



Easy Online Marketing for Engineering Firms

ingenuity
MARKETING GROUP

Your prospective clients are swamped with content. To get their attention online you need to:

- Appeal to their emotions
- Help solve their problems
- Demonstrate extreme value
- Remove distractions
- Track what's working

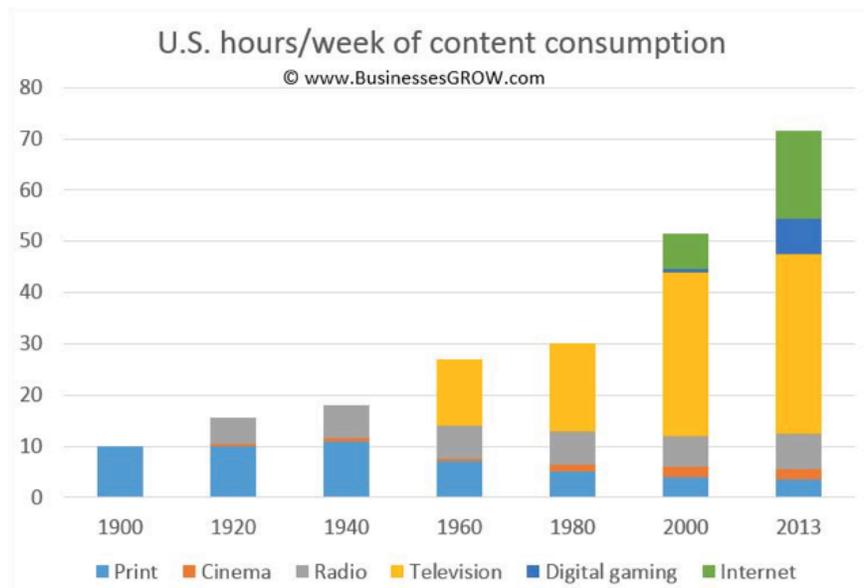
In this white paper, we'll look at the current state of your prospects' overwhelmed attention, plus current changes in buying patterns driven by the online world. And we'll address how to cut through the clutter and drive action.



Surviving the content shock

The amount of content created on a daily basis is mind-blowing and mere mortals can't keep up. Whether you call it "content shock," "attention crash" or some other name, your prospects are being overwhelmed by the demands on their attention.

To get through to them you need a solid strategy for getting and holding their attention while conveying powerful reasons to choose your company over others.



"Marketing today is difficult. There are 200 million people on the U.S. 'do not call' list. Over 86% of TV viewers admit to skipping commercials. Forty-four percent of direct marketing is never opened. Roughly 99.9% of online banners are never clicked. Buyers wait until they have completed 60-80% of their research before reaching out to vendors."

- Michael Brenner, Senior Director of Global Marketing at SAP

You may think it costs too much money and time to hire professional writers, but as the landscape becomes increasingly crowded, you need a higher level of quality and writers with the ability to put themselves in your prospects' shoes. If you don't have the ability internally, consider hiring professional writers to enact the tactics in this white paper.

Today, being boring has become very expensive!

How buying decisions are really made

“Although we’d never admit it, partly because we’re unlikely to be aware of it, most of our purchase decisions are driven by unconscious cues.”

– Kit Yarrow, *Decoding the New Consumer Mind*

In his book “Thinking Fast & Slow,” Nobel-prize winning economist Daniel Kahneman describes two modes of thinking that exist in the human mind. Fast thinking, which he calls System 1, is automatic — while slow thinking (System 2) requires attention and effort.

He writes: “When we think of ourselves, we identify with System 2, the conscious, reasoning self that has beliefs, makes choices, and decides what to think about and what to do. Although System 2 believes itself to be where the action is ... I describe System 1 as effortlessly originating impressions and feelings that are the main sources of the explicit beliefs and deliberate choices of System 2.”

