

**FOCUS
REPORT**

Tech Talk



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Tech Transformation: A Race You Can't Stop Running In

Technology has transformed the world of B2B sales and marketing just as it has nearly every profession. The demand for pinpoint target marketing, invaluable customer data, customized content, multipurpose CRM and intuitive, on-demand sales training has B2B product and service providers investing significant amounts on technology.

InsideSales, makers of an enterprise sales engagement platform, estimates that companies spend \$4,581 per rep annually on sales technology. Market analyst firm IDC estimates that worldwide spending on technologies and services that enable digital transformation reached nearly \$2 trillion in 2022, a growth rate of 16.7% between 2017 and 2022.

At the same time, multiple surveys indicate that a significant portion of these investments may be wasted because marketing and sales professionals fail to use the tech tools they are supplied with. A recent Gartner survey stated that marketers report utilizing just 42% of the breadth of capabilities available in their martech stack, down from 58% in 2020. (See the story on page 4.) SuperOffice, a European provider of B2B CRM, reports that only 40% of all CRM customers have an organizational adoption rate of over 90%.

Mixmax, a sales engagement platform provider, offers these tips for adoption of the sales tech tools that you provide your team:

- Facilitate the user experience with a straightforward user interface.
- Offer a painless (and short, if possible) implementation process.
- Meet sales reps when and where they need it (for example, directly in their email inbox).
- Integrate with your existing systems (for example, Salesforce).

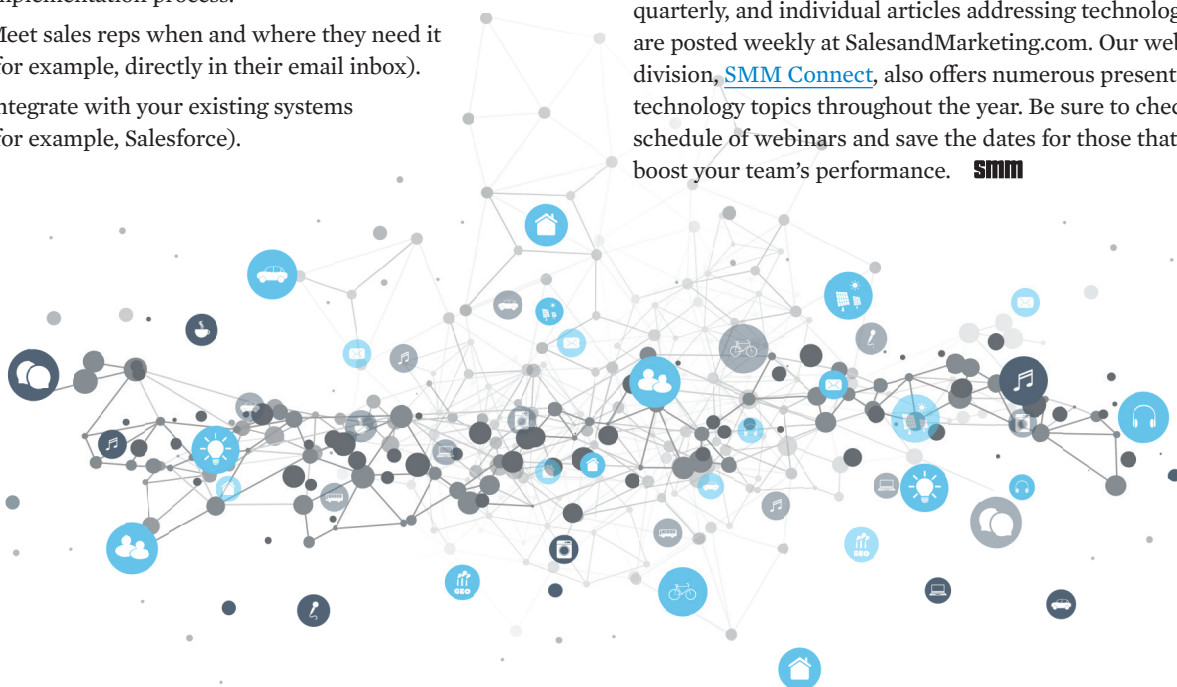
- Offer strong and easily accessible support and training material.
- Streamline/combine/automate workflows.

