement.

Non-Digital Execution

Physical events and tangible interactions can still be a critical factor in how companies interact with vendors, prospects, customers and other stakeholders. While the value of attendance of trade events is always subjective, less mature companies tend to spend a significant proportion of their annual variable marketing budget on these types of events without really knowing the real return they're getting from

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their investment. While companies can gain a lot of competitive and market knowledge while participating in these events, they do not often generate significant business impact. More mature B2B marketing organizations tend to spend less of their budget on industry events, instead running their own topic, best-practice, and trend-based events aimed at customers and targeted prospects. While these can be much harder events at which to achieve good attendance, the quality of Leads and the goodwill generated at these more personal events are easier to quantify and generally lead to much higher conversion (and retention) rates.

Communications

As your B2B marketing requirements grow and the function matures, your marketing communications team will become more structured. Initially you may not have a dedicated resource to work with the press and other relevant outlets, but as you move up the maturity model you will require dedicated (or outsourced) resources to build and manage relationships initially with a few key targeted journalists and bloggers and later with a broader range of press and industry analyst groups that cover your business's market sectors. Sometimes labeled MARCOM, PR/AR, or other, this function also generally owns internal and partner communications as well.

Planning

The types and level of planning that are undertaken by the marketing team are enhanced as the level of maturity increases over time, and the importance to the business of this planning function grows dramatically as well. As maturity increases, the coordination of planning efforts across the business functions evolves. While market research (both purchased and primary) is relevant in many areas, it is especially critical in planning.

Automation

As the B2B marketing team becomes more experienced and has a more complete understanding of the workflows involved in running the function, it is practical to automate an increasing number and type of marketing and related processes.

Measurement

Key to the success of any organization is to both set meaningful goals and to measure attainment. As your marketing matures, the volume and type of items you measure grows to reflect the increasing understanding you have of the nature of the market and your relative influence of that market. At the same time, senior management will demand certain new metrics that weren't possible at lower levels of marketing maturity.

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The B2B Marketing Maturity Model Overview:

Below is the B2B Marketing Maturity Model summary chart, followed by additional detail for each level:

	Level 0 Survival	Level 1 Enable Sales	Level 2 Demand Gen	Level 3 Strategic	Level 4 4th Domain	Level 5 Forecastable Asset
Branding	Logo / Tagline	Brand Guidelines	Multi-Media Brand	Segment-Based Brand vs. No Brand	Who Are We	Who the Market Wants Us to Be
Sales Support	PPT	Sales Kit & Training	Demand Machine	Sales Handoff Negotiated	MQL → SQL Perfected	Demand Throttled to Capacity
Content	Product Description	Competitive FDB	Thought Leadership	Buyer's Journey Content Factory	Black Box Operationalized	De Facto Standard
Digital Execution	Paper Website	Interactive Website	Social Interaction	Bidirectional Social Interaction	Integrated Omni-Channel	Continuous Innovation
Non-Digital Execution	Ad Hoc Trade Events	Schedule of Annual Trade Events	Keynote Speaking at Trade Events	Company-owned events		
Communications	Ad Hoc PR	AR & PR Outreach	Syndicated Content	Branded Content	Recognized Thought Leader	Media Mover
Planning	Marketing Plan	GTM Plan	3 Year Plan	5 Year Plan	P-D-C-A Cycle Plan	Knowledge-Driven Plan
Automation	To Do List	CRM	Manual Driven Workflows	Marketing Automation	Lead-to-Cash	Contact-to-Retention
Measurement	Activity Volume	Opportunity Volume	CILO Volume	L3 CEO Dashboard with CILO Velocity	L4 CEO Dashboard with Attribution	L5 CEO Dashboard with Futures

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Level 0: Survival

Branding	Brand basics including (but not limited to): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company name • Logo, tagline, business cards • Product/service names (sub-brands) • Mission or vision statement, “elevator pitch”
Sales Support	A PowerPoint (PPT) or equivalent presentation for Sales or management to use with prospects
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Product or service descriptions • Ad hoc customer “value” content
Digital Execution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website with brand and company basics and information on the products/services and how to contact the company • SEO ensuring company can be found • Some additional ad hoc digital activities
Non-Digital Execution	Ad hoc industry events/event-related activity
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press releases and ad hoc public relations (PR) • Ad hoc analyst relations and communications activity
Planning	Basic marketing plan with high level strategy and list of marketing tactics
Automation	No real marketing automation, but possibly some project management tool or to-do-list process
Measurement	Marketing measured on volume and surface “quality” of activities and deliverables (i.e. giving executives a good feeling), but not qualified objectively

