

THE NEW B2B MARKETING

Manifesto

Five imperatives and six staples
you need to win the battle for attention

We're not in Kansas anymore.

You know that bit in *The Wizard of Oz* where Dorothy first wakes up in a strange, technicolour world, looks around, turns to Toto and delivers the classic understatement, “I’ve a feeling we’re not in Kansas any more”?

Well, that’s what this book is about.

If you’re a B2B marketer, you’ve probably got that post-Kansas feeling. You went to sleep one day in a black & white world of trade magazines, exhibitions and direct mail and woke up on some psychadelic, virtual planet.

This book is about this strange new landscape.

The tour starts with a call to action and a plea for ambition. It then moves on to look at what’s really changed in B2B (it’s not what everybody says it is).

Then we touch on the big-ass barriers that stand between you and glory.

Finally, it identifies what you can do about it: five imperatives and six B2B staples – the new weapons in your arsenal, waiting to be deployed.

Hang on to your little dog.



The rant.
A call to action
and plea
for ambition.

There has never
been a more interesting,
exciting or challenging
time to be a B2B
marketer than
right now.



~~Your job description has been fundamentally re-written.~~

Your potential buyers don't buy the way they used to.
(Remember when a brochure actually mattered?)

Your sales people don't sell the way they used to.
(Their shotguns have been replaced by rifles.)

Your competitors don't compete the way they used to.
(They're quicker, more agile and reaching more people.)

All bets are off. All rules are out of date.
All conventional wisdom has been exposed as neither.

There has never been
a scarier, more exposed
time to be a B2B
marketer than
right now.

Welcome. To the most important fork in your career path.

You woke up one day and found yourself in the Land of Accountability.
Everything you do can be measured – more or less instantly.

And the people who measure you are starting to figure this out.
There's no place to hide.



Two roads:

One is fairly straight, flat and well-lit.

You don't have to change direction, pace or attitude to follow it.

It's marketing as you've always practiced it – maybe with a few added tricks.

The other is a bit more challenging.

It takes unexpected twists and turns. It's illuminated in places but pitch-black in others.

You have no idea where it leads and neither does anyone else

(despite all the 'social media ninjas' tweeting themselves into a frenzy).

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This isn't one of those rhetorical choices.

It's real.

You really can choose the safer, more comfortable path and still enjoy your career.

There are plenty of well-paid jobs in excellent companies for people who take this path.

These jobs have 'marketing' titles – ultimately even Director of Marketing or CMO.

But they're not really marketing jobs, they're *marketing communications* jobs.

Don't knock marcom.

Marcom people provide a valuable service to their companies. Because that's exactly what they provide: service & support for the sales team.

When sales needs a new data sheet or case study: you're the dude. You handle the trade show stands and e-newsletters. You own the brochures and the website.

That's a valuable function*.
But it's not marketing.
Not any more.

* Dianna Huff has an [excellent marcom job description](#)

The other road also travels through the marketing department.
But it doesn't end there.

It ends with a new role for B2B marketers like you.

This is the road for ambitious, confident B2B marketers.

Marketers who want a place at the sales table. Marketers who see their job as not just growing the brand but growing the business.

To take this road, you need to start thinking big – thinking less like a traditional marcoms person and more like a CEO.



The new B2B marketer is the engine of the company.

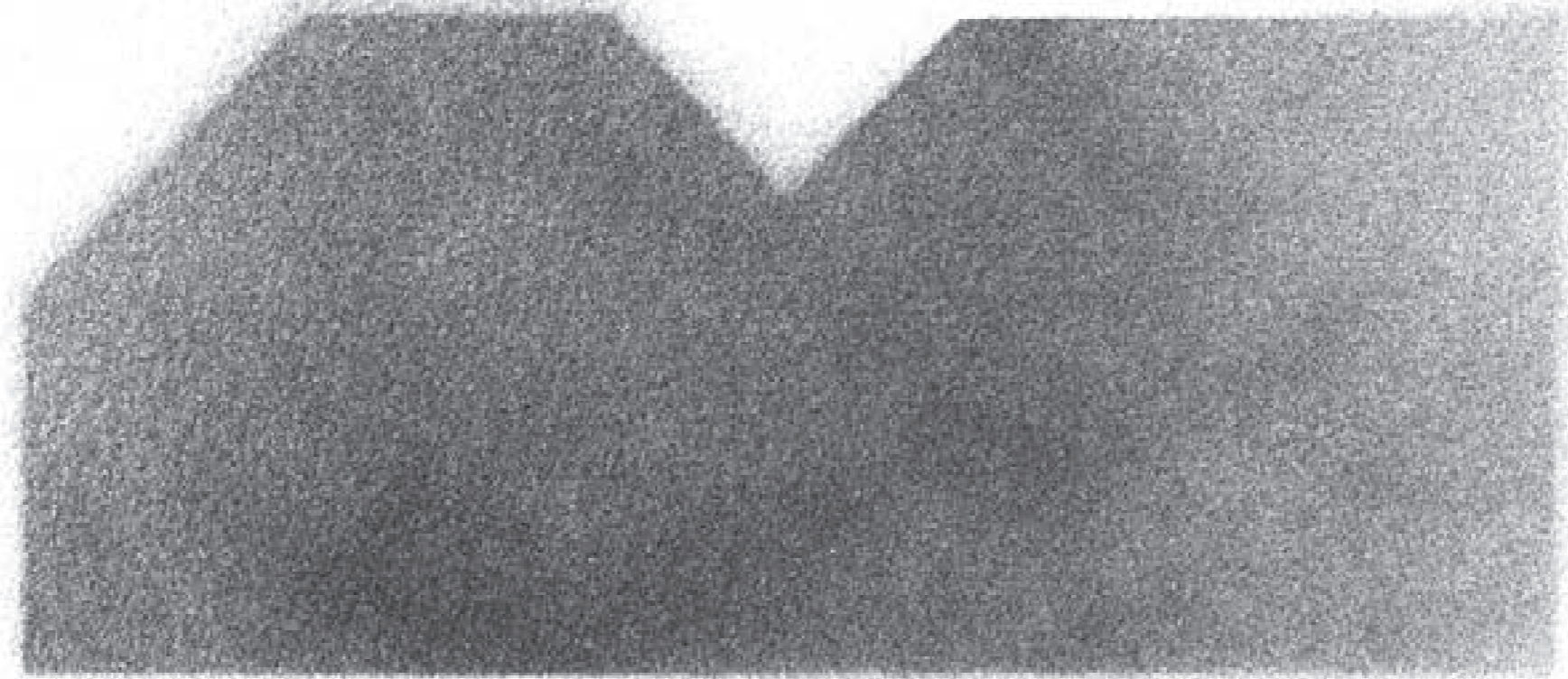
The sales department was always thought of as the engine room.

