Contents

Product Marketing

Getting products in front of customers
and making sure they sell

product

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Welcome
Leading the way for product managers/marketers

Marketing products sounds reasonably straightforward.

But, once you start to explore what it means, you find it can require a vast range of knowledge and skills. It can mean being a wizard on social media, a savvy project manager, or an expert on the customers and competition in a particular market.

So to keep things manageable, the focus of this Journal is on what we call inbound and outbound product marketing. Inbound marketing techniques help you 'get found' by people who'll be interested in what you offer. Outbound marketing techniques push your sales message out in the hope it hits people who'll care. We recognize that in some companies, the role is wider. Your job might include market analysis and proposition development, but these are topics we've covered in other Journals.

Our aim is to provide guidance, tips, and advice – we hope we've achieved it!

Who's who?

The *Product Management Journal* is published by Product Focus as an independent publication for product managers with technology-based products. Product Focus was founded and is run by Ian Lunn (top) and Andrew Dickenson.

The founders continue to deliver many of Product Focus's training courses and reviews alongside their team of senior consultants.

To get all our previous journals, and receive the latest copy, sign-up at **www.productfocus.com**

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Product marketing

What is it?

Is there an industry-standard definition?

Well, like the mythical unicorn, you can look for it, but you'll never find it. What makes a definition challenging is that the product marketing role is different from company to company.

In smaller companies, the role may not exist, and so the product marketing activities are picked up by someone in Marketing or by a product manager.

In larger companies, there may be product marketing people for each country or region feeding their understanding of local markets into a central function.

A Product Marketing department may be part of Marketing, Sales, Product Management or completely separate. And even then, the activities that are done by the function will vary from business to business.

So bearing that in mind, let's start with some simple models.

Product marketing vs. product management?

One view is that product management is about building products, and product marketing is about helping to sell them. The analogy is of getting products onto the shelf and then getting them off again. It's simple, but it's not the whole story. The key part that's missing is that both functions have to understand markets and

Getting products on-the-shelf
Product Management

Getting products off-the-shelf
Product Marketing

Fig.1 On and off-the-shelf

customers really well to do a good job.

Another view is that product management knows what to say about the product, and product marketing knows how best to communicate

the messages to the market, e.g., how to do effective email marketing, which exhibitions to go to, and how to craft compelling copy, but we see this straying into the area of market communications. (See Fig. 2.)

And yet another view is that product marketers focus on specific market segments while product managers focus on their product – which may be sold across a range of different markets. (See Fig. 3.)

This model gives responsibility to product marketing to understand their local market (their customers, competitors, regulatory situation, etc.) and input this into product management. In turn, product management must try to develop a single product that can work across all markets. The goal is to get the economies of scale and profitability of the 'build once, sell many times' model. Local product teams may then need to 'localize' products to fit their market, for example, changing aspects such as pricing and language.

Product Management

What to say

↓

How to say it

Product Marketing

Fig.2 Experts on what to say and how to say it?

Fig.3 Product / market matrix organization
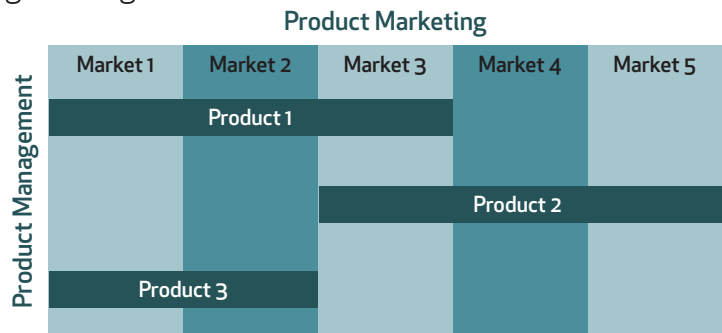
Product marketing vs. marketing?

Marketing comes in different flavors. Corporate marketing that promotes the company brand and reputation. Field marketing that does promotion in local markets. Marketing communications (Marcoms) uses a range of techniques to talk to the market. And product marketing that handles the marketing around specific products.

When companies first start, they typically set up a marketing department that covers all of these. As companies grow, particularly if they have big complex products, they may set up a product marketing team. This team has the time and focus to build detailed product and market knowledge and produce the marketing materials required. In bigger companies, the product marketing team is often supported by the company's marketing department or external specialist agencies – with expertise in areas such as Public Relations (PR), Events, CRM (Customer Relationship Management), and social media.

BALANCE

Who has ownership for the success of the product?

In most companies, Product Marketing is responsible for the activities associated with selling the product. They typically get involved once the development process is underway and lead the planning of the launch program. The product management/product marketing relationship can be described as a 'partnership of peers.' Ownership for the success of the product is split between both areas.

In some companies, the product marketing role is much bigger. They create the high-level requirements for the product based on their understanding of the market and then drive the promotion of the product once launched. Product Management acts as a delivery function. In this scenario, Product Marketing is typically the business owner of the product and is accountable for its success.