A group of [marketing and communications professionals](#) assembled by Forbes was asked early this year what tech trends they feel are increasing in importance. Answers included AI that increases understanding of the customer journey; real-time survey tools; lead-tracking and visibility tools; and data, data, data – to help personalize customer communication, reach prospects at the right time, and provide a bounty of broad customer insights that can improve everything from target marketing to customer service.

“B2B sales are on the verge of making a giant leap that will take them beyond all the traditional limits,” states a report from [global management consulting firm Kearney](#). Kearney studied companies whose revenue and sales productivity grew faster than average and discovered they use technology to incorporate emerging practices that can be grouped in three distinct waves:

- Make buying simple and easy
- Maximize customer value
- Redefine customer value

This B2B sales and marketing technology report provides insights on specific ways that technology can be deployed to maximize your team's efficiency and effectiveness. Technology's role is broad and ever-changing. A single report will never be sufficient to summarize all that technology can accomplish. That's why we will continue to publish technology updates quarterly, and individual articles addressing technology topics are posted weekly at [SalesandMarketing.com](#). Our webinar division, [SMM Connect](#), also offers numerous presentations on technology topics throughout the year. Be sure to check the schedule of webinars and save the dates for those that can help boost your team's performance. **SMM**



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4 Martech Trends Impacting 2023 Strategy

BY BENJAMIN BLOOM

Consistently high spending on marketing technology over the past few years is now a key risk to the budgets and credibility of chief marketing officers.

According to Gartner's [2022 CMO Spend Survey](#), B2B organizations devote approximately one-quarter of their marketing budget to technology. Yet B2B marketers used less of their martech stack in 2022 than in previous years. Gartner's latest [Marketing and Communications Technology survey](#) revealed that B2B marketers are using just 43% of the breadth of capabilities available in their overall stack, compared to nearly 60% just two years prior.

At that rate, for a business with \$1 billion in revenue, unused martech could be eating up nearly \$13 million in expense each year.

Some teams may feel that an "all in" bet on an "integrated suite" mega vendor will provide all that is needed. A staggering 60% of survey respondents say they prefer an integrated suite approach to selecting technology, while only 25% say they prefer a "best-of-breed" approach. Although the marketing suite offerings promise simplicity, low levels of marketing technology utilization and critical technology gaps identified in the survey reinforce the need to build a capability-first, rather than a technology-first, approach.

To thrive in such an environment will require CMOs to regularly scrutinize their marketing technology investments and monitor their progress in improving utilization. They will also need to combine that investment discipline with the appetite for growth, and four key trends will dominate that growth story: shifting organizational models, talent gaps, cross-functional challenges and a bevy of new technologies to navigate the cookieless future.



Trend #1: Increased visibility for martech invites greater scrutiny

CMOs are evolving their martech teams through increased centralization to create more efficient, scalable, flexible and resilient marketing organizations. Centralized internal operating models such as centers of excellence (COEs), internal agencies and shared services are the most popular structures for delivering martech capabilities, according to Gartner research.

In addition, marketing's influence on enterprise-wide digital transformation and innovation has increased markedly in the past year due to factors such as increased focus on digital commerce and a chance in C-suite prioritization of brand and stakeholders.

Although this shift represents a great opportunity for martech teams to impact business and customer goals, it also introduces new challenges. For instance, heightened expectations from the C-suite increase the pressures for CMOs to effectively address pervasive problems like martech skills gaps and under-utilization of their stack. An inability to solve these challenges and meet C-suite

expectations will undermine marketing's credibility as a strategic business function.

Trend #2: Skills gaps raise concern as marketing's tech ownership rises

Skills and support are falling short, with an average of 64% of martech leaders agreeing that their team lacks technical skills to integrate and operate their martech stack and receives insufficient support to increase usage of their martech stack. This sentiment is consistent with findings from the 2022 Gartner CMO Spend survey in which marketing leaders [cited](#) martech as one of the top capability gap areas.

Simultaneously, marketing has taken the lead in ownership of martech activities, traditionally under IT's remit, such as integration of disparate martech systems and customer databases. Again, this is both an opportunity and a challenge for marketers: They may be able to move faster on martech initiatives, but can no longer blame other departments if they are unable to attract and manage the requisite technical talent

needed to succeed. It's essential that increased ownership of technical martech activities is accompanied by appropriate skills acquisition within the marketing team as well as aligned delivery models with the IT department.