After all, they're the ones responsible for revenue, right?

In the new B2B world, sales are the tires.
The rubber hitting the road.

But marketing is the real engine.

Here are three reasons why...



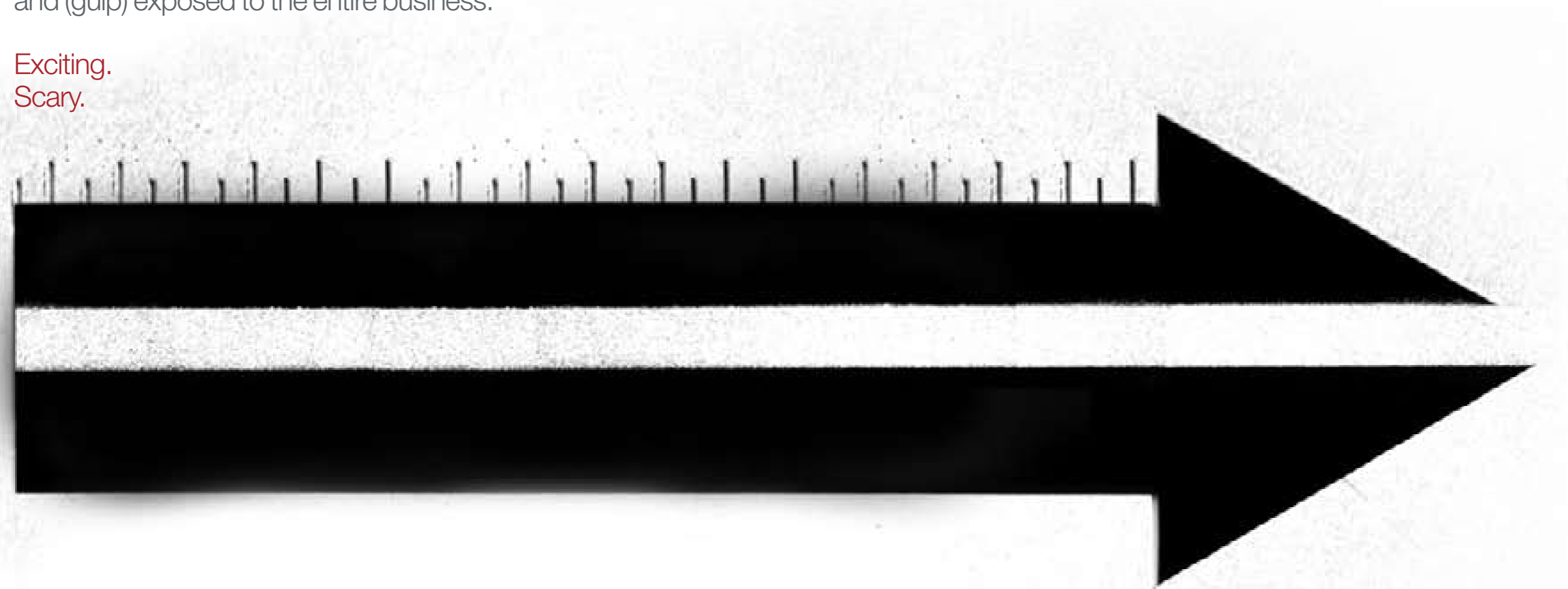
1. You own the pipeline.

The sales team owns the sales funnel.
But you feed the top of their funnel.
So you own your company's revenue pipe.

The success or failure of your company depends entirely on the quality and quantity of sales-ready leads you generate.

And both metrics – quality and quantity – can now be easily tracked and (gulp) exposed to the entire business.

Exciting.
Scary.



2. You own innovation.

Your sales people spend most of their time with customers.

If they're good, they'll bring back valuable insights from these relationships.

Insights that will make your products better.

But the sales people won't bring back the innovation that will turn your market upside down. They're welded to the existing market paradigm. (Clayton Christensen nailed this dynamic in [The Innovator's Dilemma](#).)

If you think your job is to flog whatever products your development people come up with, go back to the page about marcoms.

The marketing job, as Theodore Levitt defined it, is "a tightly integrated effort to discover, create, arouse, and satisfy customer needs." (His [Marketing Myopia](#) is something of a sacred text around the Velocity campus.)

It's your job to listen to the whole market (not just your customers) and bring back ideas that will make money.

3. You own information.

Information has always been a part of every B2B product. Now, it's often the most important part of the product (if not the whole thing).

It follows that information has also become the most important differentiator in competitive markets. And marketers are the Masters of Information. (There's a brilliant book related to this called [Information Rules](#) by Shapiro and Varian. It was written before the Internet took off but is just as fresh and relevant today).

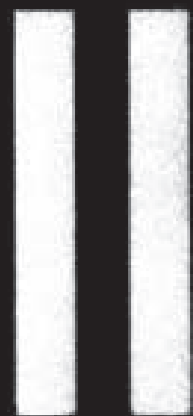
These three new realities make you the single most important person in your company.

The marketing pipeline (and the accountability it implies); marketing as innovation driver; and marketing as information generator.

Get these three dimensions right and there's literally nothing you can't accomplish.

In short: it's time to raise your sights.

To be more ambitious for your marketing than you've ever been before.



What's really changed.

The new marketing mindset
The new B2B buying path
The new B2B competition



The internet did indeed change everything for B2B marketers, but not for the reasons everyone attributes to it.

It's not because it unleashed social media. Social media is just a vector for your ideas. A cool vector but not as earth-shaking as the people who live in it claim.

And it's not because of the web. The web is a humbly powerful thing. But old-style marketers can and do still use it to host what are essentially brochures.

And it's not because of email. Email is magic. A direct response medium with almost zero cost or delay. But for the vast majority of B2B marketers, email marketing is little more than spam. Look at your in box.

So why did the Internet change everything? Because it created a new way of thinking...