In other companies, Product Management is in charge. They take input from Product Marketing, existing customers, and market research. They then balance this commercial view (see Fig. 4) with an understanding of the technical, operational, and user experience needs. With this 'helicopter' view across all aspects of the product, they can make balanced trade-offs on what's best for the business to drive the product forward.
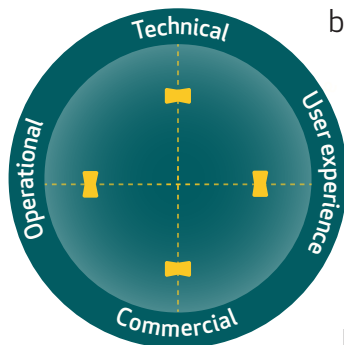
Specialist skills and experience needed

There are many different tasks that need to be done in any product-based business, and in any business of size, there is too much for one person to do. Also, each task requires specialist skills and experience to do well. So these product tasks are often split between various people – some who sit within Product Management or Product Marketing and others who sit in different parts of the business. For example, you might have prices set by pricing specialists, sales support materials created by Product Marketing, and requirements written by Product Owners working in Development.

To help you understand who does what, we have developed our Product Activities Framework.

Fig.4 A balanced view

The Product Activities Framework

The Product Activities Framework shows the 20 different product management activities that should be going on in any company with products.

All these activities should be happening somewhere in the company. Deciding who owns each of these activities in your business can be a good way of sorting out the split between product management and product marketing.

You can see the detail of what each activity includes on our website.

Strategic Product Activities
-working out what the right product is for the business

Insight	Analysis	Direction
Market research	Segmentation	Product & portfolio strategy
Customer research	Propositions	Vision & evangelizing
Competitive research	Positioning	Roadmaps
Product performance	Business cases	Pricing

Inbound Activities
-helping the business to deliver the product

- Discovery & design
- Requirements
- Project & partner management
- Operational readiness & trials

Outbound Activities
-helping the business to sell the product

- Launch
- Product promotion
- Sales & marketing content
- Sales support

Fig.5 The Product Activities Framework

Conclusion

Product marketing is set up in different ways. How it's structured and what it does varies based on the company size, the markets in which the company operates, and the skills and preferences of the individuals involved.

However, in our experience, to be successful, three things are really important…

1. You need to understand who owns each product activity in your business, so everyone knows what they need to do. This ensures the process of building and selling products works smoothly end-to-end.

2. You need to understand who has ultimate ownership for the success of each product. This helps ensure that trade-offs, such as delaying a product launch in one market to ensure all markets have the same version, are made in the best interests of the company as a whole.

3. And finally, you need a detailed understanding of your customers, prospects, and markets. This insight helps ensure products are well-positioned, customers want to buy them, and sales teams have what they need to sell.

"When you go to a new company, always ask what Product Management and Product Marketing do. In my experience, the role may be 'sliced and diced' across several functions."
Stefano Maifreni, Founder, Eggcelerate

The basics
Right message, right people, right place, right time

You may well be aware of the wide range of tools that can be used to market products. And, there's a temptation to dive right in and get started – after all, if it's worth doing, then why would we wait?

But, before launching into product marketing activities, it's worth taking a step back to ensure your marketing will be effective. You need to get the basics right.

> "It's key to have the right approach to marketing campaigns. For example, knowing your target audience and researching their means of consuming marketing information is a vital element but often overlooked."
> **James Jarvis, Product Manager, Safe Computing**

First things first

What are you trying to achieve? Your objective is to get the attention of prospects, and clearly and persuasively communicate the value of your proposition. And, if you do it well, then you'll help them make the right decision … which, of course, is to buy your product.

That means doing some work before you start revving the marketing engine. First, you need to understand who to talk to…

Business to Business (B2B)

In B2B, there are multiple audiences to consider within a single customer's organization.

There is the *economic buyer* who cares about business benefits such as how the product will make or save the company money. This is the person who typically signs the cheques.

Then there are the *end-user buyers*. The person, people or team who are going to use your product to do some part of their job. They care about how your
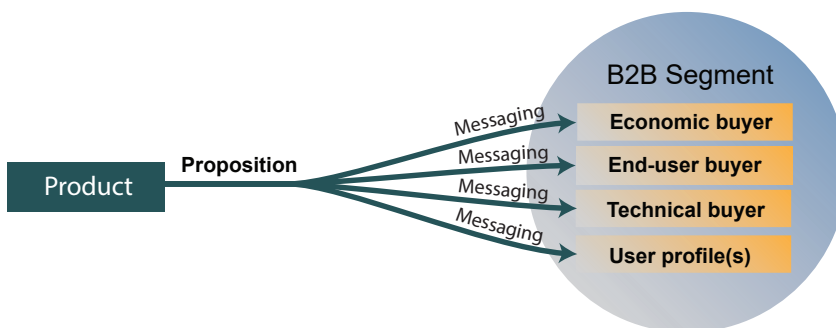

Fig.6 Multiple audiences in B2B

product will make their life better and how easy it will be to learn and use. There may be multiple user profiles you need to worry about, e.g., the people who use your product day-to-day and their management who want reports.

Finally, there is the *technology buyer* who wants to know about the product's technical details. They care about setup, support, and system pre-requisites. This would typically be someone in IT.