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Level 1: Marketing Enables Sales (“Enable Sales”)

Branding	Structured brand and messaging guidelines and templates with the aim of making everything look and sound like it comes from one company
Sales Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sales kit (structured set of materials provided to Sales people on a regular cadence) • Sales training materials • Features descriptions and benefits (FDB) vs. competition materials • Regular delivery of a Sales training program
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Externally-facing content with comparisons versus competitors, a demonstration of the product, and validation of “value” received by customers • Focus on content delivering a message that validates your marketing position
Digital Execution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactive website, SEO evolution • Increasing type and number of digital marketing tactics
Non-Digital Execution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation of industry trade events leading to a defined list of shows • Execution of booth/similar at approved/funded events
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some public relations/press (PR) and analyst relations (AR) outreach • Awareness activities (not independently measured) providing “air cover” for Sales • Ad hoc internal communications
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Product/service launch plans • Simple go-to-market (GTM) plan (which should have shared ownership with Sales, Finance and Product Management)
Automation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer relationship management (CRM) • Subscription to Contact list purchase/rental services • Use of a non-spamming compliant emailing service • Other ad hoc marketing operations tools
Measurement	Marketing measured on document/content creation volume and ultimate Sales’ results

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Level 2: Marketing Drives Demand (“Demand Gen”)

Branding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Branding extended to multi-media (video, print, adverts, business cards, name badges, uniform guidelines, office signage, packaging, etc.) • Extends to awareness campaigns/activities
Sales Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A focus on ensuring Contacts are tracked and that Inquires convert to Leads and that Leads convert to Opportunities • Call scripts created for Sales/Inside Sales/Resellers • All prospect inquiries, responses, etc. automatically captured→ quickly passed to Sales
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buyer’s Journey “Content Factory” concept accepted and standards for content types, characteristics and quality established • Content creation training for all SMEs • Buyer’s Journey phase-based campaign content created and pushed out (including white papers, webinars, etc.) • Buyer’s Journey “logical” campaign #1 may be developed and manually tested at this level
Digital Execution	Website activity expands to encompass popular and relevant social media sites (LinkedIn, Twitter, etc.) and ad hoc mobile interaction
Non-Digital Execution	Trade events activity now includes scouting and negotiating speaking slots and the sponsorship of social activity
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The focus now expands to try and get editorial content placed in industry and generalist publications (online and print) • Editorial/Public Relations (PR) program implemented • Analyst Relations/Public Relations (AR/PR) program audit
Planning	Planning cycle includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some segmentation and targeting • Evaluating outsourcing and global insourcing options for select marketing functions • Product Management-Product Marketing alignment and “roles and responsibilities” discussion
Automation	A recognition that marketing campaigns need a structured workflow, but more knowledge is needed as to how to manage the workflow; most decisions are still taken manually, even though some form of marketing automation tool may be being evaluated, the process flows are not yet viable and/or ready to be fully implemented
Measurement	Marketing primarily measured on the number of: Contacts acquired, campaign responses (aka Inquiries), “Leads” created and passed to Sales, and/or Opportunities created and worked by Sales.

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Level 3: Marketing Becomes Strategic (“Strategic”)