Or as Kit Yarrow writes in “Decoding the New Consumer Mind:” “For example, car studies have found that consumers tend to purchase cars they emotionally relate to—ones that represent their lifestyle and personality. They then look for data to justify their decisions. Car specs are important, but not to inspire someone to purchase a particular car; it’s vice versa: they’re used to validate a car that’s already been chosen. ... The unconscious mind may be hidden from us, but that doesn’t diminish its power. The fact that people generally—and mistakenly—believe that they make decisions logically and consciously only increases its influence.”

You may be thinking that’s only true of consumer goods like cars, but in the next section we’ll explore why personal value is more important in B2B sales, not less.

Not only is emotion a key driver of decision-making, but today’s buyers are responding more emotionally than ever. Yarrow details how technology has had an isolating effect on today’s buyer, making them more anxious and less trusting. We feel like we’re living in an unpredictable world because everything seems to move faster and faster; we have an overwhelming number of choices; and if we’re on social media we’re bombarded by messages that suggest that our peers are happier and more successful than we are.

Yarrow says that buyers today prefer a buying cycle that:

- Makes them feel more in control
- Reduces the fear of making a mistake
- Simplifies the decision process
- Offers clear and immediate emotional benefits
- Is freer of obstacles

Later in this white paper, we'll talk more about leveraging the power of emotion and how to reduce fear, but the first tactical tip is to look at your online presence and your sales process and find ways to help you prospects feel in control and move through their decision-making process in a simpler way.

Make sure you're answering their questions before they think of them, that they can find everything they need on your website and that they feel in control. As Yarrow points out, "Simply uttering a phrase that reinforces control results in happier, more confident consumers—who are then also twice as likely to accept a request. 'It's your decision,' 'you're free to choose,' 'don't feel obligated,' and so forth all work. This is much more effective in face-to-face communication, but still somewhat effective in email communication. Activating a person's sense of control makes him or her more open to persuasion."



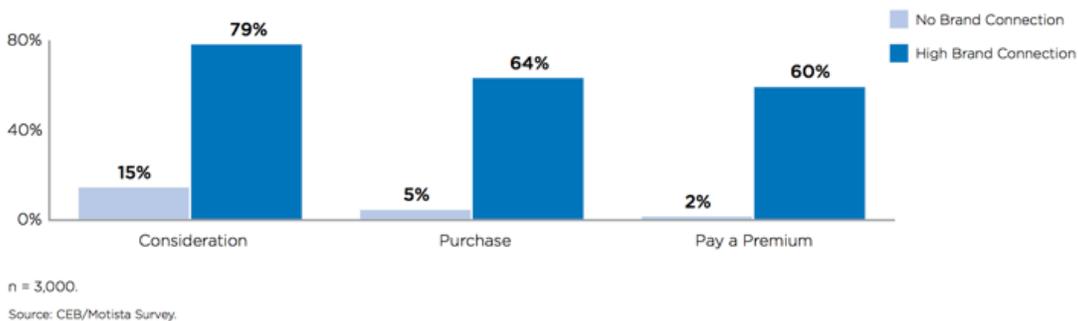
Tap into personal value to drive action and build trust

“Strong B2B branding drives customers’ willingness to consider, purchase, and pay a premium for a supplier.”

The quote above comes from the CEB Marketing Leadership Council in partnership with Google in their white paper “From Promotion to Emotion: Connecting B2B Customers to Brands.” They studied responses from 3,000 B2B buyers across seven industries, including engineering, plus interviews with 50 B2B marketing organizations.

From the study, they found that, “Customers who believe a brand will provide business value are 4x more likely to consider that brand.” The trouble is that many brands know this, so they’re all demonstrating business value and again prospects are having trouble differentiating between them.