It's important to think about the messaging to each of these audiences and whether it varies for the different market segments that are being targeted. And remember, it's not just product features that customers care about, but the whole proposition, e.g., price, support, T's & C's, and the future roadmap.
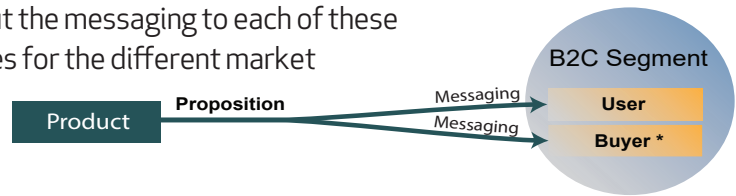

Fig.7 B2C audiences

Business to Consumer (B2C)

In B2C, usually, the user is the buyer. For example, you buy the apps that you'll be using on your phone.

However, this is not always true. Selling a TV may require a proposition that addresses ease of use for the whole family and advanced functionality, e.g., internet access, for the enthusiast who's making the purchase.

The buying cycle

A customer typically goes through a standard set of steps when buying a product. The comments around the outside of Fig. 8 show what we as vendors need to focus on.

The majority of customers in both B2B and B2C will take themselves round the early stages of the buying cycle without any proactive involvement from us. This is as long as you provide access to the information they're looking for. And, of course, the
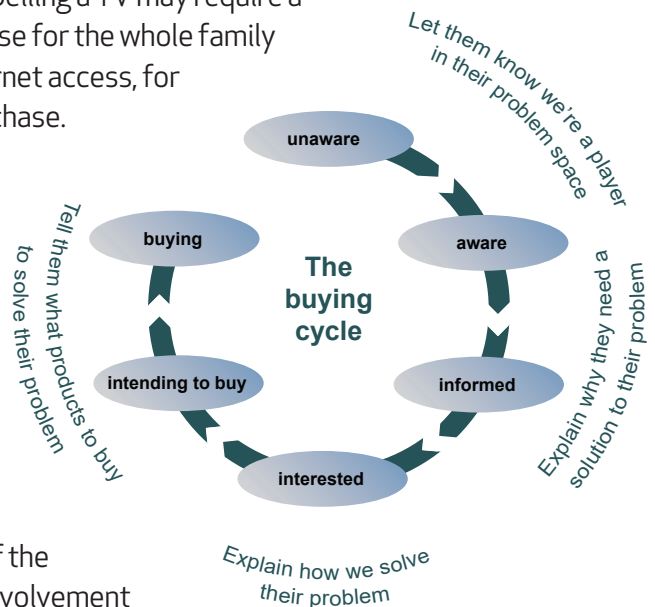

Fig.8 The buying cycle

TESTING

first place most people look is on the web – so it's very important the product information on your website is up to date.
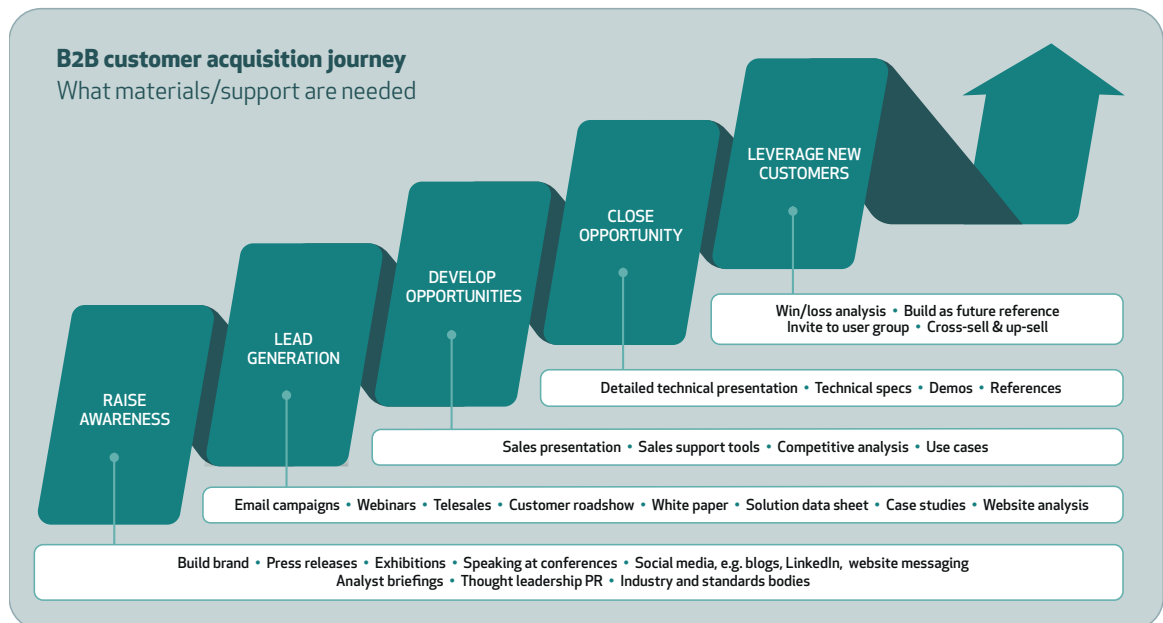
Testing the message

You should also have a way of testing which messages will resonate or have worked the best.