Trend #3: CMOs prepare for a cookieless future with new adtech and commerce technologies

The risk of an integrated suite approach extends beyond contract lock-in. Uncertainty, driven by privacy and identity developments, also compels CMOs to invest in viable strategies that leverage emerging channels.

The aforementioned Marketing and Communication Technology survey also revealed that many of the tools to support [innovative marketing channels](#) are gaining steam, such as podcast advertising, social commerce and streaming/connected TV (CTV) advertising. Meanwhile, those that support [metaverse](#) initiatives and non-fungible tokens (NFTs) are certainly on

CMOs' radars, but are generating more nascent support.

Yet no amount of vendor white papers or case studies can perfectly predict how your team or customers will respond to new campaigns and touchpoints. Look for opportunities for internal ownership of these new audio, video and social technologies rather than deferring to an agency. Such an approach can both validate the fit of technologies and vendors from outside the integrated suites, and improve agility through internal capabilities.

Trend #4: Success of the IT-marketing partnership remains critical

CMOs who cannot effectively partner with their IT and data and analytics counterparts will fail to build necessary capabilities, such as omnichannel journey orchestration and [personalization](#), needed to deliver on customer experience goals. While marketing and IT are two functions that contribute the most to funding investments for martech, the

strength of that partnership can make a significant difference.

Shared responsibility for funding investments is the ultimate indication that senior leaders are working together to support big-ticket martech platforms. When executed well, this correlates with greater-than-average martech utilization rates. Companies that report collaborative funding (i.e., marketing + IT/technology + other functions as primary contributors) to martech investments report slightly higher current utilization rates (46%) than the overall survey average (42%).

It's critical that CMOs partner with the CIO, CTO and other technology leaders to develop a shared and tech-agnostic map of the business capabilities that will enable the business to fulfill its CX or growth vision. **SMM**

[Benjamin Bloom](#) is a vice president analyst in the [Gartner Marketing Practice](#), focused on helping marketing leaders with martech stack optimization, personalization and customer data management.



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Minding the New Sales Training Gaps

Technology helps resolve new challenges posed by today's remote work world

BY MATT PROSTKO

The entire business world went virtual seemingly overnight when the COVID-19 pandemic struck, and it drastically transformed the role of the salesperson. It also created an education gap. The shift to remote work limited the ability to learn new skills from trainers, managers and peers. But thankfully, there are tools and practices that can help close this gap.

Pre-pandemic, salespeople could generally be broken into two camps: Inside representatives, who, as the name suggests, work inside an office; and field reps, who work in the field, interacting with prospects face-to-face. In the age of remote work, the differences between these roles have become less clear.

Information Sharing Gets Disrupted

This has created a few new challenges. First, salespeople can no longer rely on the “swivel chair method” of sharing tribal knowledge in an office environment. Previously, inside reps

relied on in-person knowledge sharing to sharpen their skills and receive feedback and advice from colleagues and managers in real time. Similarly, field reps would get plenty of “windshield time” with their manager to debrief when traveling between meetings with customers and prospects.

These on-the-spot opportunities for coaching and guidance no longer exist in the way they used to. In a fully virtual selling environment, it's more difficult for managers to have a bearing on what their reps are up to and how they're performing. In an effort to keep track, managers are tasked with reporting and analysis that eats away at time they could otherwise be spending with reps to make them better salespeople.

If sales reps are no longer learning in the office or in the field, then how are they learning? Not through sales training, evidently. [According to Gartner](#), reps forget 70% of the information they learn within a week of training, and 87% will

forget everything within a month. Add to this the fact that most training today is virtual (read: the sales reps attending are even more distracted and less engaged), and it's easy to surmise the efficacy of common training methods is highly questionable.

Long story short, sales reps' learning and productivity have slowed. Turnover and burnout are high. Training is episodic and ineffective. Managers can't coach their reps because they don't have the time or opportunity. Sounds bleak, right?

Thankfully, there are tools and strategies companies can put into place to help close the learning gap.

Tech's Teaching Role

Conversation intelligence tools like VoiceVibes from Bigtincan, Gong and Chorus let sales managers do things like watch reps' calls so they can provide feedback, helpful tips and coaching in today's remote work environment. There

are also sales enablement tools, like Seismic or Highspot, that make learning consistent and bite-sized so that reps don't forget what they learn and can constantly put it into practice.