Branding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness and preference audits and program (per problem/solution) • Brand/No Brand analysis and decision by product/segment
Sales Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The process for Marketing-to-Sales handoff of qualified Leads is negotiated between Marketing and Sales and becomes a key measure of both teams • Intelligence on prospect companies fed to Sales • On-boarding and training of new Sales reps and partners now a globally seamless and efficient program
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Content Factory” fully operationalized to support buyer’s journey campaigns with efficient creation of full range of high-impact assets (i.e. info-graphics, online assessment tools, video, etc.) and messaging • Content creation goals set based on calendar and known resources • Optimum content type/s now identified for each role/persona for each Buyer’s Journey stage for each campaign • Factory process becomes a measurable goal across the company
Digital Execution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Execution of organic (company created) and industry virtual event strategy and plan • Execution of digital/virtual events and digital elements of customer, special interest group (SIG), and communities plan
Non-Digital Execution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Execution of organic and industry physical event strategy and plan • Execution of physical elements of customer, special interest group (SIG), and communities plan
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press/analyst program now inbound (Press and Analysts ask for input as opposed to you asking or paying them to listen) • Internal communications plan created and resourced • Entire company onboard with Marketing GTM plan and using same marketing and plan terminology
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 4 questions “Drill” completed, business problems ranked, segmentation and targeting drill completed for all problems/entire portfolio • Some scenario-based forecasting capability • Product Management-Product Marketing alignment and roles and responsibilities program implemented; RACI model for all functions, etc.
Automation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaign automation of manually tested buyer’s journey “Black Box” campaigns • Automation of additional reports, specific tasks, and Lead scoring
Measurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CILO-type scoring and process implemented • Measured on pipeline volume, movement and velocity, and ultimate revenue • Dashboards and reports include above metrics

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Level 4: Marketing as the 4th Domain (“4th Domain”)

Branding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The focus of branding becomes aligning every communication (both internal and external) and touchpoint with a clear, accepted statement of “who we are” as a company (which is a continuation of the earlier “<i>What business are we in?</i>” drill made famous by Peter Drucker) • All employees, partners and references are activated as brand evangelists and even obscure touchpoints (e.g. support, billing, pages on partner websites, etc.), are aligned
Sales Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processes are developed that ensure that the transition of demand (Leads) from Marketing to Sales is flawless • The previously negotiated Marketing-to-Sales handoff is institutionalized with all parties in agreement about exactly what constitutes a marketing qualified Lead (MQL), how it is packaged and sent to Sales, and how (and how quickly) Sales must review it and either accept it as a Sales qualified Lead (SQL) or reject it for cause and provide details back to Marketing and Sales management • The process also now includes detail and timing for Sales to convert the SQL into the appropriate opportunity/pipeline entry in the Sales CRM system for tracking
Content	<p>Now that the Buyer's Journey is codified across the company, the process of building and automating the entire B2B marketing campaign process inside of the marketing department with very clear inputs and measures from executive management and sales can be enacted as a marketing “black box”</p>
Digital Execution	<p>All digital and non-digital channels (web, print, events, social, partner, etc.) are all integrated together as a single, cohesive omni-channel delivery machine</p>
Non-Digital Execution	<p>(including mobile, the visual web (TVW), Internet of Things (IoT), etc.)</p>
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The public relations, press and analyst functions and relationships are now so well established that the company’s subject matter experts are considered go-to people for opinions, advice and quotes • Thought leadership status is ubiquitous across all target markets
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The team anticipates future “Sales capacity” and Marketing resource requirements and ensures they are part of the resourcing plan for all parts of the company • The planning function now extends beyond the existing products and next round of products into a continual cycle of agile planning using a model such as the plan-do-check-act (P-D-C-A) cycle, whereby every new piece of knowledge is used to tune the plan (note: as the plan was already quite accurate this just reduces risk) • There is a continuity/succession plan for all Marketing and related staff

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Automation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The marketing process delivers a forecast-able volume of high quality Leads that can now be used to predict future closed deal volume and values • This now enables a viable “Lead to cash” process using the marketing engine along with a structured Sales methodology • The “Black Box” Buyer’s Journey campaigns for all business problems are fully automated such that all prospects are either progressed forward efficiently or appropriately nurtured or recycled, taking into account all viable decision/responses and paths
Measurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The company can start to gain long-term leading indicators of future business by measuring changes in awareness and preference mapped to performance against forecast. Campaign “lag” and “leak” analysis (which looks at why prospects aren’t progressing as fast as projected (lag) and why prospects are disengaging from the campaign altogether (leak)), and campaign tuning is now institutionalized • Attribution for all marketing channels, assets and activities is now completed and tied to the appropriate Sales data • Dashboards reflect the above added measures (e.g. MQL→SQL efficiency, lag/leak, attribution, etc.)