This should include talking directly with customers and prospects. It's likely to include getting feedback from your sales channels. If you have the budget, you could pay an agency to do some market research. Online, you can A/B test the effectiveness of two different web pages at the same time – though a common challenge for infrequently accessed pages is having the volume of visitors needed to give statistically relevant results.

The customer acquisition journey in B2B

Fig. 9 shows the typical stages involved in acquiring a new B2B customer. It maps onto the buying cycle but describes things from the vendor's perspective. It also shows the typical marketing tools and materials used at different stages of the journey.

Fig.9 B2B Customer acquisition journey

B2B customer acquisition journey
What materials/support are needed

RAISE AWARENESS

LEAD GENERATION

DEVELOP OPPORTUNITIES

CLOSE OPPORTUNITY

LEVERAGE NEW CUSTOMERS

Win/loss analysis • Build as future reference
Invite to user group • Cross-sell & up-sell

Detailed technical presentation • Technical specs • Demos • References

Sales presentation • Sales support tools • Competitive analysis • Use cases

Email campaigns • Webinars • Telesales • Customer roadshow • White paper • Solution data sheet • Case studies • Website analysis

Build brand • Press releases • Exhibitions • Speaking at conferences • Social media, e.g. blogs, LinkedIn, website messaging
Analyst briefings • Thought leadership PR • Industry and standards bodies

A description of the many possible materials and activities are shown in the table at the end of this article. You will need to consider which are the best ones to engage with prospects at different times. Also, not every product can justify the cost of everything that could be done.

Creating a marketing machine

The goal is to create a product marketing machine that can take prospects through a journey, from being unaware of what you do to the point at which they buy from you.

You should be aiming to continually improve the effectiveness of your product marketing. For most channels, this translates into having some KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) to measure how you're doing and running a series of experiments to try and learn what to change to become more effective. This is particularly true with online channels, where the cost to change things is typically small.

However, our experience is that although it would be nice to be able to measure everything, we rarely have a perfect picture. Data is late or missing. A new competitor's proposition is unknown. Some new insights passed to you from a customer meeting contradict your established thinking. So you have to make your decisions based on a mix of data, anecdotal feedback, and gut feel.

Conclusion

Start with the basics. This means understanding who you're targeting, getting the messages right, and having a plan on which approaches to use and when.

If you don't, then you risk wasting your marketing budget – and all the money and hard work that went into creating the product.

"The dominance in mind share of digital marketing in all its various guises has caused some to forget the product marketing basics – it seems to me many smaller businesses, e.g., IT resellers for example – are so focused on 'digital' that they pay insufficient attention to the messaging and content, but wonder why they aren't getting the results they hoped for!"
**Nic Du Feu,
Product Marketer,
iOT Consulting**

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ACTIVITIES

This table shows all the different product marketing materials and activities we've seen used in companies we've worked with. Use it as a checklist to decide what to do for your product.

Material / activities	Description
Analyst briefings	Setting up a meeting with an industry analyst, e.g., Gartner, IDC, and preparing briefing notes for a Subject Matter Expert (SME) such as the product manager.
Brochure	Typically a printed or downloadable description of the product and why customers should buy, e.g. an A4 PDF document 2–8 pages long.
Build as future reference	Setting expectations with the customer that once everything is successful, they will provide a reference, e.g., a quote, short video, detailed case study.
Build brand	Activities such as advertising, sponsorship, Public Relations (PR) to build awareness or preference for the company brand, or of a sub-brand linked to a particular product or product range.
Case studies	Detailed descriptions of how specific customers are using and benefiting from the product. The format could be a white paper, section on the website, or short video. Ideally, customers are named, but sometimes their approval can be difficult to get.
Competitive analysis	A presentation for the sales channels explaining who the competition is, how we compare and how to compete.
Conferences	Looking for speaker slots or sponsorship opportunities at relevant conferences.
Cross-sell and up-sell presentation	A presentation for the sales channels that identifies opportunities to sell other things from the portfolio or to sell add-ons to the product initially sold.
Customer roadshow	A roadshow of presentations in different cities to different groups of customers.
Demos	A scripted demonstration of the product for the sales teams to use. Sometimes known as demo-in-a-box where everything is provided in an *easy to use* kit that can be taken to the customer's site.
Detailed technical presentation	Detailed presentation of how the product works and how it can be integrated into the customer environment. Aimed at the technical buyer of the potential customer.
Elevator pitch	Short 30-second explanation of your product and why customers should buy it.
Email campaigns	Series of targeted emails aimed at prospects to generate leads. CRM (Customer Relationship Management) and email marketing IT systems are needed to support this.
Exhibitions	Developing infrastructure and messaging for exhibitions, organizing Subject Matter Experts to attend, and arranging customer meetings.
Industry and standards bodies	Attending to meet potential customers but also to help understand and shape trends in the industry. Being visible and active in these forums can be excellent PR.
Infographic	Graphical representation of key data. Often used to promote thought leadership.
Press releases	Usually 'put out' when a product is first launched, or there is a major new release. Often timed to coincide with major industry events to maximize publicity.

