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MAXIMISE YOUR MARKETING POTENTIAL

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MAXIMISE

YOUR MARKETING POTENTIAL

For traditional industries like manufacturing, digital marketing has long taken a backseat. The sector invests less than most on marketing strategy, instead relying heavily on dealer contracts and direct distribution to drive growth. Marketing often doesn't extend far beyond appearances at trade shows, website maintenance, and occasional publication of white papers or brochures.

Established manufacturing firms often rely on the same processes that have served them well for years. While people never stop learning, formalised training processes tend to finish at the end of the onboarding process, with little investment into upskilling and reskilling later on. In the fast-paced world of marketing, where the only constant is change, that isn't a viable option.

Digital marketing is constantly evolving, making continuous learning *extremely important*.

Why it's time for a culture shift in manufacturing

Today's manufacturing companies find themselves in the midst of constant digital disruption and increasing buyer control. Given that the sector lags behind most others when it comes to digital innovation, there's a clear competitive advantage to be had for manufacturers to invest in modern marketing strategies. That said, it isn't always easy. Digital marketing is changing all the time along with evolving consumer habits and business models and ongoing disruption to supply chains. Trends, tactics, and technology change quickly and often unpredictably. For marketers, it's necessary to change with them.

In the end, it's all about becoming adaptable in an increasingly uncertain future in which there will be both new opportunities and new risks. That's why continuous learning is extraordinarily important for marketing teams, especially in the case of manufacturing firms that have been lagging behind in their digital transformation efforts. **Manufacturers must invest in constant upskilling and reskilling their teams to drive business growth and adapt to regular and often unpredictable shifts in demand.** In other words, they must be driven by a culture of continuous learning, where ongoing training and skills development are inextricably part of the job.

Keeping abreast of new technologies to drive growth

By now, most manufacturing leaders understand the importance and impact of new techs like robotic process automation (RPA), machine learning, and predictive maintenance. Indeed, the sector has been investing heavily in these areas in recent years. Yet while the benefits of such solutions are without doubt, communicating them to stakeholders, partners, and potential customers poses a significant challenge.



Manufacturing marketing teams might not need a deep understanding of how such techs work, but they do need to be able to communicate their benefits. For example, RPA is instrumental in the rise of lights-out manufacturing, which itself is a key driver of sustainable manufacturing. Sustainability is now top of mind for many potential customers, as businesses seek to improve the efficiency of their supply chains and uphold their corporate social responsibility goals.

Understanding and communicating the increasingly important roles of these solutions requires continuous learning across every customer-facing department, such as sales, marketing, and customer support. After all, the solutions themselves are constantly advancing, rendering a lot of what team members might have learned years back largely obsolete. With adaptation and innovation being key ingredients for survival in today's market, learning demands a formalised, top-down strategy that doesn't stop.

With digital marketing revolving around the fast-paced world of technological advancement, it is also the product of evolving customer demands and habits. Even in traditional sectors like manufacturing, potential clients will be conducting research online in a multitude of ways, such as reading blog posts, downloading whitepapers, and signing up to email newsletters.

In many ways, Business-to-Business (B2B) clients are behaving more like B2C consumers, hence the increasingly important role of social media and content marketing.

While still important, direct selling and trade shows are no longer the only tools in the manufacturing marketer's arsenal. Teams must keep ahead of these changes with continuous learning, so they're always ready to serve the needs of the modern B2B customer.



Learning from one another to develop essential skills

Far from being all about advertising, digital marketing spans multiple disciplines and business departments. Success demands close collaboration between sales, marketing, procurement, and customer support. Thus, continuous learning must apply across the board, with employees being driven and knowledgeable enough to correct and learn from their mistakes and distribute those insights throughout the organization.