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Level 5: Marketing as a Forecastable Asset (“Forecastable Asset”)

Branding	The company now moves its focus to understanding the future market requirement and develops a plan to model the brand to closely align to where the market will be in the future
Sales Support	The company has a very detailed understanding of the volume and type of demand that can be effectively consumed and managed and now tune demand generation campaigns to “throttle” the demand to closely align to exactly what Sales and channel partners can consume effectively
Content	The knowledge shared by the company with the market is so well respected that it’s considered as the normal best practice used by everyone
Digital Execution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Execution risk essentially eliminated through processes • At this level the market is so well understood that it’s practical to innovate creatively on a continuous basis, with high quality feedback from key sources (e.g. communities and front-line employee ideas/feedback) driving decisions and dynamic processes to report on the change in results
Non-Digital Execution	
Communications	The market is so accepting of the company’s ideas that the media bargains for your input. When you say something people listen, so media companies will in effect pay you for your content as your presence helps them achieve their goals
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of market and real time data you are getting from the market, along with your ability to communicate internally quickly and accurately, allows you to use data to adjust your plan in near real time • Data collected on all Marketing and Sales activities is now used by entire management suite for strategic decisions
Automation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can now move beyond Lead-to-cash to a complete lifecycle automation process that can automate the process of obtaining and managing Contacts right through to managing customer retention • Leads are now considered one step deep in the process of the long term customer relationship and scenario-based projection of CLV (customer lifetime value), is now automated
Measurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to track subtle changes in current and likely future behavior and their impact on revenue, sales velocity, budget expectations and market performance • Measures now include accuracy of Contact, Inquiry, Lead, and MQL forecasts, win %, and deal size projections (at the campaign and summary level)

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Conclusion

While imperfect, we believe this program and model (and each successive version) is a valuable framework to utilize to efficiently mature the marketing function at B2B and B2C-B2B companies according to their needs while helping leaders* and owners/investors* avoid the wasteful, imprudent marketing expenditures so common today. It contains insights and examples from a variety of sources and numerous real-life situations to make it as relevant and actionable as possible.

As the marketplace and the marketing function are both rapidly evolving, this needs to be an ongoing, evolving program as well and additional insights will be added in future versions. Discussion on this topic from business leaders* and owners/investors* (as well other interested parties) is encouraged.

If you'd like to utilize the model or any of its elements for your organization (or for academic or other use), contact the authors.

*IMPORTANT NOTE FOR EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT AND INVESTORS:

It is important for executive management and investors to recognize that early business success due to having a new or unique solution to a business problem, a well-connected management team, a great Sales organization, or other factor often masks an immature marketing function. When these unsustainable advantages start to fade (often in levels 2 and 3), "marketing" moves into the spotlight and immaturity is exposed, usually in the form of missed revenue targets. Rather than view this as a failure of one individual (and trying to remedy it with the hire of his or her replacement), first consider the concepts in this model and all the real change required to move up from level to level in marketing maturity to meet your company's changing needs. Then consider the long-term advantages of efficiently increasing your level of marketing maturity (especially if your competition is not doing so), and of decreasing the uncertainty of your future ROM (return on marketing investments). Validating your company's current level of marketing maturity (and what specifically is required to move to the next level), is the first step toward a sustainable competitive advantage for any B2B and B2C-B2B company.

Appendix

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Glossary and Key Definitions

SEI:	Software Engineering Institute (at Carnegie Mellon University)
CMMI:	Capability maturity model integration
Contact:	Prospect for which you have contact details
Inquiry:	Contact that has asked for something or downloaded something
Lead:	Inquiry that has a specific project and one or more of these: approved budget, project timeline and is part of the decision team
MQL:	(Marketing Qualified Lead): Lead deemed ready for Sales that has a specific project, approved budget, project timeline, and is part of the decision team
Opportunity:	Sales-accepted Lead with project details, budget, timeline, key decision-maker/s, and estimated win % entered into customer resource management (CRM) system
Sales:	“Sales” with the “S” capitalized refers to the Sales organization and function
SQL:	(Sales Qualified Lead): An MQL that has been reviewed and accepted by Sales
CILO:	Contacts, Inquiries, Leads, Opportunities-based tracking/measurement
CRM:	Customer Relationship Management system (e.g. Salesforce.com)
Buyer’s Journey:	The distinct stages a prospective B2B customer goes through en route to solving a business problem (There are many variations, including: Untroubled & Unaware, Interest Established, Acknowledge Problem, Looking for Solution, Evaluate Solutions, Customer)
Black Box:	The mature, contained Marketing and demand generation function from the view of management seen just as Contacts going into a “Black Box” and MQLs coming out
Content Factory:	A structured approach to building new knowledge content and repurposing existing ideas and content to be used as elements in existing and future content and digital campaigns
Logical Campaign:	A decision-tree based 1-to-1 lead nurturing campaign automated such that a system sends the right message and content to each prospect at the appropriate time, according to the principles of the Buyers Journey
IoT:	Internet of things, namely the network of physical objects—devices, vehicles, buildings and other items—embedded with electronics, software, sensors, and network connectivity that enables these objects to collect and exchange data
TVW:	(the visual web) Digital presence utilizing images (little/no text) to communicate a message
PM/PMM:	Product Management/Product Marketing Management
GTM:	Go-to-market plan
Omni-Channel:	Universal continuity of experience across all [marketing] channels and touchpoints
Conversion:	The act of progressing a prospect (website visitor, etc.) into an Opportunity or Customer
R&D:	The Research and Development team or function of a company
CLV:	Customer lifetime value metric: total net profit a company makes via a given customer
SME:	Subject matter expert; an expert or thought leader on one or more topics; SMEs are often used by B2B companies to create and/or deliver high value knowledge “content”
RACI:	Matrix designating who is Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, and Informed