Material / activities	Description
References	Pre-canned references that can be used to close a sale or influence an analyst. Or a process for the sales channels to link pre-vetted existing customers with prospects.
Sales presentation	Standard presentation used by sales channels to help sell the product. These are often created in a standard format and stored online in a central repository.
Sales training presentation	Presentation for the sales channel to train them on how best to sell the product. Often includes how to identify prospects, key messages, case studies, and more.
Sales support tools	Tools such as a sales crib sheet (the key selling points vs the competition) or value positioning statement. Another, the Return On Investment (ROI) spreadsheet, allows Sales to sit with a prospect and calculate their potential ROI from buying a product.
Social media	Using social media to promote the product or a thought leadership program, e.g., working with LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Pay-per-click (PPC) advertising.
Solution datasheet	Concise description of how the product provides a solution to specific problems.
Teaser video	Short video to generate interest in the product.
Technical spec	Detailed technical specification of the product aimed at the technical buyer.
Telesales	An internal team or agency who contacts prospects directly by phone to sell the product or set up a sales meeting.
Thought leadership PR	Public Relations (PR) activities to position the company as a thought leader in the industry and attract prospective customers. This could be arranging for SMEs to comment in industry publications, publishing thought-leadership pieces online, establishing a niche blog, or running a LinkedIn group focused on a particular area.
Use cases	Descriptions of how customers could use the product and the benefits they would get (note that this is distinct from the Use Case format used to write requirements).
User Group	Running a User Group to get regular opportunities to meet with customers. Helps understand their perspective on your plans and get insight into future trends.
Website messaging	The 'copy' on the website that describes the product and proposition. Often this is based around personas in the customer.
Webinars	Online presentations on topics to which interested prospects and customers are invited. Setting up the infrastructure so a Subject Matter Expert can present.
Website analysis	Gathering and interpreting information on website usage to score prospects for follow-up and to understand the effectiveness of each part of the website.
White paper	Detailed exploration of a particular topic relevant to prospects and the product. Typically 4–10 A4 pages long.
Win/loss analysis	A meeting with the customer following the win or loss of a major deal. Helps gain insight on why their business was won or lost. Provides excellent feedback for proposition development. Also run as an internal meeting that the customer does not attend.

Planning
The delivery of marketing material

"If you aren't using productivity software, if you don't have a morning ritual, a color-coded calendar, and a to-do list – then you aren't really there yet as a Product Marketer."
William Holman, PM Director, DealerTire

It's stating the obvious to say that customers want to know about a product before they buy. And, for many businesses, almost all of that knowledge comes from materials produced by Product Marketing.

As a product marketer, what you produce is usually highly visible within the business, and you're often operating under significant time pressure to get things done. On top of that, everyone has an opinion on whether what you've done is good or bad – so there's plenty of pressure to get things right!

With these challenges in mind, here are some tips to help.

Avoiding the last-minute rush

I'm sure you've experienced the last-minute rush-job. 'X' needs doing, and it needs doing now, or else some life-changing opportunity will be missed!

Key
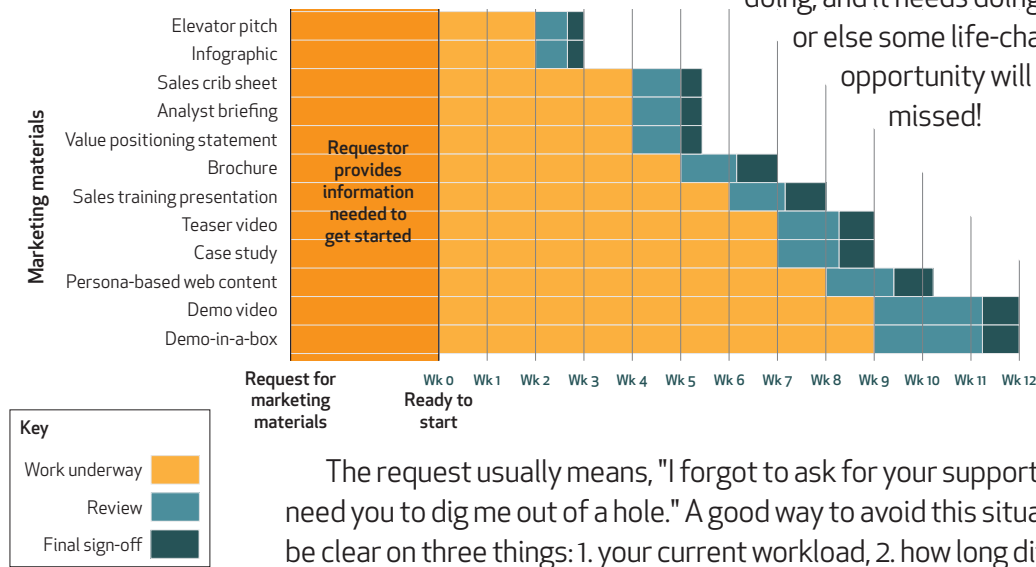- Work underway
- Review
- Final sign-off

Fig.10 Product marketing activities

The request usually means, "I forgot to ask for your support and now need you to dig me out of a hole." A good way to avoid this situation is to be clear on three things: 1. your current workload, 2. how long different types of things take to deliver, and 3. the information you'll need in order to be able to produce what's been requested.