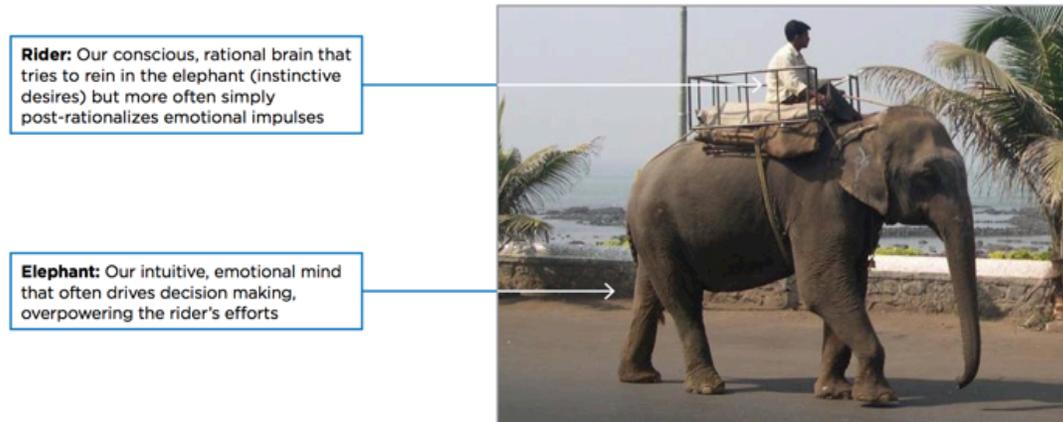
Figure 1: Impact of B2B Brand Connections



In fact, in the seven industries measured by the study, engineering was among the least differentiated – falling near the bottom along with printing, shipping and industrial supplies.

“One explanation for the limited effect of business value messages lies in the nature of decision making itself,” the CEB white paper states. “Although B2B buying is often treated as a rational activity, all human decisions are driven by a complex mix of gut, emotions, post-rationalization, and reason.”

Figure 7: The Role of Reason and Emotion in Decision Making



Source: Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion* (New York: Random House, 2012); FILE: Bombay road elephant.jpg, Wikipedia, 31 January 2006, http://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bombay_road_elephant.jpg; CEB analysis.

Engineering companies have focused very strongly on reason and somewhat on business value, but CEB found that personal value was twice as strong a driver as business value for B2B decision making.

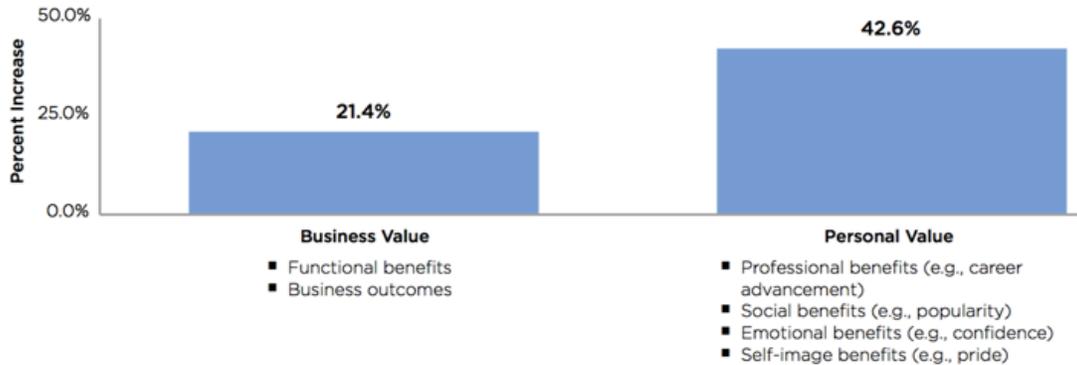
Business value focuses on the buyer's reason and emphasizes functional benefits and business outcomes. Personal value is a much more emotional area and looks at how this brand can help the individual on a professional level (career advancement, being a better leader), socially (admiration, fitting in), emotionally (confidence, excitement, happiness) and through feelings of accomplishment or doing well.

A key reason that emotional, personal factors drive B2B buying is that buyers feel a very high level of personal risk. The white paper lists the following emotional risk factors that buyers experience:

- Losing time and effort if a purchase decision goes poorly,
- Losing credibility if they make a recommendation for an unsuccessful purchase, and
- Losing the job if they are responsible for a failed purchase.

“... the more personal risks a purchase entails, the more emotional buyers feel—and the more they attach to brands that can provide value and eliminate risk.”