The new marketing mindset.

The internet uncovered what was always great about the best marketing – the science behind it – and stuck a turbo-charger inside. A few examples:

Zero-latency campaigns

Think about the power of a campaign that you can dream up on Monday morning, execute over lunch and start measuring by tea time.

The viable micro-niche

The global fraternity of Left-handed Purchasing Professionals in the Heating, Ventilation and Air-conditioning Industry could not exist without the internet. A niche that previously could not be targeted effectively can now be laser-cut from the surrounding dead wood. Segmentation used to be a blunt instrument. Now it's a scalpel.

X-ray transparency

Direct response guys always prided themselves on their accountability. Now we're all direct response guys and the transparency of our campaigns is shocking.

We're all wearing those amazing X-Ray specs advertised in the back of the comic books. We now see EVERYTHING that happens in our campaigns.

Midget power

Marketing budgets used to separate the leaders from the also-rans. The internet has taken away the money excuse. Today, tiny companies can and do market circles around their giant competitors.

The digital palette

You used to have print and face-to-face communication. Now you have audio, video, flash, search, mind maps, eBooks, slideshares, prezis, pecha kuchas, communities, micro-blogs, widgets, feeds, pay-per-click, backlinks and iPads. You've gone from black and white marketing to 3D technicolor.



The new B2B buying path.

This one is talked about a lot but it doesn't feel like it's really sunk in in most B2B marketing departments.

The new buyer starts their road to a purchase in a different place and takes a new series of steps before the purchase order gets issued.

The steps include a search engine, several visits to an industry forum, a few downloaded eBooks, maybe a question or two posted in a LinkedIn group or an informal Q&A with peers on Twitter...

B2B Buyers today move at their own pace. You need to be prepared to help them move to the next stage, but ready to sell when they're ready to buy.

If you sit back and do what you've always done, you're dramatically reducing your chances of making even the shortlist, much less the sale.

Because, in the new B2B buying path, the vendor comes in later and carries much less weight than ever before (the good news: both are variables you can influence).

The role of risk.

Today's B2B buyer is extremely risk-sensitive. You need to leverage trust-builders into each step of the journey (case studies, awards, data, testimonials, analyst support, proof points...).

The new B2B competition.

Shit. Other marketers have noticed all this stuff too. The terrible thing about B2B marketing today is that, while it gives you a head-spinning degree of power, speed and agility, it also gives the exact same power, speed and agility to your competitors.

And not just your direct competitors (the pesky brands that keep popping up wherever you pop up, looking for same budgets, responding to the same RFQs and going to the same events).

Today, you're still competing with these bastards. But they're the least of your problems.

Today, you're competing with every other company, technology, solution and strategy that even tangentially addresses the same people you're talking to.

You're also competing against every other marketer who has anything at all to offer the people you most need to reach. Not just in their business lives but in their personal lives as well.

This is all true because, before you can even hope to compete for their budgets, you have to compete for something much more precious, more scarce and more fiercely defended.

You have to compete for their attention.



The real challenge.

The Battle for Attention:
Making it through the WIIFM filter.

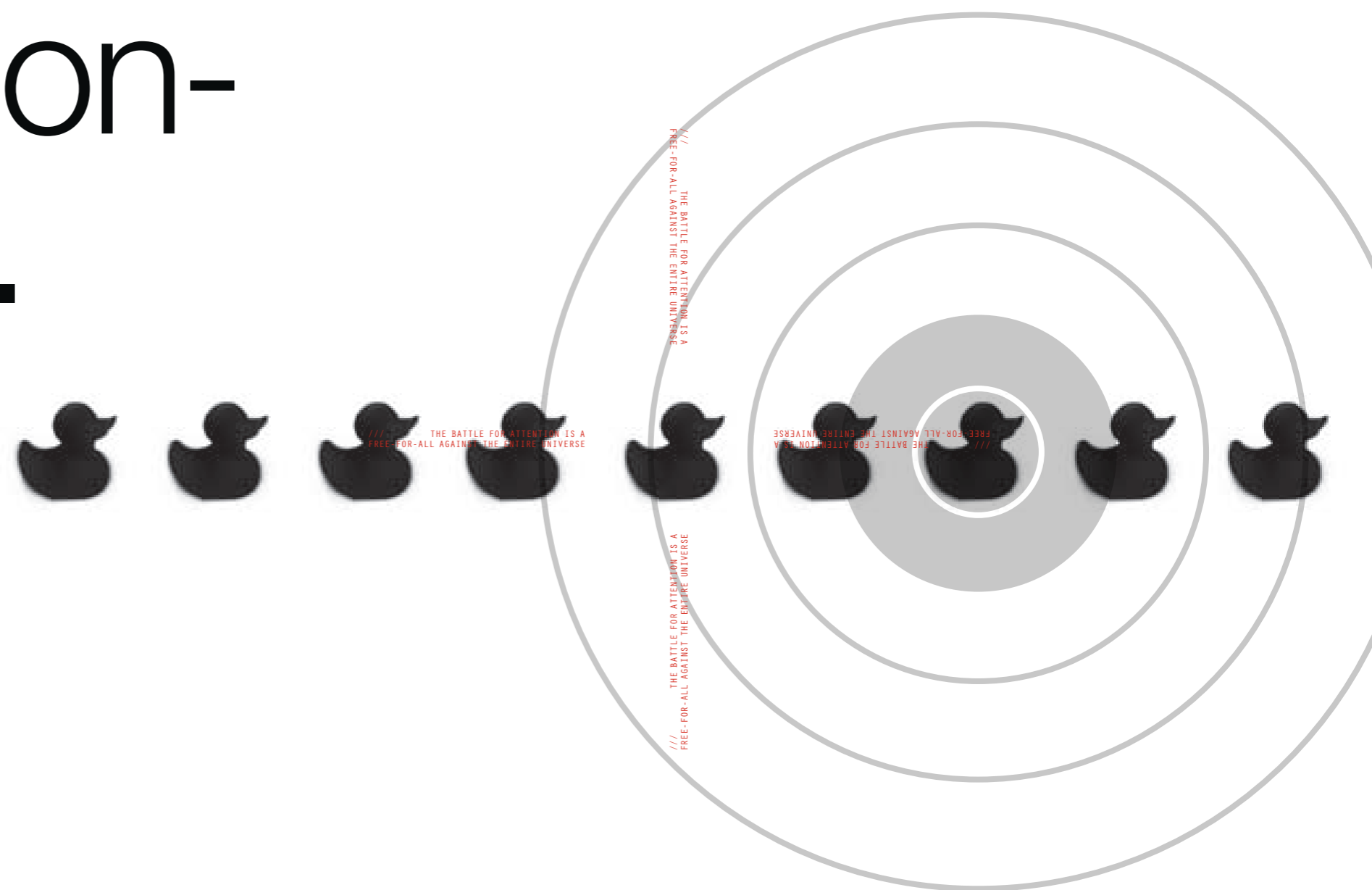


Buyer Attention Deficit Disorder and Fiction-Based Marketing.