You can use a template such as Fig.10 to show the different types of collateral you can produce, what's necessary, and the number of weeks that each will take. You should also be clear on what's required as input and the support you'll need to review and finalize the material.

Your business may have a long list of materials and activities that could be completed. However, that doesn't mean that every product gets everything. Some products aren't worth the effort.

A template can be used to work back from product launch dates to show when things need to be kicked off. In the example in Fig. 11, the revenue potential of the product being launched doesn't justify creation of a full set of marketing material.

Product 'ABC' launch marketing materials

Fig.11 Product launch collateral plan

Budgets

Most product marketing activities need skilled people to make them happen. You might have in-house experts, but sometimes you need the budget to pay for specialists from an agency. Typical examples are when you need to create a fantastic product video or an infographic.

Know who's responsible for giving approval for internal teams to commit their time or for external spend. And try and get early approval because things always take longer than everyone expects.

You might think that the budget should have been part of the product business case and be pre-approved, but this is rarely the case. And, even if it was, it's never as easy as simply asking for funding to be released. In most companies, there will be an annual budget available to spend across a number of products and you'll be fighting for your fair share.

Be prepared: sometimes, you'll have to justify your request for budget based on an expectation of achieving a particular outcome. This might be site visitor numbers, site visit duration, sales pipeline additions, or new business won.

"Product managers and sales tend to do their marketing in an ad-hoc way– they uncover the need for additional collateral pieces as they go through the sales cycle. It is important to consider the buying cycle as soon as the project is signed off, plan ahead and ensure the organization is positioned to deliver."
Dave Macken, Product Manager, Kowhiri

Personas
Getting 'under the skin' of customers

One common technique that is used to better understand customers is personas. A persona is a well-described example of a typical user or buyer of our product. It helps us think about what they're interested in and how to connect with them. In English, we use the expression getting 'under the skin' of customers to really understand what they care about.

A simplified example is shown in Fig. 12. Our proposition is business email, and Jim is a typical helpdesk manager.

So for Jim, our product needs to be super reliable, take little effort to run and, when there are problems, give him the tools and support so he can do a great job. And those messages need to be reflected in our product marketing.

We covered personas in our Journal (issue 2) on Propositions, but it's worth reiterating some of the key points.

It's good to personalize things to bring them to life, e.g., give the persona a name.

You also need to have some way of communicating the personas across the business so everyone can understand and use them. A notice board in a common area or standard shared presentation can work.

We've seen personas work well in both B2B and B2C situations.

A great tool to help create them is an Empathy Map (see Fig. 13). This uses the different senses to build a picture of what a typical persona is like.

Example persona

Name: Jim Bilgewater
Role: Helpdesk manager
Age: 32

Work issues: Very busy, so not much time to spend on any one thing. Email users are very demanding - if email goes down, his life is hell. Not enough staff or budget to do everything he wants. Key issue is having to balance the risk of early adoption of new technologies against the benefits they may deliver.
Business goals: Recently promoted from working as a team leader so looking to build his experience. Few people stay in his role for long. Wants to move up through the company.
Personal values: Likes to do a good job and stay on good terms with everyone. Proud of what he's achieved at work.

Fig.12 Some elements of a persona

Empathy Map

In our example, you can add other relevant attributes down the right-hand side. Choose the ones that make sense for your business.

Persona Empathy Map

product focus

Proposition name: _Cloud password store_   Segment: _Small Medium Business_

Persona role: _Administrator_   Name: _Mark Philipousos_   Age: _32_

Think and feel? what really counts, major preoccupations, worries & aspirations
- Wants to be seen as in control (hates surprises)
- Major fears over data security
- Worries about the detail

Hear?
from their friends
from their boss
from influencers

- Under constant pressure from boss on costs & speed
- Strongly influenced by tech bloggers

See?
environment
friends
market offers

- Avid reader of TechCrunch and security forums
- Low profile, works in back-office

- Introverted character
- enjoys detailed 1-1 tech discussions
- Brutally honest about personal and business challenges

Say and do? attitude in public, appearance, behaviour

Pain fears, frustrations, obstacles
Lacks budget and time to be able to do the best job
Finds business justification tough

Gain wants, needs, measures of success
No hacker breaches of firewalls
Time to review and play with tools to deal with security trends

Other attributes

IT literacy
Expert on MS Office, experienced O365 admin

Personal values
Likes reputation for good job. Good on detail

Education
MsC Computer Science

Fig.13 Example of an Empathy Map

Our experience is that there is often some repetition as you fill in the different sections, but we think that's OK as the aim of the template is to brainstorm any and all useful insights.

As in the picture below, it helps to do this with input from other people in the company who have come across the personas in real life. Also, sometimes you can base it on a real person (but please change their name, so they don't ever find out!).

Fig.14 Real-life Empathy Map development in progress

Conclusion

Personas are a useful tool at various stages of a product lifecycle.

At any stage, they help us understand the benefits that customers want to get from our proposition. When writing requirements, they help us understand what features to develop. And as product marketers, they help us understand how to communicate effectively with our prospects and customers.

Inbound marketing
Going digital to attract and convert new leads

Over the past decade, there has been an explosion in the use of inbound marketing techniques – online approaches to engage customers.
So what has fuelled this growth? After all, prospects have been doing their own online research for many years.