On-demand sales coaching is another critical resource for providing the education and support reps need to master their craft. Sales managers who are stretched especially thin are often not available for the ad hoc coaching that can make the difference between a won or lost opportunity — like helping to navigate a tricky situation or simply offering a fresh perspective on a new sales approach.

It's also important to have on-demand coaching for things that are not directly related to sales but that may impact job performance down the line. This includes developing better soft skills around communication, self-awareness and empathy, plus wellness issues like nutrition, exercise, mindfulness and mental health coaching. (Burnout in sales

is real!) For example, sales reps might meet one-on-one with a mindfulness coach each Monday morning to set their intentions and goals for that week. This can empower them to make better use of their time, reflect on what's working and what's not, and streamline their workflow. Perhaps more than any other function, success in sales often depends on a salesperson's state of mind, body and spirit. Their energy, motivation and confidence have a large impact on their results.

Mentoring and peer coaching is another fabulous way to shrink the learning gap. Salespeople can share the motions that are working/not working to accelerate performance across teams. More experienced reps can be empowered to mentor newer sellers or be leveraged as subject matter experts for key behaviors that are consistent with winning business.

Again, the key is to have the right type of growth opportunities available,

wherever and whenever they are needed. In a time-scarce environment, support and development must be available in the flow of work. If it is not now, it likely never will be.

Sales is a demanding gig. Any way companies can ensure salespeople are being supported is a win and will reflect positively in their performance. On-demand coaching is a key tool for making this happen. In today's sales environment, we must be more intentional than ever about learning. There's no more water cooler chat or borrowing tidbits you hear on the sales floor to try for yourself. Companies need to invest in the right mix of tech training tools to close the education gap and set reps up for success, now and in the future. **SMM**

Matt Prostko is head of sales at [TaskHuman](#), a mobile app that provides access to one-on-one consultations with live coaches across more than 1,000 skill sets.

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Your Customers Are Always Telling You Something Important

10 ways data analytics can create groundbreaking impacts on B2B sales

BY DANIEL MARTIN

The role of data analytics in B2B sales has become impossible to ignore. Data analytics and machine learning can help companies improve their sales. This is why you need to consider using analytics to boost your B2B sales efforts.

However, if you haven't used data analytics before, you may be unsure where to start or how it can impact your sales. Here are 10 ways that data analytics can create groundbreaking impacts on B2B sales.

1 Improve Product Recommendations

A critical component of running a successful business is interpreting, analyzing and drawing conclusions from the data the business generates. These are typically [data analyst jobs](#) that result in recommendations made to improve the processes and outcomes of a business.

One challenge that businesses of all sizes often face is finding the products they want online. Looking for products and services can take time and sap resources.

Remember that B2B businesses avoid showing their clients a traditional portfolio. This is why they find it difficult to give these clients access to curated products and services. Besides, this can result in time-consuming integrations and lost opportunities.

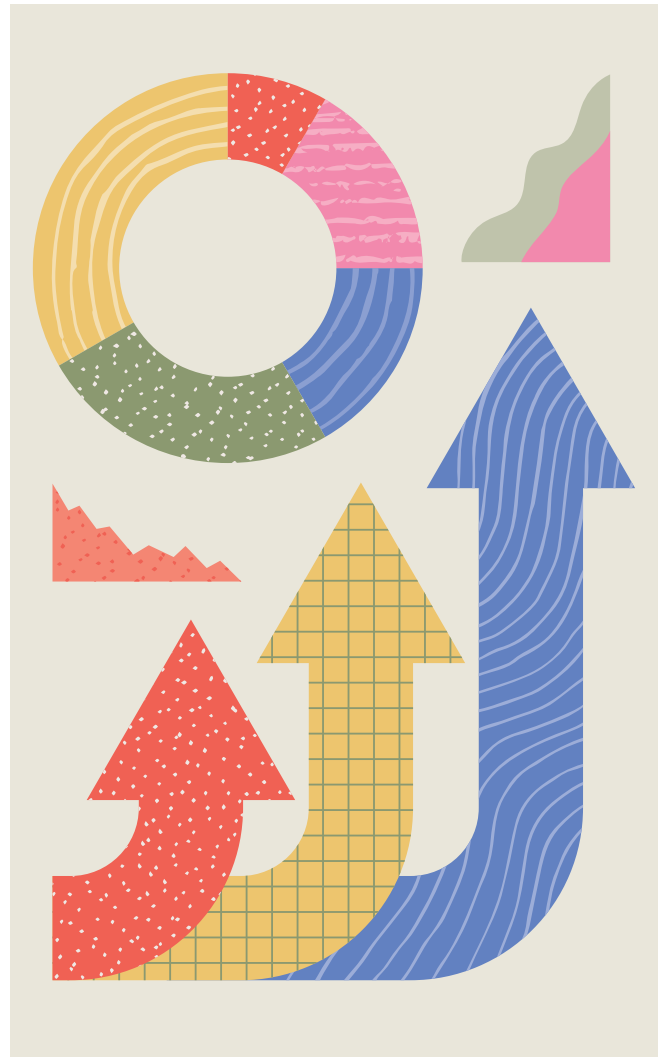
It would be wiser to depend on data analytics to find products for businesses. You can use these analytics to divide customers into groups. This will allow you to recommend products and services to clients based on these groups.