Like everything else in the new B2B marketing, the Battle for Attention has always been there. But today, post-Google, it has scaled up from a skirmish against a few other known players to a manic free-for-all against the entire universe.

Think of that harrowing first scene in Saving Private Ryan. The one where a few dozen hand-held cameras capture the sheer, psychotic terror of the Normandy landing. That scene is a good metaphor for the (thankfully bloodless) B2B Battle for Attention. But, unlike that scene in Saving Private Ryan, the (thankfully metaphorical) bullets are not just coming from the beach. They're coming from above, below, behind and from the sides.

Long story short: you're not on the beach yet.
You're in deep water.



The vast majority of B2B marketers are still playing yesterday's game.

They're still marketing to an imagined audience that is eager to receive their next press release or newsletter. An audience that will stop what they're doing to learn about the 'all new' version 6.2.

This imaginary audience is just that. A fiction.

Eight years ago, you could afford fiction-based marketing. Today, you can't.

Eight years ago, vendors like you were a primary source of information for isolated, fact-starved buyers. Today, you're down near the bottom of the credibility league (unless you earn your way up the list).

Eight years ago, you could pretty much count on getting a sliver of attention for free. Today, you don't even get a glance much less the time it takes to deliver a clever headline.

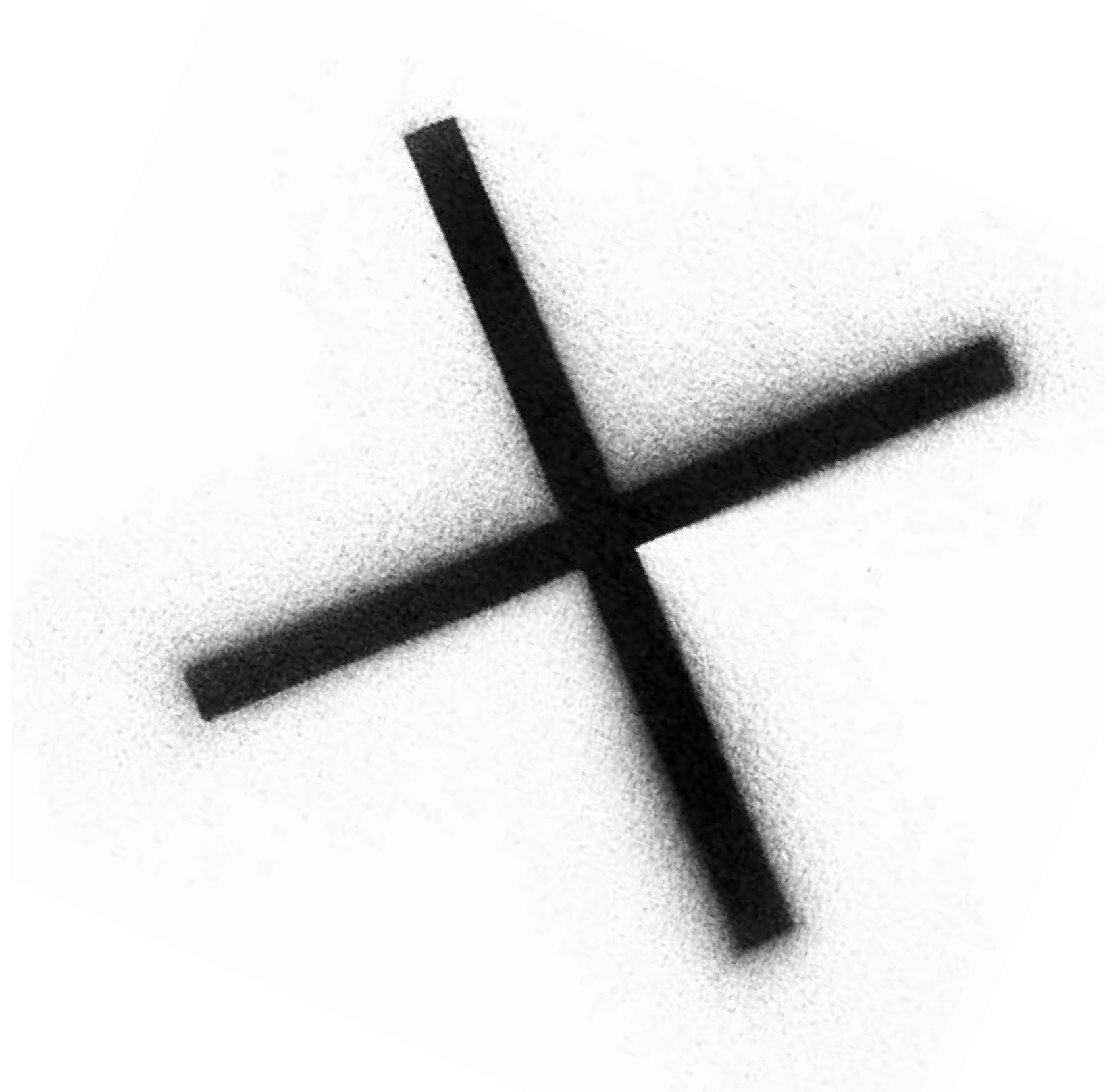
Today, the buyer's attention (like everyone else's in this media-saturated life) has been shattered into a million little micro-slivers.

And the only way to get even a single one of these micro-slivers is to bloody well earn it.

Earning every glance.

If marketing is earning the right to sell, then the Battle for Attention is where you earn the right to market.

Before you can even ask yourself, “How can I convince these people to do what I need them to do?” you have to ask yourself, “How can I get these people to stop, put down their iPads/Blackberries/3-D goggles, and listen to me?”