What's different is how this research happens. It used to be a key job of the marketer to promote the company's website to as many potential customers as possible. Interested prospects would then take a look. Today, prospects don't start by looking for familiar companies – instead, they search for solutions to problems. If a vendor doesn't appear on the first page of search results, they aren't involved in online forums or being talked about on social media, they risk becoming invisible to potential customers.

Inbound marketing techniques help companies gain credibility with potential customers and provide companies with insight into customer behavior, perceptions, and interests.

Inbound marketing encompasses a whole range of digital marketing tools, including social media, content marketing, Search Engine Optimization (SEO), Pay Per Click (PPC), and online forums. It doesn't matter if you work in B2C or B2B; engaging customers through digital techniques needs to be part of your marketing toolkit.

There seems a constant rise in the number of techniques that can

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Social media continues to grow

Some highlights from the GWI report:
- Despite starting to plateau in 2019, time spent on social media gained new ground in 2020 – climbing in 32 of the 47 tracked markets
- 51% of U.S./UK consumers use YouTube to research or find products to buy
- Influencers retain a strong hold on consumers, but there's demand for unfiltered content.
- Facebook remains the world's most popular social network. However, it's true Instagram has taken the reins from Facebook among Gen Zs by establishing its place as their favorite and most-used app.

Source: Social Media Marketing trends in 2021 GWI

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be used, and it's often challenging to work out which are the best in your situation.

Evaluating the options

We know that people typically only buy after they've had multiple points of interaction with a company (e.g., they've seen an ad, received an email, checked out a blog, read some tweets). Some references say it takes 7 exposures to our messages before a customer will take action. So, it's important that multiple channels and attempts are used.

But, generating all these interactions takes time and costs money – so it's important to understand which work.

You might have gained hundreds of re-tweets and thousands of Facebook likes – but you need to try to measure the correlation between these and your sales bottom line.

Successful evolution

Being successful with inbound marketing techniques requires experimentation to find out what works best. For example, viewers of your website might be given a score that reflects their readiness to buy. Each time they view particular pages, download documents, or view a demo video, the score gets updated. Your treatment of each visitor depends on their score. For example, low scorers might get emailed with exclusive content. High scorers, who are most likely to buy, might receive a call from telesales. Only by matching your scoring of their activity on your website with their subsequent buying behavior (did they buy or not) can you optimize your scoring mechanism to correctly identify and focus your efforts on the best prospects.

"As you define your market, see social media as purely another channel – your customers, prospects, and suppliers are all active on social platforms, and so are your competitors.

Everyone's at the party; you have a ticket, why wouldn't you go?

The real value of social media is that you can hear what your customers, prospects, and competitors are thinking without even having to ask."
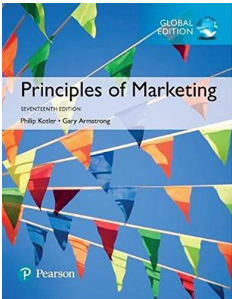**Derek Britton, Director, MicroFocus**
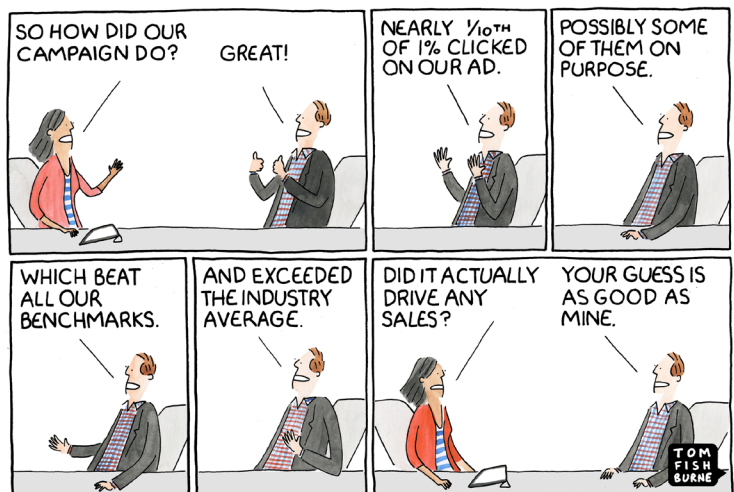
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The Review

Reviews of great books for product managers

Book Review

Principles of Marketing by Philip Kotler, Gary Armstrong, Lloyd C. Harris and Nigel Piercy (Pearson)

This is the reference book on marketing.

It was recommended to me when I worked in my first product marketing job more than 25 years ago. It's been updated and retained its place on my bookshelf ever since.

I can't claim to have read it from cover to cover, but it's not that sort of book. It's something you dip into like a box of chocolates. Sometimes it's an old favorite – a theory on which you need a refresher. At other times it's something completely new – a marketing term you've heard about and want to find a more comprehensive definition than the one you found on Wikipedia.

Its real strength is its examples culled from both the B2C and B2B worlds. These bring to life the theories under discussion and explore how and when they can be used to best effect. Examples come from large companies with which you're familiar and small ones that may be new to you. It's always fun to see if the 'hot' company in the example is still doing well or even still exists today. But as this book is updated seemingly every year, it does feel fresh.