2 Improve Sales Forecasting

Another reason why data analytics is useful is it improves your sales forecasting. Sales forecasting is an important function for all B2B organizations. These organizations use forecasting to prepare budgets and analyze spending.

You can use big data analytics to forecast sales and improve resource allocation. This would allow you to reduce the wastage of resources in your organization. One of these resources that data analytics can help you save is time. Forecasting is a time-consuming process that can put a strain on your sales team.

This is why it's better to use data analytics software to help you with sales forecasting.



3 Improve Email Campaigns

You can use data analytics to understand which [email subject lines](#) get the most clicks. You may even use analytics to understand which types of messages generate the most leads. Data science can also help you determine the best time of day to send your emails.

4 Track Sales Leads

It's one thing to place a message online about your business; it's another thing altogether to track the leads you receive on your links and ads. You may use Adwords and social media platforms to generate leads for your website. You can use data analytics to track the lead capture performance of your channels. This will allow you to improve your future digital marketing efforts.

5 Predict Future Sales Behavior

Data science allows B2B sellers to [predict future actions](#) based on past behaviors. You'll find that you can use predictive data analysis to appeal to more customers in the future.

It's important to note that you can also use analysis to find what customers are truly interested in. This will help you save time researching what your customers would respond well to.

6 Help Create a Pricing Strategy

One of the best ways to take care of pricing is to analyze historical pricing data. Doing so lets you understand the prices customers are willing to pay for their services. Your pricing strategy will be based on hard numbers. Customer segmentation using data analytics can also help you refine your pricing strategy.

7 Help You Deal with Customer Portfolios

You can use several helpful techniques to deal with [customer portfolios](#), including creating buyer personas to understand how customers will behave. If you play your cards right, you can use customer data to attract new customers at low cost while not disturbing existing customers.

8 Boost Your CRM's Effectiveness

Maintaining good customer relationships is the key to successful B2B marketing. Sales data analytics can help

you analyze customer behavior to predict buying patterns. Understanding how businesses make buying decisions will improve the targeting of your marketing.

9 Prioritize Leads

Analyzing your sales data will allow your team to find out which leads they should be focusing on. This in turn will allow them to find out which customers are the most likely to buy their products and services.

You can even analyze your [sales conversion rate](#) using data analysis tools online. Your conversion rate will help you brainstorm ways to increase your marketing efforts.

10 Improve Sales Team Management

Your sales team will find themselves in a better position to manage time with data analytics. This stems from functions like customer segmentation. Your sales team will recognize that customers are different and have diverse needs. If you take a data-driven approach to increase leads, your customers are sure to benefit as well. An efficient sales team will be in a good position to improve lead generation.

The advantage of sales analytics is that it's not difficult to use. Your business is sure to enjoy the benefits of data analysis if you choose the right software for it. The abundance of data analysis tools out there doesn't make this choice any easier. You could enlist the list of PPC and SEO experts to help you figure out which data analytics tools you should opt for. Give yourself the advantage of data analysis and reap the benefits for your business. **SMM**

Daniel Martin has had hands-on experience in digital marketing since 2007. He builds teams and coaches others to foster innovation and solve real-time problems.

What's Dragging Down Your Data Program?

In 2018, Thomas C. Redman, president of the consultancy Data Quality Solutions, conducted research to understand why, in his words, "so many years into the digital revolution, progress in the data space is so slow."