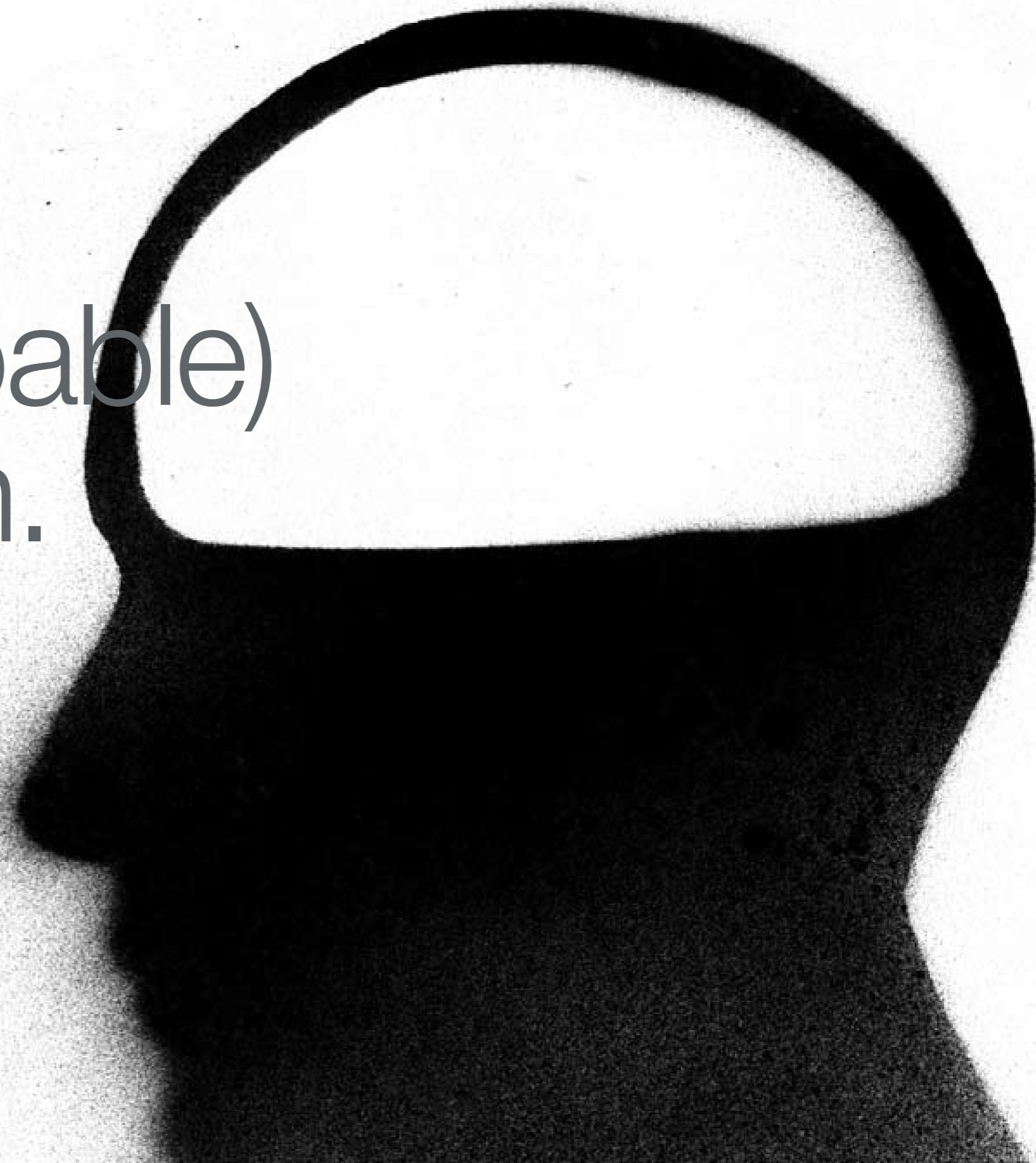


The WIIFM filter: a hare-brained (but spookily probable) theory of the brain.

There's only really one way to blast through all the planet's Info-Gunk and get someone's attention.

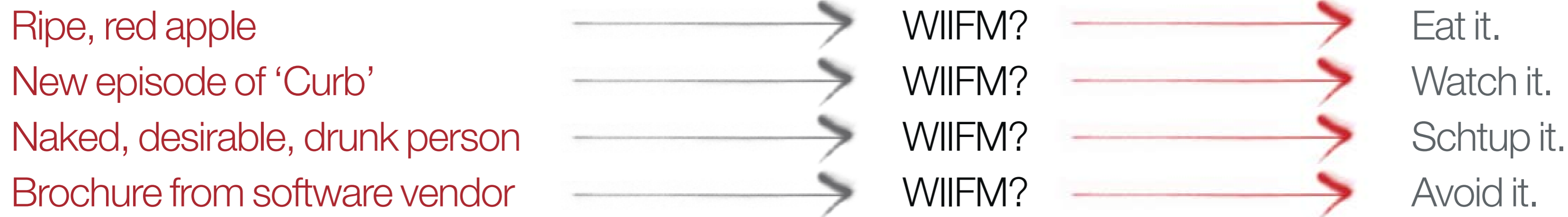
You need a really, really good answer to the question that all of us ask ourselves 36 times per second as we scan the world around us:

'What's In It For Me?'



It ain't species-flattering but it certainly seems to be the way we approach life.

Our senses grab stuff. Our brain sends the input to the WIIFM Clearing Centre
(take a left at the amygdala) and generates an instant response.
We decide to act on the response or move on:



(See where this is going?)

How to use the only two things you have in your kit bag to get past the WIIFM filter.

You've found an ingenious way to drop your latest eBook or white paper on to the foot of a prospect. They look down. The WIIFM filter kicks in.

You now have 6-14 micro-seconds to deliver one of two signals (or, if you can pull it off, both):

“This will be useful to you.”

or

“This will be entertaining.”

How do you signal these things?

You don't have much time or space.

For an eBook like this, for instance, you have four main tools:

Your title

Does it stop your busy target reader? Would you want to read it?

Your sub-title

Does it promise anything?

The design of your cover

Does it signal 'boring slog' or 'quick read'?

Your landing page

Does it sell the contents hard? Does it demonstrate the fast, fun readability it promises? Any testimonials or independent evidence of value?

