The Attention Economy

The Impact of Attention Scarcity on Modern Marketing

Featuring Contributions by Marketing & Sales Thought Leaders from:
Demandbase, Influitive, Marketo, Oracle Marketing Cloud, Vidyard, and more.
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8.25 seconds. That is the average attention span of your buyer today.

Even content designed to be newsworthy only gets an average of 15 seconds of attention and then most people are gone. As a marketer, what are you going to do, hurl more ads and emails at your prospects to try to get them back? It’s hard to get someone’s attention; it’s even harder to hold on to it.

If the success of your marketing is dependent on your ability to educate people, create awareness and change their attitudes, then you are going to have to get people to spend real time with the right material – and you need to do that every chance you get. This kind of attention is a rare – and essential – commodity that marketers can’t afford to waste. When a busy person – the kind you sell to – decides to click on a content offer you sent them, you have collectively created a great moment: A person with an appetite for the information that you possess has just offered you a slice of their incredibly limited attention. Despite thousands of other marketing messages, mountains of work emails, cat tweets, Facebook updates, etc., they have chosen to pick this moment to read about something you both care about. If you do a bad job with this precious moment, they will be off doing something else in a heartbeat – and chances are they won’t come back. Even worse, one way or another, they will eventually find the information they need and it may not be from you, but from one of your competitors.

Attention, real attention, is everything. Understanding it, measuring it and holding on to it is synonymous with great marketing today.”

Marketing in the Attention Economy

We asked a who’s who of leading B2B marketers, influencers and visionaries to discuss the impact of attention scarcity on their business, marketing strategies and day-to-day lives. Addressing different aspects of the attention challenge, our contributors share their secrets for marketing effectively in the attention economy. You’ll hear their insights on email marketing, content marketing, account-based marketing, personalization, engagement, video, data-driven marketing, customer-centric marketing, customer advocacy and programmatic advertising.
On with the Show

While we still have your attention, let’s dive right in. Here’s what our experts have to say about how marketers can – and must – adapt their strategies, programs and practices to better capture and hold on to attention.
Marketers Need to “Reset for Relevance” to Meet Attention Scarcity Head-on

One of the best illustrations of the scarcity of attention is that the amount of content produced by brands increased by 78% in 2014, but engagement with each piece decreased by 60%, according to Track Maven. The sad part of this lack of engagement is that, rather than fixing the issue, marketers keep pumping out mediocre content at an increasing pace.

Recent research from Euromoney Institutional Investor found that 50% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their content isn’t interesting enough to engage their audience. Thirty-five percent said they don’t really know what content their audience is interested in. Yet, this same research estimates that $100 billion will be spent globally on content marketing and thought leadership in 2016.

This is a sad state of affairs. And my biggest question is why aren’t we fixing it? The nature of attention is that it’s a human resource that has limitations – there’s only so much to go around. It’s not like we can manufacture more of it. What marketers need to figure out is how to get their audiences to redirect that limited supply to their content and ideas. For me, this means becoming so damn relevant that the audience realizes the best way to spend their attention is with your content. Spending money, resources and effort on content that no one reads or responds to is not sustainable – or even rational.

“The nature of attention is that it’s a human resource that has limitations – there’s only so much to go around. It’s not like we can manufacture more of it.”

The best way to get a reset on relevance is to stop, step back, and get to know your audience. Get to know them really well. There’s no excuse for not knowing what will interest them or what they will place value on learning more about. For me, this means developing personas. Not based on what you think you know, but on insights derived from talking to your customers and prospects – enough of them until you keep hearing the same stuff over and over related to the problems your products solve.
It also means that marketers need to realize that no one cares if they publish content every Tuesday at 10 a.m. on their blog. That’s your schedule, not theirs. Your audience also doesn’t care that your campaign runs its course over a three-month quarter and then stops. That’s your construct. These unnatural schedules and artificial constructs can flip the switch to shut down attention by cutting off those who are invested in the topic.

With information only a keystroke away 24/7, marketers need to unfold complete storylines that are available whenever the mood strikes.

We need to filter out the most relevant topics and build content based on them that will continue to develop ideas and expand thinking. One-off content will only get you “drive-by” views, not sustained engagement. Building a school of thought will attract both promoters and detractors — and that’s what draws and keeps attention. Additionally, we need to make sure that we connect the dots in the thinking by building hub and spoke structure around it. If you want to keep your audience’s attention, then you need to keep on connecting them with your ideas from channel to channel and story to story.