He identified five key areas of critical importance. "Failure to deliver in any of these areas can scuttle an otherwise terrific data program," he stated in an article for [MIT Sloan Management Review](#).

- **Data quality:** Poor-quality data adds incredible cost and friction.
- **Putting data to work:** Unless companies put data to work in ways that return value, there is little business benefit. Ways to do so include data science (including AI and machine learning), exploiting proprietary data, creating a data-driven culture, monetizing data by selling it or building it into products and services, and treating data as an asset.
- **Organizational capability:** This refers to the people, structure and culture within the organization that support data programs. For example, silos can get in the way of data sharing.
- **Technology:** Technological infrastructure will be different for each company, but it will be difficult for companies to scale their data programs without the right tools and technologies in place.
- **Defense:** This category encompasses all the organizational tasks related to minimizing risk, including security, privacy and ethics.

Use Media to Create Warm Handshakes at Industry Conferences

BY DUSTIN SIGGINS

In-person events rebounded in 2022 and should continue to grow moving forward. Industry conferences are among the most valuable network-building opportunities. They're also one of the hardest places to develop relationships because everyone has limited time to accomplish many goals. Attendees throw business cards and product literature at as many people as possible to see what sticks.

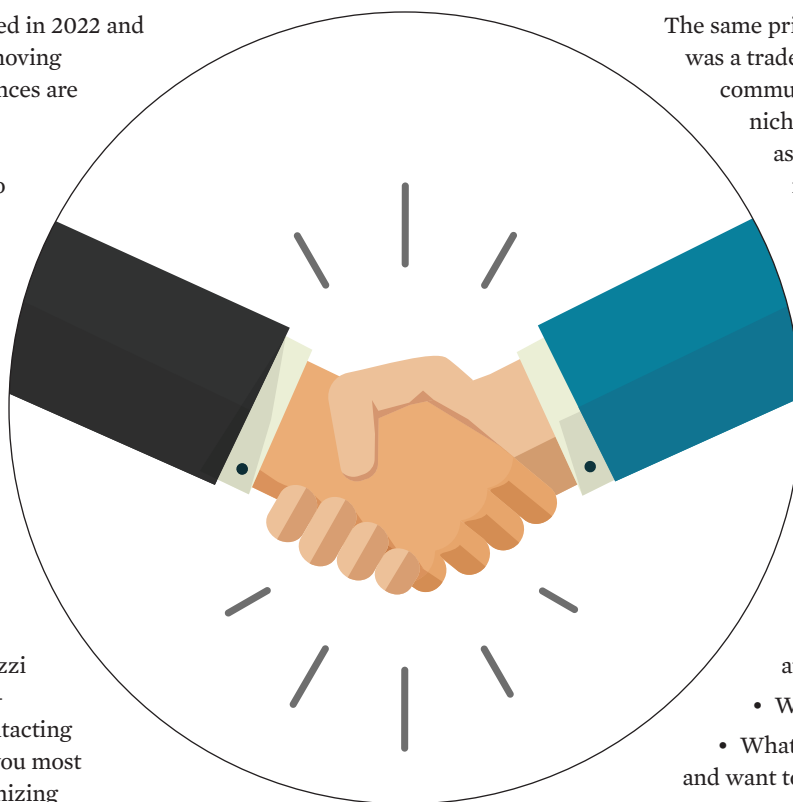
A better approach is to plan how to get in front of the right people ahead of time. Keith Ferrazzi popularized one method — researching attendees, contacting a few people with whom you most want to connect, and organizing individual meetings and small group gatherings on-site.

Ferrazzi's approach is a great application of the “inch-wide, mile-deep” method of building a network. However, it still requires the same “cold-call” sales approach as most other conference strategies — calling people who may or may not have heard of you to ask for their time at a busy conference.

What if you used a marketing approach that put your name in front of most or all attendees *and* gave you a better chance of success with the Ferrazzi approach? That approach exists, and it starts with putting your name and message in the press.

Turning Cold Handshakes into Warm Ones

Introducing myself to people at industry conferences was easy when I was a journalist. People had heard of me or my outlet; and if they hadn't, they still wanted to talk to me for coverage. Cold handshakes immediately became warm and, sometimes, hot handshakes.