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About The Authors

The Business-to-Business Marketing Maturity Model was developed by Steven A. Menges and David K. Liff from a concept conceived of by Steven A. Menges. While practitioners for 25+ years each, the authors are also passionate about the professional discipline of marketing (especially B2B marketing), and actively participate in and support academic and professional development. If you'd like the authors to speak at your next event, present this paper, or otherwise assist in a student or practitioner learning effort, please do so using the contact details below.

Steven A. Menges

A 30-year practitioner and builder of successful marketing, product and Sales enablement efforts at Fortune 500, start-up, and mid-stage organizations, Mr. Menges is known as a visionary and motivational hands-on manager and mentor. Steven's consistent record of delivering goal-exceeding growth and retention rates for B2B and B2B2C organizations was during both down and up markets and for both pre-chasm and post-chasm products.

A strategic, versatile executive who has worn many hats while helping build two successful start-up organizations in the managed service provider (MSP) sector, Mr. Menges has also helped position and grow direct and channel reseller-based brands and product lines domestically and worldwide (as well as launching a credibility sub-brand to drive a cybersecurity exit). Having acted as VP of Product Marketing, VP of Buyer's Journeys, Head of Content & Field Marketing, Director of Product Management, and B.U. CMO (with stints as Sales Manager, Project Manager and agency-side VP), Steven has a unique big picture understanding of how companies work and how marketing best interacts with all its stakeholders.

An admirer and advocate of Peter Drucker's teachings, Steven is an expert at deeply understanding the customer's thought process and developing low-cost, high impact programs to drive the most efficient prospect progressions through the B2B buyer's journey while fostering long-term customer loyalty.

Mr. Menges earned an MBA from the Katz Graduate School of Business at the University of Pittsburgh and is currently an Adjunct Marketing and Capstone/thesis professor for NYU's M.S. in Management and Systems (STEM) and M.S. in Integrated Marketing master's degree programs. Steven and co-founder David Liff starting working together in 2002 and have run the B2B³ agency since 2012.

David K. Liff

Mr. Liff is a motivational and innovative leader who builds and delivers marketing strategy and execution for businesses ranging in size from \$50M to \$3B while working directly for CEOs and Business Unit leaders.

He has driven highly focused marketing programs and organizations to deliver results within conservative budgets using the broadest range of innovative techniques to best match the buying community at hand. Mr. Liff has repeatedly taken on seemingly impossible situations and delivered success in ways that no one could have predicted while mentoring and motivating new and existing staff and making the journey and challenges enjoyable for the team.

David has over 27 years' experience in global technology B2B and Consumer channel and direct marketing at a multitude of well-known corporations including HP (Hewlett Packard), Nimsoft, ArisGlobal and CA Technologies. With a unique ability to drive much-needed internal change and make things happen quickly, Mr. Liff is equipped to succeed for any size organization.

A published author, Mr. Liff is a Dual US, European Citizen and is originally from the UK where he graduated from Westminster University. He lives in New York City.

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The logo consists of the letters 'B2B3' in a large, bold, black serif font. The letters are slightly shadowed, giving them a three-dimensional appearance as if they are floating above a surface.