Figure 8: Impact of Perceived Brand Benefits on Commercial Outcome^a



n = 3,000.

Source: CEB/Motista Survey; CEB analysis.

Additionally, they found that B2B brands are much better at demonstrating personal value (as well as business value) to existing clients than they are to prospects. At Ingenuity, we've seen this time and again in engineering. Once you get a client, they're loyal and they love you, but your company has the hardest time telling prospects why they would love you.

There are two steps to fixing this: first, you need emotional messages in your brand. Second, you need to make sure that you have those available at every stage in the buying cycle. Typically, companies start with emotional messages early on – and then provide logical messages through all of the next stages of consideration until the actual negotiation process begins.

CEB states, “... marketers should use emotional, personal value messages throughout, not just at the start and end. To do so, marketers should exploit video and social media channels. Our research found that customers who engaged this way were up to 20% more likely to purchase at any given purchase stage.”

Marketing is all about understanding how to persuade with emotions. Irritation, frustration, struggle, content creates an emotion which creates thinking which creates action. If you send out beautiful newsletters, people think you're beautiful, or wise quotes and people think you're wise.

Using emotion well is a place where engineering companies often need outside help because you're in a very rational industry. At the very least, you need to interview existing clients and find out how they talk about your products and services. You'll find that the language they use is often more powerful and emotional than what you say. Use that language on your website, online publicity, social media and articles.

How to direct prospect and client attention

“Buyers want to buy. They want to do so faster than they do now. They’re also solving problems they’ve never had to solve before. Your buyers know they need help finding and deploying the right solutions. But they’re stymied by the information they find online that doesn’t address what they need.”

– Ardath Albee, “Digital Relevance”

We’ve touched on the importance of simplifying the buying process and ensuring that you have emotional messages at every stage of that process. If you haven’t mapped out the steps that a prospect goes through when she or he chooses your company, now is a great time to do that.

Your buying cycle should include at least these stages:

Attraction/Initiation – Your prospect starts to see your name (on social media, in articles, at an event, etc.) or realizes they have a need and begins to research providers and finds you that way.

Research/Narrowing the Criteria – Your prospect researches you and other companies and/or clarifies what they need as time passes and their need becomes more insistent.

Evaluation – Your prospect has reduced the number of potential companies to only a few or one vs. the status quo.

Negotiation/Closing – Remember that until the sale is closed, you may still be in competition with the status quo. This is also a stage where your prospect may need to drive more buy-in at their company.

Delight/Promotion – Your client becomes a referral source. Make sure you go beyond just delivering service and don’t forget to give them emotional information that validates their decision, makes them look good inside their company and motivates them to share.

For each stage of the cycle, you need to create clear, easy, prospect-focused messages that they can share with others in their decision-making process.

In “Decoding the New Consumer Mind,” Kit Yarrow makes a list of how today’s overwhelming, fast-paced world is changing the minds of buyers and what this means for marketers:

- Buyers spending less time on detailed information.
- New and novel ideas have a greater opportunity to be considered because searches are wider rather than deeper.
- Buyers look for faster solutions: “For example, brands that simplify consumer decision making are 115 percent more likely to be recommended.”
- It takes more intensity to get people’s attention.
- Buyers get bored more easily — including with long explanations.

Yarrow followed shoppers as they shopped and noticed that those under stress behaved differently. This is critical for engineering companies because many of your prospects are considerably more stressed out than they were a few years ago. Yarrow found that stressed-out buyers share these characteristics:

- They are more prone to inertia—buying the same thing without thinking, or not buying at all.
- They rely more heavily on trusted experts, such as bloggers, cooking programs, friends, or favorite stores to curate and whittle down what they consider to be excessive options. They gravitate toward smaller pools of options and appreciate help getting there.
- They are more likely to rationalize impulsive purchases.
- They are less deliberate in their decision making and rely more on in-store feelings and symbolic cues to make decisions.
- They are highly sensitive to complexity—if it’s not simple, they’re not buying. Likewise, they feel grateful and are loyal to brands and retailers that organize and simplify the buying process.