Any massive forms to fill out before getting the goods?

You don't get much more than these limited tools in your attempts to get over the WIFM filter. Maximise the power of all four and you just might earn that download.

If so, congratulations. Now the hard work starts.



Five B2B Imperatives.

The things you need to do to win the Battle for Attention and survive the WIFM filter.



1. Get a World View.

Before you can sell a product or service, you need to sell a world view. But very few marketers spend any time at all clarifying their world view.

What is a world view and why is it so important?

Your world view is a compelling interpretation of the challenges and opportunities that your buyers face. It describes their past, present and future in a way that leads inevitably to your solution.

Your world view is the environment in which your marketing lives.

Everything you do and say must be consistent with it.

Your world view has to be built on reality. It's a story that makes sense.

If people buy your world view, you're on the inside track to a sales engagement. If they reject it, they won't be progressing any further down the neck of your beautifully-engineered sales funnel.

Game over.

2. Expose your beliefs.

Simon Sinek gave an [inspiring TED talk](#) recently about the power of a company's beliefs. The essence of Simon's talk:

People don't buy what you do they buy why you do it.

(and then justify their choice with all that rational stuff you gave them).

He bases this on brain research that shows that the part of the brain responsible for our rational processes (and language) is not the part of the brain that drives decisions (which are guided by a completely different thing – the limbic system).

In other words, when we throw features and functions at people, we can't change their behaviour. But when we start with beliefs, we light up the part of the brain that drives decisions and behaviour. Then people can rationalise their feelings of trust and loyalty with the feature/function stuff.

Great leaders (like Martin Luther King) and great brands (like Apple) expose their beliefs right out front.

What does your company passionately believe?
Have you told anyone about it lately?

3. It's all about chops.

A convincing world view – and a convincing marketing campaign or communication – is always based on your company's 'chops'.

Chops is a shorter and much more fun way of saying 'expertise, experience and authority'.

Chops is about virtuosity.

Andres Segovia had chops (out whatever Spanish for the 'wazoo' is).
Justin Bieber? Please.

Chops is genuine, hard-earned credibility.

Nelson Mandela: chops.
Your average politician: don't get me started.

Chops is highly specialised.

When it comes to routing packets, Cisco has chops.
When it comes to routing packages, FedEx has chops.
When it comes to routing passengers: neither knows squat.

Chops is magnetic.

People listen to someone with chops.
People drift away from someone with none.

If all the arts of seduction have succeeded in getting people into the theatre, chops is what keeps them in the stalls, listening to your song. It answers the killer question that underlies all of your marketing:
'Why should I believe you?'



Shameless Plug:

'Why should I believe you?' is the third question in our Holy Trinity of B2B Marketing. To find out what the first two are, and for a bloody good night in, give it a go.

Got chops? Get it in your marketing.

If your company doesn't have chops in something relevant, it will fail in very short order. You have, at best, a few weeks to try to correct this fatal problem.

My guess is that your company does have chops where it matters. That, somewhere in the corridors or cube farms, are people who really, really know what they're talking about.

Your most important job as a marketer is to get almost embarrassingly close to these people. Spend so much time with them that folks start to whisper. Mine their minerals. Harvest their wheat. Pick their brains clean.

They have what you need: the insight that makes people take your marketing seriously.



Shameless Plug II:

We go into the sources of your chops in our best-selling (well, it's free) [B2B Content Marketing Workbook](#).

4. The primacy of the idea.

This diatribe would not be complete without a plea for all B2B marketers to close their Tweet Decks and tear themselves away from their LinkedIn groups for long enough to actually think once in a while.

Don't get me wrong: we love social media as a listening post, a community builder and vector for content.

But the key word in the term 'social media' is 'media'. It's a medium for something. And that thing is ideas. If you have a good idea, social and other media will help spread it like wildfire.

If you don't have an idea at all, social media will expose this in less than 140 characters, 'hash tag' included.

B2B marketing is a profession of ideas. If you leave this rather loopy, digressive rant with only one impulse, I hope it's to go away and generate some.

5. Think beyond digital.

While the Internet changed B2B marketing forever, it also distorted it.

As marketers, we didn't just make a place for it at the table, we made it the whole enchilada.

Now we're entering a post-digital era (I know, I know, you haven't even mastered the digital era yet). An era when online and offline work together, spark off each other and start to create deeper, more integrated engagements with prospects and customers.

The evidence for this is everywhere, from the recent Gold Lions at Cannes (like the [Nike Chalkbot](#)) to the Volkswagen '[Fun Theory](#)' campaign. And it's coming to B2B too.

Andreas Dahlqvist of DDB Stockholm said it nicely:

"It's about not thinking in terms of digital and non-digital but merging the two. Doing away with silo thinking... asking how do you extend a digital experience into the real world?"



Six B2B staples.

The stuff we all need to get good at right now.

People often ask us, 'Okay smart-arses, if you're such experts, what are the most important weapons in the new B2B arsenal?'

Actually, people never seem to ask this. But if they did, we'd be ready with an impressive, six-point answer that goes a little bit like this...

1. Content Marketing.

You know that old chestnut that goes ‘Half my marketing budget is wasted – I just don’t know which half’?

Well, content marketing is the half that isn’t wasted.
Full stop.

And you know when we said marketing is the new engine of your company?
Well, content is the fuel.

This is no longer a sideline for B2B.
This is mainstream.

“Content Marketing is turning your insight and advice into campaigns that change people’s minds and incite action.”
From the B2B Content Marketing Workbook

If you’re a B2B marketer (and, let’s face it, who else would be reading this?) you don’t just need to get good at Content Marketing.
You have to get great at it.