Continuous learning is less about formal training, and more about building a culture of learning and innovation driven by collaboration and communication. To make that happen, there must be an effective infrastructure in place that promotes close ties

between departments and stops information silos from forming. As such, continuous learning isn't something employees should be doing alone all the time. It needs to be punctuated by team-orientated events and hands-on learning. Above all, it must be engaging and promote knowledge-sharing.

People, process, and technology in continuous learning

With all the talk of automation, it's sometimes easy to neglect the most important things of all – people and strategy. Though technology naturally plays a central role in digital marketing, the importance of personal and interpersonal skills is greater than ever. Marketing teams, like any other department, need the optimal blend of people, process, and technology:



PEOPLE

Continuous learning requires excellent social and leadership skills. **Leaders must avoid taking a traditional academic approach and instead lead by example.** They must themselves be champions of innovation and advocates of transformation. That way, they can integrate organization-wide learning into their working environments and align the objectives of different employees and departments with common, business-wide goals.



PROCESS

Continuous learning requires an adaptable and scalable strategy that allows teams to put their skills and ambitions to practical use. **Processes include established standards for onboarding, training, and knowledge-sharing.** Team members should be motivated to document and record information for sharing across the organisation as a whole, and update it whenever they detect opportunities for improvement. This new knowledge should then be applied to learning activities.



TECHNOLOGY

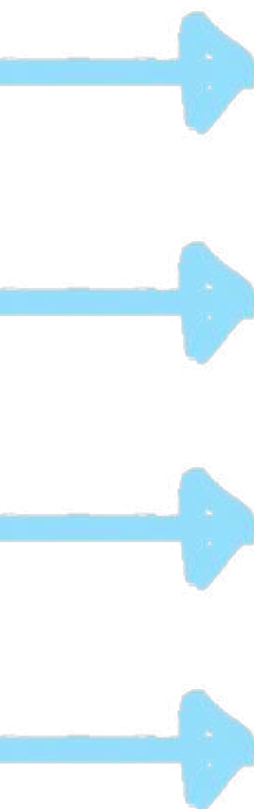
Technology includes the tools needed to bring people together under a shared learning environment and enable the key processes that make it all happen. **A continuous learning program should incorporate flexible online learning platforms that allow employees to learn both on and off the clock, no matter where they are.** Other essential tools include data analytics for measuring key performance indicators (KPIs), communication and collaboration platforms, and readily accessible knowledge bases.

How to launch a continuous marketing strategy that works

Marketing is a vibrant and thriving sector, and manufacturers have many exciting opportunities to build and retain knowledge and, in doing so, become more sustainable both economically and environmentally. As teams continue to learn about digital marketing, they will be able to reach more customers and establish a clear competitive advantage over the many that still lag behind. Below is an overview of the key steps it takes to launch a continuous learning program:

Final words

Implementing a culture of continuous learning is increasingly important for manufacturers of all sizes and across all fields. It offers a dependable way to keep ahead of new trends and the latest technological innovations, and the changing customer habits that come with them. For marketing teams, this means building a stronger reputation and promoting a more sustainable and transparent business model in a time when customers are warier than ever about who they do business with.



Be clear about what you want to achieve. Modern marketing should not happen in a bubble – your objectives must align with the overarching vision of the organisation. For example, a solar panel manufacturer might hope to boost sales by 30% over six months by focussing on environmental benefits in its marketing communications.

Create your continuous learning process. Once you've defined your goals, you can start building a program that aligns with your vision. Although the actual content of the program will be tailored to your needs, the process should start with onboarding and continue in alignment with employee career paths and organisational goals.

Empower your employees with the right tech. Traditional methods like live classes, workshops, and seminars, still have a place, but online learning tools are excellent for supporting continuous learning. Being able to access knowledge and learning tools in any location at any time is precisely what today's employees need.

Establish a way to measure success. Progress must be constantly recorded and measured to ensure success and detect opportunities for improvement. Using specific success measurements engages and motivates employees. This is also a clear benefit of online learning tools, which often have built-in analytics tools.



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