

It's a Web-centric World. Get on Board.



## The power to influence has shifted to the web.

The web provides access to more information from more sources than ever before and people are drawn to it when they need answers. They bounce from site to site and source to source looking for information, advice, and opinions. It's convenient. It's open 24x7. And it allows people to engage in conversations about what matters to them.

As the central location for information, the web has revolutionized how our prospects and customers find, gather, and digest information, how they engage with our brand, and how they make buying decisions. It's become the most influential and visited communications channel ever built.

## Leverage the web to drive action.

Your prospects and customers are spending a great deal of time on the web. Their web-centric behavior gives you the opportunity to be seen and to influence them on a regular basis. To capitalize on this behavior, the web must be at the core of your marketing and communications strategy. We call this Web-centric Marketing.

Web-centric Marketing focuses on how best to use the web to support and reach your business goals. Your plan should:

- » Identify all online sources, or influencers, your audiences might visit.
- » Specify how you'll utilize your site, as well as the other online sources you've identified, to help you achieve your goals and influence your buyer.
- » Specify how you will incorporate the web into all your outreach efforts.

## Act web-centric.

### 1. Widen your circle of influence.

With the explosion of blogs, social networking, and user-generated content, your web site is no longer the most influential source of information for your buyer. Today your buyer has immediate access to an incredible amount of unbiased information developed by other "industry experts". You need to create a presence on the sites they go to for information.

- » Find out where they do their research and where they look for answers.
- » Hunt down sites that offer up the latest opinions and news related to the products, services, or issues you focus on.
- » Create a presence on those sites through advertising, sponsorships, and articles.

The key is to be where your prospects are when they're looking for insight.

### 2. Look for ways to push your content to other sites.

Don't limit your content, or your knowledge, to just your site.

- » Push out your webinars, podcasts, and white papers.
- » Publish articles on industry sites or in industry eNewsletters.
- » Collaborate with others on joint webinars or podcasts.

Having your content and your opinions on other sites gives you outside validation and added credibility. It's another opportunity to get in front of your prospects and influence their thinking.

### 3. Everybody's talking and your prospects are listening.

IT decision makers spend more time each week reading or interacting with social media than they do with editorial content or vendor-produced content.<sup>1</sup>

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Prospects trust user-generated content more than vendor content because they see it as more objective.

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So get objective sources talking about you.

- » Start by identifying peer-to-peer and community sites where your prospects go for opinions.
- » Track down the most commonly visited blogs related to your product or services. Get them to blog about you.
- » Join in the conversation yourself by sharing your insights and knowledge. Avoid anything that looks like you're trying to "sell" them.

### 4. Start a conversation with your prospects.

It's not just about having others talk about you; you need to get the conversation started on your site too. Your prospects are actively engaged in, or reading, multiple conversations on the web. They expect to be able to engage in conversations with you too (or at least feel you are open to what they have to say).

- » Allow visitors to vote on the most helpful white paper, webinar, or article on your site, then bubble that content up for others to see.
- » Create polls related to industry issues and publish the results.

- » Create your own corporate blog where experts in your company share their thoughts and arrange for other experts to join in the discussion.

Send the message that you care about what your customers think and that you're not afraid to let everyone know how they feel. Companies that provide insights and relevant content visitors benefit from are seen as more transparent and as thought leaders to be respected.

### 5. Engage with rich media.

In addition to providing a multitude of information from a variety of sources, the web also allows companies to serve up content in a variety of formats.

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When surveyed, 78% of regular web users felt online video made content more compelling and valuable. 84% said online video enhances technology related content, while 57% said it impacts their purchasing decision.<sup>2</sup>

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Flash animation, video, podcasts, and webcasts offer more dynamic, richer experiences that help engage your visitor and impact their buying decisions.

- » Create short (1 - 2 minute) overviews of your areas of expertise.
- » Create a customer case study video library.
- » Walk visitors through product demos or technical deep dives.

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<sup>1</sup> IT Toolbox, 2007

<sup>2</sup> Knowledgestorm, 2006

## 6. Think web-centric in off-line channels too.

It's not all about the web. Traditional marketing channels are still alive and kicking. Offline marketing such as magazine advertisements, direct mail, seminars, or tradeshows increased online activity.

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80% of technology buyers said offline marketing materials "frequently" or "often" drove them to specific sites for more information.<sup>3</sup>

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Look for ways to extend the off-line experience online.

- » Drive prospects to targeted landing pages or microsites for more information.
- » Offer up free online assessments, or ROI tools to help prospects better evaluate your offerings.
- » Hold a webinar or live chat session with your product experts to answer prospects' questions.

It's the combination of pushing people to your web site from multiple channels, both offline and online, that seems to be working best.

## Use the web to gain a competitive edge.

It's a web-centric world. As the central location for finding information, the web is changing how we engage with our prospects and how they learn about us and what we have to offer. Our prospects and customers are spending a great deal of their day on the web and that's a great opportunity for us to reach out to them.

For B2B marketers to be successful at generating awareness, building brands, and driving sales, they must find ways to leverage this web-centric world to their advantage. Marketers who understand and capitalize on this behavior will have a competitive edge over those who don't.

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<sup>3</sup>Center for Media Research, 2007

### About Erickson Barnett.

It's a web-centric world. At Erickson Barnett we leverage this new landscape to create smart marketing programs that drive measurable results. Our clients depend on us to create:

- » Clear Messaging
- » Remarkable Identities
- » Unique Campaigns
- » Engaging Web Sites
- » Influential Rich Media

The world has changed. Get results.

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