2. Analytics.

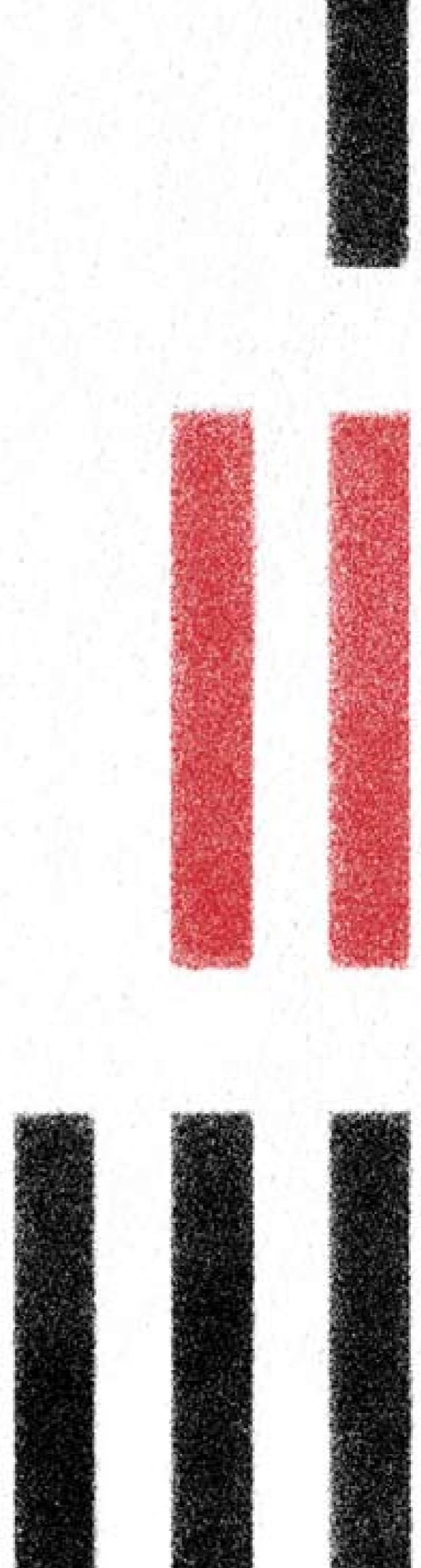
You can't play in the digital sandbox without measuring everything that moves and 62% of the things that don't move.

If you haven't really got your head around analytics yet, stop reading eBooks about anything else and start reading eBooks about analytics.

Analytics makes your marketing better, lets you constantly improve results and gives you the proof you need to defend and grow your budgets.

Without it, you're flying blind.

Determine your killer metrics – traffic, time on site, pages viewed, conversions, whatever – and track them mercilessly.



3. A/B Testing.

This is a subset of analytics but it's worth breaking out.
Digital marketing lets you test assumptions instead of just assuming them.

Your flimsy hunches can now be backed up by rock-solid data.
And those arguments about the colour of the landingpage headline
can now be resolved conclusively.

A/B testing is the place to start.
Multivariate testing (if you've got the traffic volumes) is the next step up.

Why wouldn't you do this almost every day?



4. Lead nurturing.

The most significant development in B2B marketing since the Internet seems to have snuck in behind everyone's backs. Now we're all tripping over each other trying to get good at it.

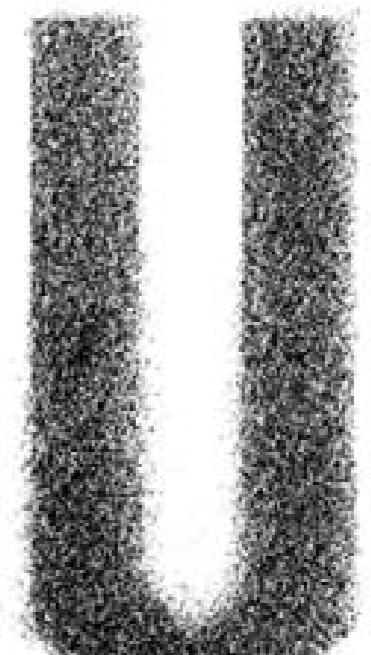
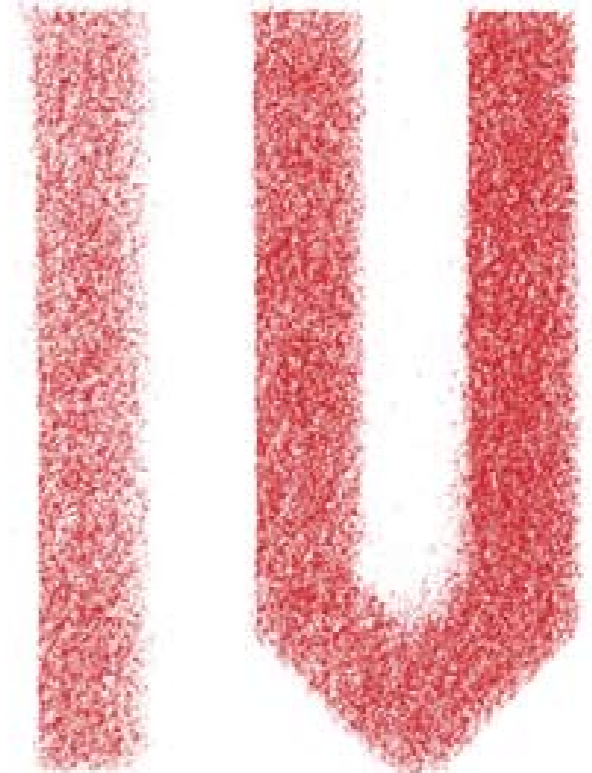
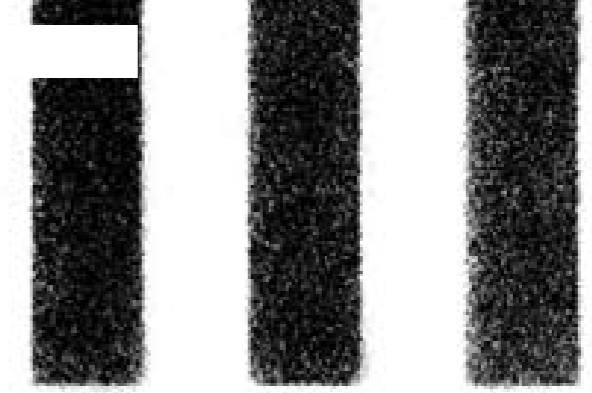
Get good at it. This is the mythical Golden Link between Marketing and Sales that was written about in the Upanishads and the Bible and stuff.

In the new B2B world, not doing lead nurturing is simply malpractice.

Lead Nurturing defined:

"Lead nurturing is the process of building relationships with qualified prospects regardless of their timing to buy, with the goal of earning their business when they are ready."