We know it’s a tall order to take highly complex matters of engineering and turn them into simple answers – but today it’s more important than ever. And the great news is that once you’ve invested the time and effort to help your prospective buyers understand in plain terms what you can do for them and why they’ll love working with you – you get an extra dose of gratitude from them for making their lives easier and saving them effort and time.

The secret to connecting in an online world

One word you might see a lot of in marketing circles is “authenticity” – usually touted as the secret to succeeding online with prospects. But what does it really mean? You clearly don’t want to show the world everything about your company, so how do you choose what to show and what not to show?

What you want to do is to express the core values of your company in a way that invites prospects to connect with you and to experience belonging because they share those values with you.

In “Decoding the New Consumer Mind,” Kit Yarrow states, “Our need to belong and connect is rooted in survival.” She goes on to say, “Consumers want to trust. It’s in our nature to want to ‘trade’ with confidence—it’s easier and faster, and feels better. Because consumers often feel burned, wary, unseen, and disrespected (not just by businesses ...), the businesses that exhibit compassion, humanity, and personality have a magnificent opportunity to connect—deeply.”

Your company’s online presence has to be deeply rooted in what your company is at its core. When prospects see consistent messages from your company that reflect a set of values resonant through all levels of what you do, it builds trust and makes them want to work with you – if they have the same values. And if they don’t, do you really want them as clients?

What are your values? It’s not services, quality and years of knowledge. Everyone has that. Ask yourself (and your clients):

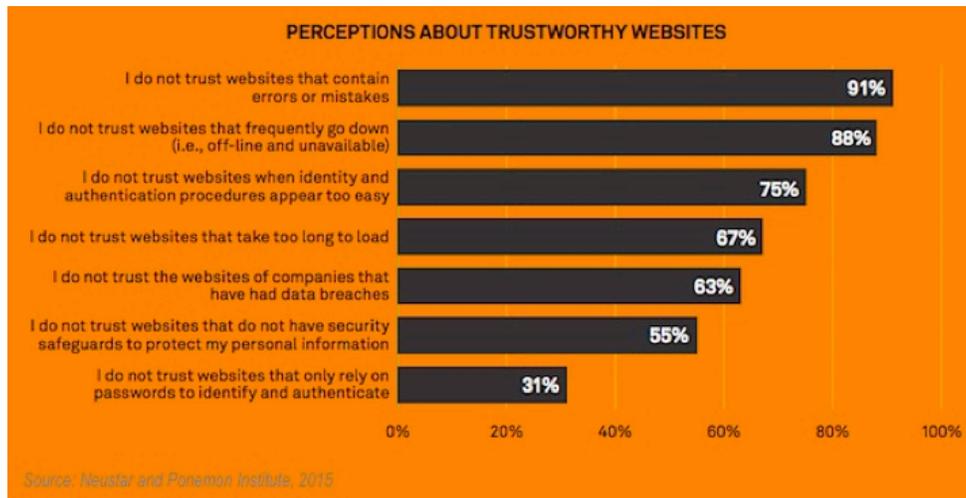
- Why do clients return year after year?
- What do our best clients value about us?
- Why do our employees stay?
- What are the aspects of our company that if they went away, we would lose our best clients and employees?
- What do we value about our best clients? (Often shared values are a reason people have great working relationships.)
- How would a client describe us when giving a referral? (Ask actual clients this question.)

There are many ways to discover your values, your core brands – and firms you can hire to help you do just that – but here’s just one more exercise you can do today that will help you explore your core values: come up with a list of cars, celebrities and songs that are a distinctly **bad** fit for your company. Now talk about why they don’t fit. In the negatives you’ll learn a lot about who you really are and why you’re different from your competitors.

Using those messages about your company’s core values, emotionally, through all stages of the buying cycle, will make it easy for your prospects to consider and choose you.

Why innovation is more important than ever

A recent report from Neustar and the Ponemon Institute about what makes consumer mistrust brand websites show that errors and technology issues are the top drivers of mistrust.



In addition to the basics of having accurate information and a site that is quickly available for visitors, many companies overlook the importance of a site that feels forward-looking.

