


Why enterprise B2B companies are looking for integrated PR and marketing agencies





Selling technical,
high-value, B2B products
and services is unique.

The fact that you're reading this paper indicates you know just how challenging it can be to attract the right kinds of prospects, work through an organisational buying process and land a meaningful and profitable deal.

The same challenges exist whether you're a vendor selling direct or part of the channel.

You don't know exactly who the person or team is that will table your solution initially in their organisation. You don't know how much they do or don't know about your brand, products or value proposition. And, you don't really know (to begin with) exactly why they are engaging with your firm.

Yes, you might know the marketing assets a prospect firm downloaded. Yes, you might know what website pages or lead-generation campaigns they interacted with. However, you most likely won't know the context behind the potential buyer's interest.

All you know is that something you said or did as a company has attracted an opportunity.

It's for this reason that public relations and marketing—traditionally two relatively disconnected services—increasingly need to be delivered as an integrated solution. Aside from the obvious cost and time efficiencies of working with a single provider that knows your products, ideal clients, brand, unique selling proposition and messaging, it also boosts the scale and velocity of go-to-market outputs.

The power of integrating marketing and PR

In a B2B technology sector setting, vendors or their partners hire PR firms first and foremost for media relations. That means hiring an agency that delivers a proactive program of media engagement to keep journalists up to date with newsworthy insights, news, and technology use-case examples.

The goal is to profile the vendor or partner as a reliable and important source of information that readers, viewers, or listeners will value and, by virtue of that fact, is of value to journalists.

As an aside, PR also includes crisis communication, employee communication, government relations and many other areas. But usually, in our experience, the first phone call from a vendor or partner to a PR firm is enquiring about media relations.

But, clients gain a compounding effect when their PR efforts work in tandem with their marketing campaigns. To explain why, we need to recognise that, more than ever, de-risking a complex purchase decision for a technology buyer is crucial.

B2B buyers spend just 17 per cent of their purchase consideration time meeting with potential suppliers. Meanwhile, they spend 27 per cent of their time researching independently online and 18 per cent of their time researching independently offline.¹

Therefore, ensuring solutions have a strong market presence from early in the customer journey is profoundly important. There just aren't that many opportunities to tell your story and address potential roadblocks (risks).

While many businesses may already have PR and marketing campaigns in play, these are far more likely to yield improved results if they're conducted with a holistic, strategic, and coordinated approach to program management.

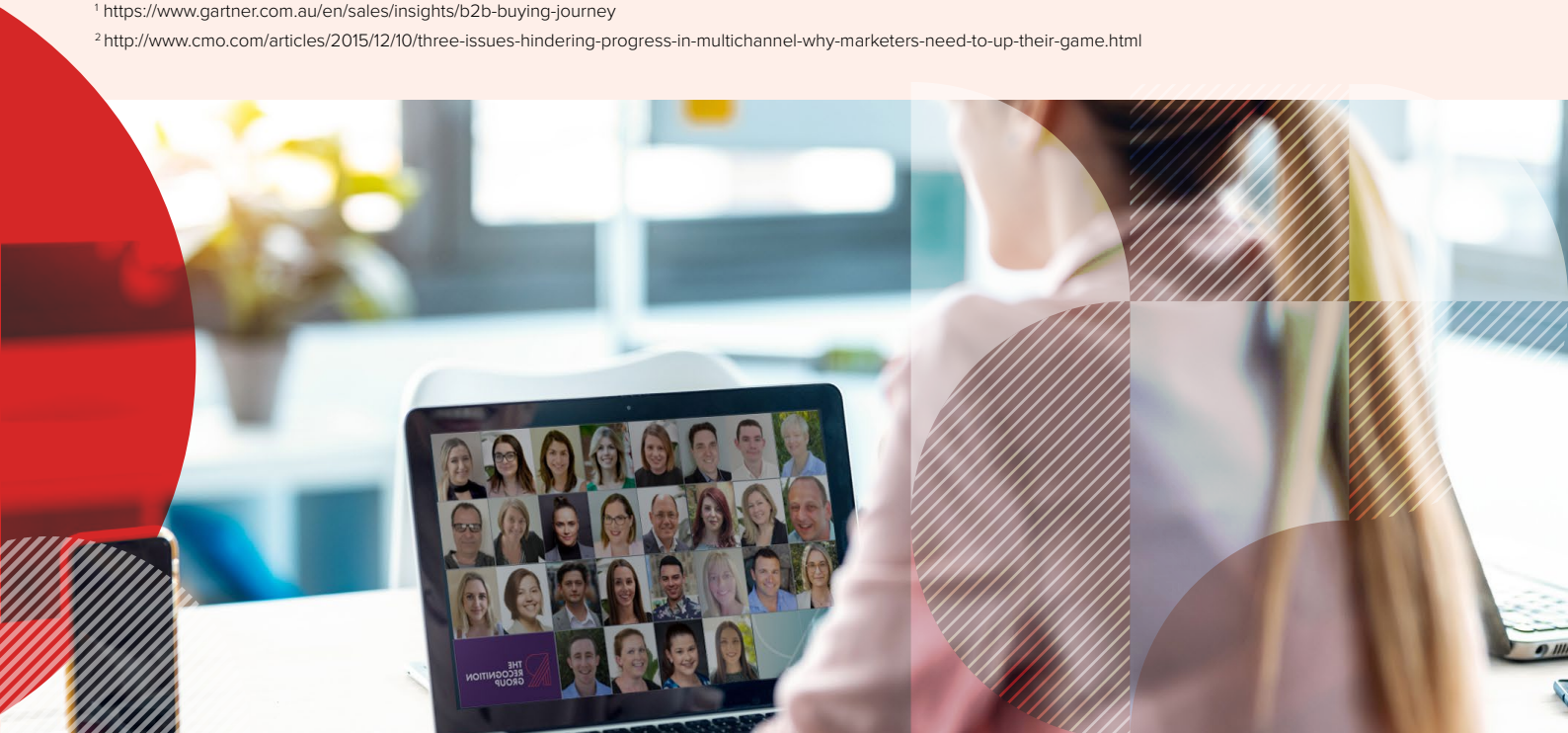
The pitch ideas and content an agency generates to appeal to journalists can often be repurposed and rehoused into lead generation campaigns. That's important because ideas and content cost money and time to generate, and it's a lost opportunity to simply use them once for a single purpose.

