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How to target technology decision

makers

NOVEMBER 27, 2013

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KPMG announced last month (<http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/articles/515600/20131021/kpmg-london-thames-valley-technology-workers-employees.htm>) that UK technology leads the private sector in employment growth, while CCS Insight predicts (<http://www.fiercewireless.com/europe/story/despite-gloomy-outlook-will-european-ma-catch-fire-2014/2013-11-15>) a wave of tech M&A activity for 2014.

And in any buoyant market, sales and marketing suddenly becomes of greater importance. Which narrows the margin for error. Knowing what content to give to who and when in the sales funnel is tricky and no one can afford a "spray and pray" approach. But data on what information is relied upon during the purchase process specifically by **technology** decision makers is not widely available.

We know - we've been looking!

So we commissioned our own. We asked 150 decision makers in the UK who had made a technology

investment in the last year how they went about it.



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The results were surprising, and in stark contrast to some of the cross-industry data we have seen, showing the importance of this IT sector-specific data.

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Research and Long List Creation

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The information used early in the purchasing process fell into four natural categories.

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(http://www.ccgrouppr.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/IT-decision-makers-

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"Very likely to use" – peers & colleagues, search engines and consultants

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Aka "Immediate Sources"

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SEO's importance in B2B marketing is hardly novel, so search engines' high rank could only be expected. Meanwhile, the importance of peers, colleagues and consultants highlights brand

awareness. Where these individuals have no direct experience of a recommendable provider, they will suggest someone they are aware of and impressed by - making broad, regular media coverage

essential.

"Likely to use" – trade shows, trade media, networking events and industry analysts.

Aka "Classic Sources".

Trade media coverage appears to have two roles – the route to the consultants and peers mentioned above, and also as a reliable mechanism for approaching tech decision makers directly.

Trade shows and hosting networking events are part and parcel of many IT marketers' plans (budget depending), and given their uniquely independent status, relevant analysts are amongst your most potent influencers.

"Not likely to use" – national media and industry forums



Aka "Broad and Shallow Sources"


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National media is intrinsically too generalist to provide sufficient levels of insight for a purchaser when looking for potential solutions to niche business problems.

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And while industry forums offer access to knowledgeable industry peers, the typical perception of

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forums is – rightly or wrongly – that participants are often biased salespeople, undermining forums'

practical use.

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Aka "Social Media"

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Despite the B2B social media hype, for the technology audience, it just does not live up to it. LinkedIn

and YouTube for example are undoubtedly content-rich, though the research shows that neither are yet

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natural resources for IT decision makers.

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[Facebook\)](#) meanwhile appears to typify the common perception of not being an appropriate B2B channel, particularly for the technology market. Finally, Twitter. Its main purpose is to offer a compelling mechanism for audiences to engage – which appears to be an offer that tech decision makers are not inclined to take up.

Short List Creation

Immediately, we saw that more sources are relied upon at short list creation than in either the stage before or at the final decision phase. This is because modern B2B short list creation is usually done without direct supplier dialogue. Decision-makers research potential suppliers independently, gathering as much content as possible and then drawing conclusions before making contact.

Therefore, white papers, case studies and user reviews were easily the most trusted content as they lend themselves to independent research. These were closely followed by third party endorsements (trade media, analyst reports and national press) due to their influence as indirect recommendations.



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Thought leadership (both trade media coverage and webinars) closely followed as it provides reassurance of innovation, while the final trusted categories were blogs and videos. Like thought leadership, blogging offers an opportunity to impress with market views, whilst videos are ideal for explaining complex propositions – vital for time-starved tech purchasers.

Email newsletters however were not considered influential, and again nor was social media. Newsletters rarely show expertise or credibility as they are too often used to circulate bland market news. Hardly the evidence- or insight-based content that is clearly preferred.

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Final Decision

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Contrary to Short Listing, making the final decision tends to be done following direct supplier contact, training (/en-gb/b2b-marketing-training)

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The content categories follow the same pattern, with some minor place-swapping within the categories themselves. But the most important switch was that blogs and vendor video content moved from "useful" to "not useful".

This is because when finally deciding, purchasers have moved beyond information on the solution's nature or supportive thought leadership, but instead need evidence of practical ability (hence case studies and white papers retaining top spots at the final decision stage).

So what?

B2B marketers targeting IT decision-makers must create plenty of content, in various forms, and must simultaneously address the different needs of the various sales stages. Nothing new there of course, but this research (available in full here (<http://info.ccgrouppr.com/tech-decision-makers>)) highlights that for the IT decision maker, the medium used is equally important.

B2B IT marketers must combine multiple factors when developing their content. It's not just about the right message, but crucially, also about matching the delivery mechanism to the sales cycle timing.

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In putting this analysis together, we also noticed that there are important differences in purchasing processes according to the value of the IT being investigated, the type of IT (hardware, software, services etc.) and also the department the technology is being bought for. These findings will be the

topics of further blogs, or are available via this link (<http://info.ccgrouppr.com/tech-decision-makers>).
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