How do you combat attention scarcity in your own life?

I spend two hours every morning looking for new thinking from new people. But I also check out what people whose ideas I value are sharing and saying. And I make lists, set up Google alerts for topics I want to track and live in my calendar. If it’s out of sight, it’s also out of mind.

Ardath Albee, CEO of her firm Marketing Interactions, Inc., helps B2B companies with complex sales create and use persona-driven content marketing strategies to turn prospects into buyers and convince customers to stay. Ardath is the author of Digital Relevance: Developing Marketing Content and Strategies that Drive Results and eMarketing Strategies for the Complex Sale. She has been voted one of the 50 Most Influential People in Sales and Marketing for the last five years.
Today, I feel as though most of the marketing and sales world emulates those children: Everyone is jumping up and down trying to catch my attention, yelling “Me, Me, Me,...” and sadly a few are trying to pick my pocket.

It’s fairly easy to ignore those messages. I mark them as SPAM in my email and ignore phone calls from people I don’t recognize. The customer’s sophistication in learning how not to pay attention increases at almost the same rate as the marketer’s clever new ideas and approaches to try to capture that attention.

But for the most part, to address this lack of attention, what sales and marketers do is just turn up the volume, figuratively and literally. The number of messages across all channels skyrocket – the content hasn’t improved, but the volume simply increases.

Customers filter that out, as well.

Theoretically, we know the answer to this: It’s relevance, impact and meaning.

Sadly, the practice is far from the theory. Recently, I read research on email marketing: 42% of email marketers use no targeting techniques at all; 37% use limited targeting.

What this data says is that as much as we talk about relevance, impact and meaning, all we are doing is jumping up and down, waving our hands and shouting “Me, Me, Me...”

Modern marketers and sellers concerned about the issue of attention scarcity implicitly believe they deserve, or have earned, the attention of the customer or prospect. Yet the behaviors and practices of modern marketers and sellers demonstrate that they don’t deserve the attention they crave.

I believe there is an attention scarcity problem, but it’s felt by customers! Sales and marketing are
Customers are eager to learn – but about the things they care about, in terms that are specific, relevant and impactful to them.

busy saying "Me, Me, Me...,” but spending scarce time in understanding what challenges their customers face as enterprises and individuals and what solutions they need.

Customers aren’t being engaged in relevant or impactful conversations about the issues they face. While sales and marketing have tremendous tools they can leverage to research and understand the enterprises and individuals they are targeting, only a few do. I suppose it’s too much work to be relevant, timely and impactful. It’s far easier to send 100s and 1000s of generic messages, hoping to get some response.

Yet customers want us to solve the attention scarcity problem. They are so busy managing the day-to-day, they seldom have an opportunity to question, “Are we missing something? Are there ways we can improve? Are there opportunities we should be exploiting? Can we be better?”

We can solve that problem. We can solve the customer attention scarcity problem – separating ourselves from everyone else. But we have to do the work. We have to know what problems we are the best in the world at solving (being honest with ourselves), then focus on customers who have those problems and not waste our time on anyone else.

We have to leverage the great marketing, sales and analytic tools available to reach the right people with the right message at the right time. We have the capability, particularly with sales, to tailor an approach that is specific to the individual and enterprise, to engage them in specific discussions about them and their business.

We just have to do the work.

The most effective way to get customers to pay attention is to first pay attention to them!

How do you combat attention scarcity in your own life?

We are always looking at our customers, their businesses, industries and markets. We constantly position ourselves with insight, discussions, ideas focused first on them, not us. We know if what we are doing is important and relevant to the issues they face, then we can capture their attention and their imaginations. But we don’t want everyone’s attention. Having said that, we are not a “charity business” focused on helping everyone. We are viciously focused and pragmatic about what we are the best in the world at doing. While we get lots of people who want to talk to us, we only invest in those that fit our competency and our ability to have an impact.

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What’s the real impact of attention scarcity for today’s marketer? Let’s take a look. I’ll start by showcasing two scenarios that highlight the light and the dark sides of attention scarcity in today’s marketplace: The dark side of attention scarcity could lead a customer to respond to your marketing with:

- Don’t you know I’m a customer? Seriously? DELETE!
- Why would I spend an hour of my busy time watching a webinar on that topic? Don’t you know what I care about? DELETE!
- Ewwww, an obvious retargeting ad about that same webinar that is not useful to me – now this is really getting annoying! WISH I COULD DELETE!

