B2B Marketers Struggle To Connect Content Marketing With Business Value

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Results Of The Q2 2014 Forrester/Business Marketing Association/Online Marketing Institute Joint Study

CAMBRIDGE, Mass., July 16, 2014 /PRNewswire/ -- Most B2B marketers have wised up to the value of content marketing, but many are still early on in the journey from product-focused to relationship-building content marketing. According to the 2014 Forrester Research/Business Marketing Association/Online Marketing Institute study, "Compare Your B2B Content Marketing Maturity," while 51% of B2B marketing leaders rate their content marketing practices as very mature, an overwhelming 85% fail to connect content activity to business value — and, as a result, fail to retain customers or win their long-term loyalty. In fact, when asked to look back at the past 12 months and rate the effectiveness of content marketing efforts, only 14% of those surveyed gave their content practices high marks for delivering value back to the business.

"The majority of marketers find producing content that engages buyers to be a major challenge," said Business Marketing Association Chair Steve Liguori. "And that's for good reason. Our survey results show that the majority of B2B content practices focus too narrowly on early-stage buyer acquisition — which fails to engage buyers throughout their lifetime. To create content that attracts and builds customer relationships throughout the customer life cycle, B2B marketers must make a fundamental shift from writing about features and benefits to delivering valuable information that drives business results."

Marketers Struggle To Create More Powerful Content That Customers Value
B2B marketers have more work to do when it comes to using content to consistently deliver a valuable exchange of information with prospective buyers. To start, too many marketers continue to downplay the importance of content as marketing's main job. A startling 72% of surveyed marketers say less than half of their marketing staff plays a primary role in content marketing today — leaving content to quickly degrade to talk of products, features, and what the company has to offer, rather than cleverly packaged bits of the interesting insights buyers crave.

"The gap between content marketing awareness and good content marketing execution is not surprising. It's something we run into every day at the Institute - what we call the digital skills gap," said Online Marketing Institute Founder & CEO, Aaron Kahlow. "There simply aren't enough trained content marketers to do the leg work. But the imperative for education is here and seen across the board, from entry level to CMO."

Currently, content production:

- **Fails to highlight how products and services help customers become successful.** While 71% of surveyed marketers say their content features case studies or customer stories, only 3% admit this is a primary focus of their efforts.
- **Lacks forward-leaning insights that buyers can turn into action.** Only 12% of respondents make publishing research and perspectives the main focus of their content marketing, and no one said they engage external experts to validate those ideas.
- **Focuses on closing the deal, not on building relationships.** While more than three-quarters of respondents say they frequently communicate to their customer base, only 5% make this a priority, proving that marketers are too focused on acquisition rather than long-term loyalty.

"Business buyers can now access an abundance of digital information to research and shop for solutions on their own terms," said Forrester Research Vice President and Principal Analyst Laura Ramos. "That means many B2B firms risk losing more empowered customers to more responsive competitors — if they don't take the time to assess the true maturity of their content marketing engines and make sure that content connects with what concerns and interests buyers."

The good news, says Ramos: "Once marketing leaders have made the shift to relationship-building content marketing, they will find that it regularly fuels the demand generation engine, boosts brand visibility, and attracts buyers interested in the problems their company can solve."

About The Survey
This study uses data based on a survey of 113 B2B marketing executives, fielded in Q2 2014. BMA and OMI members, as well as qualified marketers, can access a complimentary copy of the research report on the BMA website at Http://www.marketing.org/BMAForresterContentSurvey.

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About the Business Marketing Association
For more than 90 years, the Business Marketing Association (BMA) has dedicated itself exclusively to the discipline of business-to-business marketing. We enrich the lives of B2B marketer by providing a forum to connect them to learn about new trends and network with peers to exchange ideas. As the largest organization in the world dedicated to B2B marketing, our 18 chapters and 2,500 members represent corporate professionals, agencies, small businesses and suppliers committed to advancing the practice of B2B marketing. To learn more, visit www.marketing.org.

About Online Marketing Institute
Founded in 2007, the Online Marketing Institute offers the world's largest online library of digital marketing classes taught by leading practitioners. Thousands of professionals, entrepreneurs, agencies, students, and teams across the globe use their Online Marketing Institute education to advance their careers and drive business results. Unlike traditional and generic education sources, OMI provides high quality, affordable, online, on-demand classes covering the most innovative and proven best practices in digital marketing, taught by world class practitioners. OMI's platform is ideal for busy working professionals and there's a digital marketing class to meet the needs of any student skill level (beginner to advanced), across any topic (email to search to social media), anytime (online and on-demand).

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