

Marketing at the Point of Choice

Jennifer Larsen Morrow, President
Creative Company, Inc.



As a business person, you know it's a good practice to build your brand by marketing to your target audiences at their various touch points – the places where you connect with and communicate to potential buyers or influencers. But in today's environment, the number of potential touch points and media choices for even a single target audience can be overwhelming. Time and resources often limit which touch points are addressed. Whether marketing online, in print, or in person, how do you choose where and when to invest your marketing budget to generate response and the highest ROI?

The secret? Market at the audience's points of choice. Instead of spreading your budget to any and all touch points, prioritize your marketing investment by focusing on the points at which potential buyers are making a decision and taking action to take the next step. Where do you start?

Step 1: Identify your target audiences.

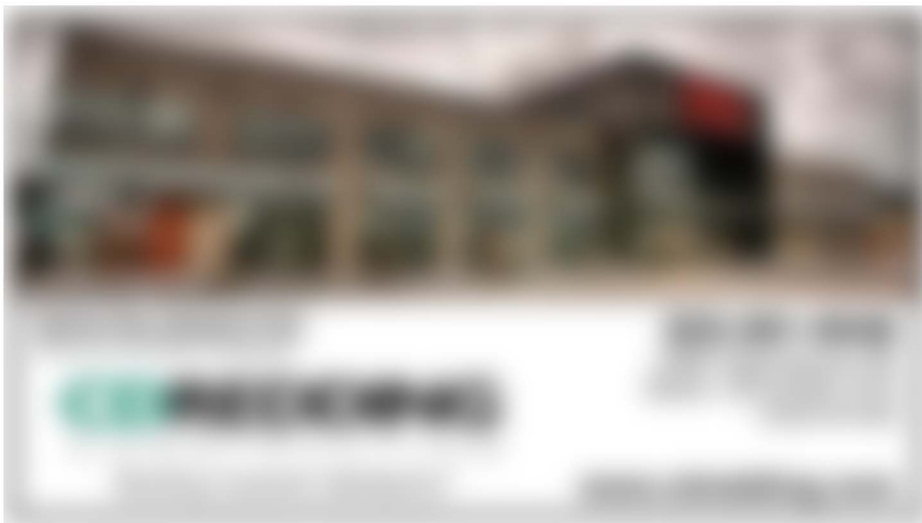
Well-planned marketing must always start with identifying your target audiences—defining who they are, what benefits they'll receive from your product or service, and what they will respond to. Most manufacturers and B2B marketers have multiple targets, each with different perceptions and expectations.

Step 2: For each target audience, identify the stages in the sales process.

Start at the beginning, when a potential buyer first finds out about your company, then identify the stages involved in this process. What happens if they find you online? What's the process after a trade show meeting? What about a sales call? Where is the interaction that will move them forward towards a purchase decision?

Step 3: Identify the buyer's decision points in the sales process.

Next, identify what information and action is needed by each target audience in order to move forward in the process. For example, a buyer might find your website by searching for the products you offer, then visit your website (and others) to conduct comparative research, request more information, or to make a purchase. Or at a tradeshow, a prospect will learn more about what you have to offer, and accept or decline the opportunity to talk further.



What is "Point of Choice"?

A point of choice is the situation where a prospect or buyer will take action, to move to the next step in the buying process. Research, request information, make a purchase. Unlike advertising or public relations that's designed to build awareness, the point of choice is focused on immediate response—taking action towards a purchase.

Step 4: Develop marketing strategies focused on these decision points.

Not only do you want to encourage the potential buyer to take the next step, but you also must ensure the buyer has the information and tools to make that decision and seamlessly follow through. If a prospect has received a referral to your company but can't find your website through a search engine, you have a problem ... and an opportunity.

For both business to business (B2B) and business to consumer (B2C) marketers, one of the most powerful points of choice is the internet. Organic search engine optimization (SEO) and pay-per-click online campaigns are critical components to support and drive audiences to your website. (Social media is a growing tool, but may not be appropriate for all audiences). Thus it's vital you have a strongly branded website with distinctive messaging, clear calls to action, and tools and information to support response. Offline points of choice vary greatly based on your industry, product or service offering, and target audiences.

It's important to note in a recent survey by **GlobalSpec**, industrial (B2B) firms cited the best new lead sources are the company website (70%), tradeshow (44%), and e-mail marketing (33%).

This is a quick overview of the point of choice concept. As with all effective marketing—know your audiences, evaluate your sales process, and put yourself in your audience's shoes. For a bigger return, support your brand first at the key points of choice for each target audience.

Creative Company's process is designed to optimize your brand at each point of choice. Give us a call to find out how we can increase the return on your marketing budget and deliver sustained results to your bottom line.

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