It comes in various different versions and is regularly updated. The eighteenth was published in 2021, and the Global Edition has around 700 pages.

It's divided into 4 parts and 20 chapters and covers everything you could want to know about different aspects of marketing. As the textbook used on many marketing courses, it's studded with author comments, exercises, and summaries. These are very much aimed at students, and you can safely ignore them. It's the glossary and index at the back that I find most useful to access the content.

A great book to have on your shelf.

Have your view

Thank you to everyone who submitted quotes for this Journal. We're sorry there is not room for them all, but some of the best are shown below.

"To train our teams ready for launch, I prepared an easy-to-remember 'cheatsheet.' It summarised the main characteristics of the service and was re-purposed as a website infographic. It's proven really useful and only took two hours to create. It doesn't take long or require expensive tools to make something good."

Stijn Boussemaere, Product Manager, Savaco

"Since we've started to use different personas, it has become easier to understand what value a solution should deliver, what user experience it should provide (per persona), and how we can translate this into key messages for our marketing collateral. Personas have started providing context and clarity in mastering Product Marketing in our company!"

Jeroen Kleinhoven, Global Head of Product Strategy IPRD, Evalueserve

"A good marketing message is brief. No communication plan or product marketing strategy should take more than a single page. Work with drafts of your marketing material at a very early stage and edit – don't wait for the information to be complete."

Dorien van der Linden, Senior Product Marketeer, Advicent Solutions

"The main value of personas is that they provide a focal point in your business about the customer experience. They enable a common understanding for the whole team of what the customer wants and how they think, feel and behave."

Miles Cheetham, Consultant, CX New Product Development

Annual Survey
We use our survey to benchmark product management each year. Let us know if you'd like to take part. You can **download the latest results** from our website.
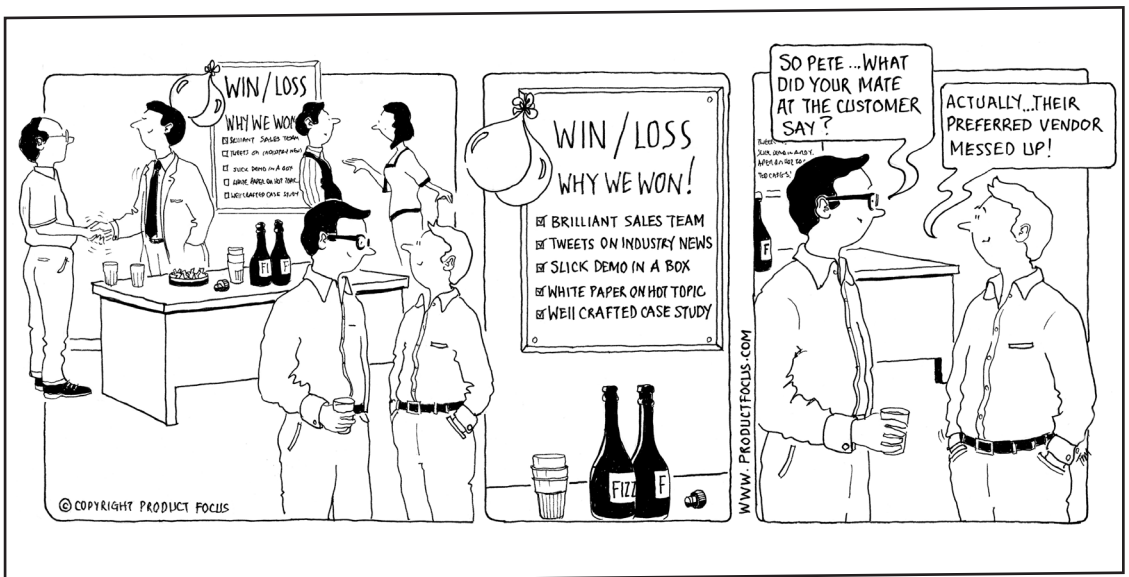
The Insight

Artist and expert

If you work in product marketing, then you may well be used to being teased. They say your job is all about making things pretty – being an expert at 'coloring-in.'

And yes, there is often a creative side to the role. You might be the one coming up with new ideas on how to present the product. Or the one who briefs the agencies who create the videos, images, and text that will wow customers and help sell the product. There's a real skill to getting this right and making sure the message cuts through the clutter and resonates with your target audience. So, hold your head high. Few people have the ability to do all these things well.

But that's only part of the job. Even when product marketing is focused on outbound activities, there are hard decisions to be made in many areas. Prioritization is always critical. For example, you might make decisions on the level of spend on different marketing activities for a product. You might also have to balance resources between different products. For example, how does a customer acquisition program for an existing product rank against a set of launch activities for something new?

Getting these right takes real insight into your audience and your products, as well as diplomacy skills and experience. And you'll have to work really closely with the product management, sales, and marcoms teams to make it all work.

We've seen organizations that don't value product marketing. They get them involved too late, provide them with inadequate briefings, or treat them as second-class citizens. In our experience, these are the businesses that don't perform well.

Product Marketing needs to be a valued member of the organization. Their input is essential to helping the product achieve commercial success and for making us all look good!

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