Innovation builds trust. This doesn't mean that your company needs to be constantly innovating your services and processes if that's not part of your core brand. It does mean that your marketing materials from your website to your collateral and tradeshow presence need to convey that your company is ahead of the curve.

In her book "Decoding the New Consumer Mind," Kit Yarrow says about companies that use technology and innovation in their marketing: "I've found that consumers view these companies as smarter and cooler, and feel that they are trying hard to meet their (the consumer's) needs, and think their products are superior."

This is true in engineering as well as for consumer products, especially because the buyers of your services are also often shopping online at websites that are raising the bar for online experience across the board. Think about what a person feels if they've been shopping on Amazon.com and then comes to a engineering company site that looks like it was designed ten years ago, takes forever to load and is hard to navigate.

Yarrow also says, "In my research, I've found that we're not only more trusting of new things but also increasingly wary of brands and products that don't innovate. ... For the first time, heritage can be baggage."

A generation that grew up with technological innovation is rising up the ranks in the businesses that buy your services. They put more trust in brands like Apple than in those that are a hundred years old or more. This doesn't mean you can't talk about your company's history, only that it's no longer enough. Show that you understand the power of innovation and you'll build trust with your prospects and clients.

In addition, there is a class of bad habits that many companies in high-technical industries form. While you're eliminating errors and technical glitches, make sure that your website and other online content is free from:

- Highly formal language
- Wordiness
- Jargon
- Buzzwords
- Abstract language
- Talking all about your company, services and products

Content checklist

This short list will help you focus each piece of content in your online presence:

- Who am I writing this for?
- What problem am I helping them solve?
- Why will they pay attention to this content?
- Have I removed distractions such as jargon, buzzwords and formal language?
- How do I want them to feel?
- What do I want them to do?

The best way to know what your prospects need is to see what people are looking for, what they read and what they spend time on.

At the very least, you need to be using [Google Analytics](http://www.google.com/analytics/) (www.google.com/analytics/) or a similar tool – or be working with a company that can provide you with analytics. Look for the pages that are most visited and the pages that visitors spend the most time on. You can also see which social networks are sending the most traffic and the traffic that spends the most time on your site.

Time on site is a more important measure than pure traffic. Tony Haile, the CEO of Chartbeat, has written that his company's tracking tools show that: "if you can hold a visitor's attention for just three minutes they are twice as likely to return than if you only hold them for one minute."

He also found that social shares don't necessary translate into reading: "We looked at 10,000 socially-shared articles and found that there is no relationship whatsoever between the amount a piece of content is shared and the amount of attention an average reader will give that content."

Both of those findings point to the necessity of having longer content that is more engaging and useful to readers. Using Google Analytics, you can see if there's already content of this type on your site: where are the pages that people spend three or more minutes on? Use this information to create more content like that.

Use Google Search Console (formerly Webmaster Tools) to see which keywords cause your company to show up in search. The tool is online at: <https://www.google.com/webmasters/tools/>. You can set it to show keywords that gave impressions of your site and click throughs to your website. This helps you identify which keywords are driving the most traffic. These are keywords you may want to create more content about.

If you're getting good at using your search engine keywords, consider using a tool like ubersuggest (ubersuggest.org) to find the search phrases people use on that topic.

Make sure you're checking in with your analytics on a monthly or at least bi-monthly basis with a particular emphasis on what's working.



At Ingenuity Marketing Group we love working with smart companies who want to grow. If you have a question about how to apply anything you've seen in this white paper, contact Dawn Wagenaar at (651) 690-3358 or Dawn@ingenuitymarketing.com.

You can also sign up for our monthly e-blasts at <http://www.ingenuitymarketing.com/resources/newsletter/> and we offer a webinar series. Whether you're looking for personal growth or company-wide transformation, we add just the right kick to your creative palettes.



Ingenuity Marketing Group, LLC
360 North Robert Street, Suite 711
Saint Paul, MN 55101 | 651.690.3358

www.ingenuitymarketing.com