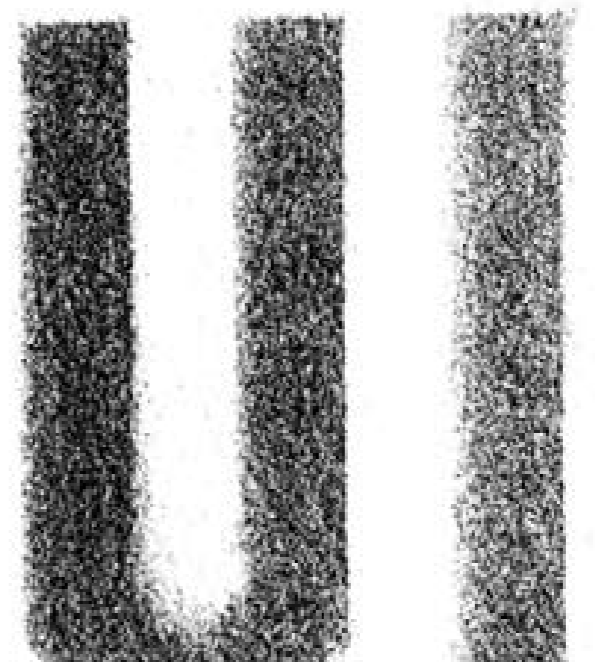
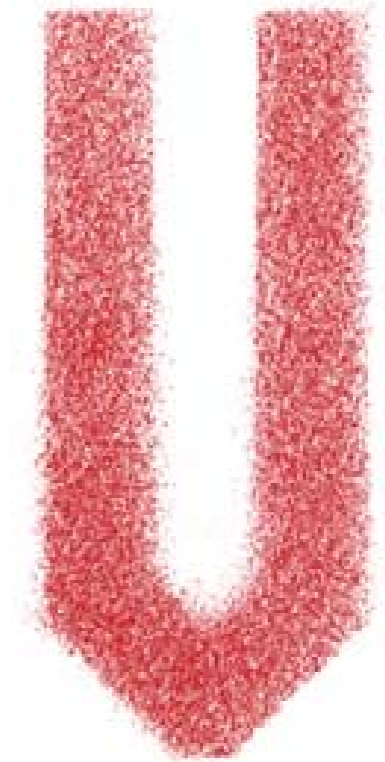
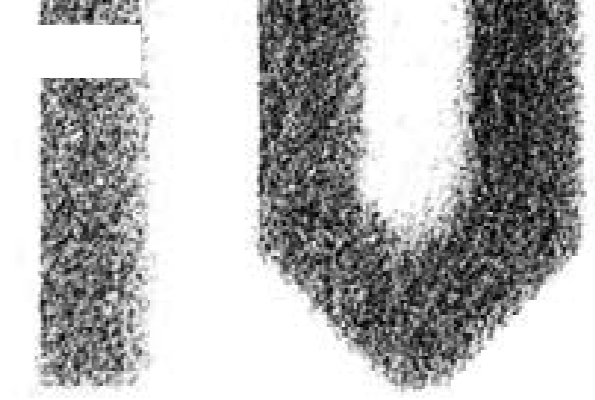
[The Definitive Guide to Lead Nurturing](#)
(by Marketo -- and designed by Velocity!)



5. Search.

Research has shown us over and over again that just about every B2B purchase starts with a web search somewhere.

We all got pretty good at search over the last couple years. But some of you out there have kept learning and become very good at it. This is an unfair advantage that we all need to work to take away. Search marketing is the foundation on which all else is built.



6. Community.

We refuse to make Social Media one of our B2B staples because it would lump us in with all those ‘Social Media Ninjas’ out there and, enthusiastic as they are, they do tend to give off that unmistakable bandwagon smell.

But community is a new B2B staple and social media is indeed a great way to foster it. We should all be building communities (if only so we can snub the ninjas).



And one free bonus staple: Mobile.

Mobile is the juggernaut that we're all trying very hard to pretend we don't see.

The B2C world can already feel the first tremors. And while B2B is ahead of consumer marketing in many things (like lead nurturing), we're going to be a bit later to this party.

But that doesn't mean you can ignore it now. The killer B2B mobile apps are ready to be born now. But they won't just be about information and entertainment – they'll be about utility.

Start thinking, “What might my buyers need when they're out and about and how can I provide it?”.

One example: a virus alert service from an anti-virus vendor. Timely. Useful. Actionable. Branded.

What the hell
was that all about?

Here's where we've just been together.

We've seen that this is an incredibly exciting but also rather scary time to be a B2B marketer. And that you can either step up to the challenge and climb its associated learning curves, or sit this one out and make pretty product brochures.

And that you, the B2B marketer, own the sales pipeline and the company's innovation and the information that is the lifeblood of the business – and this makes you the engine of the entire company.

And not just that 'the Internet has changed everything' but also the kinds of things it has changed (microniches, digital palette, yadda yadda yadda).

And that it's time to drop the childish illusion that anyone cares about you and start telling people what's in it for them.

And that five of the most important things you need right now are a World View, Beliefs, Chops, Ideas and a 'Beyond Digital' perspective.

And that once you've got these things, you need to get really good at content marketing, analytics, testing, lead nurturing, search and community. While keeping an eye on mobile. Whew.

That's our Manifesto.

We fully expect it to appear quaint in a week or so, but we thought it was still worth capturing for people who enjoy thinking about this kind of thing (people like us).

Now can we ask you to do something for us?

There's a [post on our blog](#) that announces this Manifesto.

Please go there and tell us what you think.

We really want to know (even if it's not especially flattering).

We will judge the success of this piece not by the number of downloads we get but by the number of comments – and we're aiming for 50 (a new personal best).

So please: [tweeting this](#) is fantastic (and appreciated).

But [comments](#) are golden.

Thanks.



Thanks.

To these nice people (and top B2B marketers) for their valuable advice and input:

Ambal Balakrishnan twitter.com/ambal

Dianna Huff twitter.com/diannahuff

Michele Linn twitter.com/michelelinn

Billy Mitchell twitter.com/billymitchell1

Joe Pulizzi twitter.com/juntajoe

Stephanie Tilton twitter.com/StephanieTilton

Jeremy Victor twitter.com/jeremyvictor

If you aren't reading their blogs and following their tweets, you're missing out.

About Velocity.

Velocity is that hot little B2B marketing agency you've heard so much about.

We help our clients develop compelling stories, then drive those stories to market in interesting, innovative ways.

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