Sweating these marketing and communication assets is key to building a continuous and compounding go to market program. And, if it's one integrated agency that owns the entire lifecycle of these assets from idea to execution across the marketing and communication spectrum, then message clarity, market impact, and even costs of production all improve.

What's interesting though, is that, according to research, only 14 per cent of organisations are running coordinated marketing campaigns across all channels.² While this is only one measure, it does indicate that most companies are yet to break down silos (not just between PR and marketing) and realise the savings, efficiencies, and results a more integrated approach could generate.

¹ <https://www.gartner.com.au/en/sales/insights/b2b-buying-journey>

² <http://www.cmo.com/articles/2015/12/10/three-issues-hindering-progress-in-multichannel-why-marketers-need-to-up-their-game.html>



Integrated programs map better to B2B buyer behaviour

In 2022, more than half of buyers said their buying journey had increased somewhat or significantly since 2021. The average B2B buyer starts by conducting anonymous research on potential solutions and developing an informal list of potential vendors, before collecting information on costs. At this point, they tend to bring in other team members and start evaluating what solutions would fit well with their existing vendors. Before making a final decision, they look for input from peers in the community as well as from industry analysts and consultants.³

The same research has found that 84 per cent of B2B buyers said that the winning vendor's content had a positive influence on their buying decision. 62 per cent said that the winning vendor provided higher-quality content than their competitors. And, 59 per cent said they provided a better mix of content, while 52 per cent said the content made it easier to build a business case for the purchase.⁴

³ Demand Gen report: 2022 B2B Buyer Behavior Survey. Demandbase 2022.

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One mistake to avoid

One thing to consider is that PR is not marketing and marketing is not PR. Academically speaking, PR is sometimes described as a subset of marketing, but the discipline and knowledge required to be an effective PR consultant is not the same as a marketing strategist or program manager. A truly integrated agency has depth of experience and highly qualified talent that works in both quarters. PR is not an 'add on' to marketing and marketing is not a derivative of PR.

However, some B2B marketing agencies (the ones that don't know much about PR) will often say they 'do' PR as part of their service offering; but really can't do it well. The reality is, getting a media engagement activity wrong can cost you a lot. Journalists can be a gateway to millions of readers, viewers, or listeners. Not understanding what journalists need to do their job, what makes news or even how to communicate appropriately with them can lead brands into oblivion. There is a reason PR firms have existed separately for so long; it's a specialist area. If PR is important, or at least a hygiene factor in your marketing programs, then make sure the PR credentials of the integrated agency you choose are solid.

This is why our integrated offering is based on us bringing together our separate agencies in a single work team based on what each client requires.

Our B2B technology PR firm, Recognition PR (www.recognition.com.au) has been providing PR services to vendors, distributors, and partners for more than 30 years and our media relations services continue to be in high demand. We achieve a compounding marketing effect when our PR agency works together with our full-stack B2B marketing agency, Outsource www.outsource.com.au. Our integrated approach to PR and marketing helps your business:

- tell your story in a way that resonates with your target audience, deeply engaging them with your brand
- simplify complex products and services to make them easier for your customers to understand and buy
- generate more leads.

For more information on how The Recognition Group can help your business connect with your ideal customers and stakeholders with the support of expert PR and marketing consultants and a consistent, aligned strategy, contact the team today.

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