The same principle held true when I was a trade association's director of communications. An industry niche had long distrusted the association, but by developing relationships with the niche's biggest outlet and including the niche's perspective in some of the association's other communications, we began to be a welcome face at their conferences.

Here's how to do it:

Do Your Research

You must know:

- Which outlets are most trusted by conference attendees
- What those outlets cover
- What those outlets are lacking and want to cover
- The top issues at the conference
- What stellar messaging and content you can provide which will stand out

Work Ahead of the Event

Develop and submit your content well in advance of the event. You don't want to be fighting for space with better-known competitors who have similar messages and target audiences.

Spread the Word

Spread your media exposure on social media, through email newsletters and in the gazillion flyers at the conference. [Give people every chance](#) to see your unique expertise before they meet you.

[There are many ways](#) to put great content in front of target audiences. Podcast interviews, traditional text interviews and thought leadership opinion pieces are popular tactics. You have to find what works for you, and execute.

Be Persistent

Just like handshakes, reaching out to the press isn't a one-and-done.

Every salesperson knows that a handshake, whether cold or warm, is just the start of what may be a long journey toward building a trusted relationship that results in a sale. The press is the same. You might get lucky and shake the right hand exactly when someone needs your product or service, but it's unlikely—and a single piece of press is unlikely to be so groundbreaking that it puts you at the top of the industry heap.

The best chance at creating warm handshakes at industry conferences is to build a Google roadmap ahead of time. Secure multiple media placements at least six months before the big conference, and then use your newfound credibility to secure

the highly desirable trade outlet spot two to three months ahead of time.

The hottest handshake is that which turns into a client relationship. But the next best one happens when conference attendees and organizers recognize you by name, seek your expertise, and make time for you on their calendars. Few of us have the money to make that happen, so take advantage of the press to create the relationships you want at industry conferences. **SMM**

Dustin Siggins founded the media relations firm [Proven Media Solutions](#). He is a business writer whose work has been published by *Forbes*, *Insider* and *Newsweek*.

Email marketing is the most implemented B2B marketing tactic (84% companies).

75% of B2B companies use social media, while 69% use content marketing and blogging.

Source: Sagefrog Marketing Group

86% of B2B marketing specialists identify LinkedIn as their most used social media platform.

Facebook is used by 79% and 60% use Twitter (though the latter may be dropping due to the current chaos at Elon Musk's company).

Source: Sagefrog Marketing Group

53% of marketers believe that webinars generate the most high-quality leads.

When done well, they provide a means to quickly earn the trust of prospects.

Source: Demand Gen Report

How to Squeeze All the Juice Out of Your Media Lemon

Press is good; surround-sound marketing and branding is better

"A big media placement is nice. But it's not going to move the needle on its own," says James Davis, who puts clients in everything from local radio to USA TODAY. He used to manage crisis communications for the Secretary of Defense; now, he runs a company that specializes in creating valuable connections across industries and in the press.

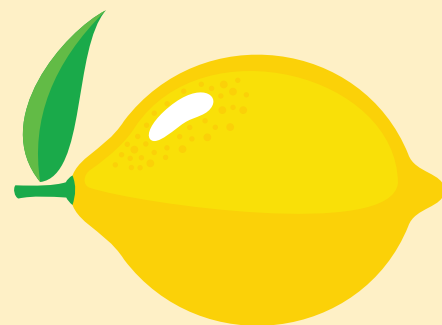
As Davis puts it, you can't squeeze all the juice out of your media lemon [without having a great marketing strategy](#).

A single *Washington Post* article, CNBC appearance or NPR hit is like getting a big contract—it looks

and feels good, and it will help. However, it's [just a blip](#) in the life cycle of your business without a supporting strategy and marketing infrastructure.

Done right, press and marketing create far more value together than they can separately. You and your competition likely share many of the same marketing and branding tactics—personal and company LinkedIn accounts, quality websites, and e-mail lists. However, many companies don't see value in media coverage, so they don't invest in it. This gives you an opportunity to stand out with prospects and create more leads.

While the competition uses hashtags in short social media



posts, you can share deep insights in trusted media. Their social media content will be about them—a clear sales pitch. Yours will lead to your media coverage—a lighter touch that pays long-term trust dividends and may earn more engagement.

For most complex sales, press coverage won't be the deciding factor for a prospect becoming a client. But it's one of the many touchpoints that can earn trust before, during and after negotiations. — *Dustin Siggins*