Ok, that’s obviously a nightmare-inducing scenario for every marketer. Deep breath! Now let’s imagine the light side: The reaction that you want – and the reaction that you will get – when you offer people personal, relevant and useful messaging:

- Great, thank you for understanding my pain and for that useful information on how I can solve my problem quickly. I will pass this along to my colleagues too. I feel understood. SHARE!
- Yes, I’m happy to spend an hour of my time learning how to get the results I’m striving for. Thank you for the invite! SIGN ME UP!
- I feel appreciated, thank you for the call and for the personal reply, I’m not just a number to your company. I FEEL VALUED!

It’s probably obvious that it’s both easy and hard to capture the attention of today’s buyers. So how can you actually do it well?

**Be Personal**

The first thing you can do is make your marketing as personal as possible. In many cases, this means that you need to have a deep understanding of your buyer and customer. Do you have personas developed? You should. Create buyer personas that help inform your marketing and sales activities across the entire customer lifecycle (from acquisition to retention to cross-sell and up-sell) and offer descriptions that are deeper than surface demographics and firmographics.

Once you have a deep understanding of who your buyer is, use this data to offer them tailored communication on each and every channel that you use to interact with them. This may mean setting up segmentation based on personas in your marketing automation platform, and then listening to their behaviors across channels so you can respond with a personalized message, offer, piece of content at the right time and in the right place, based on who they are.
How do you combat attention scarcity in your own life?

I find the moment of Zen by putting down my phone, closing my laptop and valuing the person in front of me right now, right in this moment.

Create buyer personas that inform your marketing and sales activities across the entire customer lifecycle and offer descriptions that are deeper than surface demographics and firmographics.

Consistency Is Key

But breaking through is more than being in the right time and place at the right moment. It’s also about consistency. Consistent communication, message and personalization. Like the example of the light and dark side that I started with, a set of messages that comes from a place of understanding (who they are, what they are doing, and what their pain points are) is vastly more effective than a set of messages that comes from a place of volume. Ultimately, the messages based on understanding resonate with buyers; these are the ones they engage with, that convert and build loyalty.

Being Personal Pays

Engagement is critical—it’s what fuels your relationship with a buyer and customer throughout their lifetime. And that pays off because more engaged customers spend more, renew at higher rates and advocate more frequently. Focusing your time and energy to build personalized marketing is ultimately what will help you break the sound barrier of “marketing noise” and build relationships that last a lifetime.

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Recently, Facebook announced changes to its algorithm to show users more things that they’ll “actually spend time reading or watching.” This shift – from caring about clicks to focusing on whether people engage with the content after they click – is indicative of the broad impact of attention scarcity across all digital channels. We’re starting to treasure time spent reading or watching because it’s so incredibly rare.

What this means for you as a marketer is that your challenge is no longer simply how to get attention – no small feat in itself! You now have to think about:

1. How to do more with someone’s attention while you’ve got it
2. How to assess the quality of visitors’ post-click engagement

Let’s look at the first challenge. Content is the fuel that drives qualified demand. And it takes a lot of content to influence a purchase – according to an IDG Enterprise study, buyers of B2B technology consume at least 7 pieces of content per persona before a purchase decision is made. For enterprise purchases, up to 17 different people may be involved. This means marketing would need to make about 120 unique points of engagement in order to fully influence the decision. Given current click-through rates, the math isn’t on your side.

With regard to assessing engagement, marketers need to make the distinction between content offers (e.g. emails and display ads) and the content itself. If a prospect clicks through on your offer and downloads your content but never reads it, have you really helped qualify them?

It’s time to start viewing the attention people pay to your content as a unit of currency – something you can measure and use to identify your most sales-ready buyers.

**A Tale of Two Prospects**

Meet Bob and Sally. They both have the same title and buyer persona, and they both clicked through on your content offer, but only one is a qualified lead. The trick is how to tell who’s who. To your marketing automation platform, all clicks are equal: the casual content browser and the serious buyer looks exactly the same. After Bob clicked, he spent 15 minutes bingeing on your eBook, case study and datasheet. Sally, on the other hand, only spent 15 seconds with your content. Who would you say is ready to talk to sales?
The Rise of the Fast-Moving Buyer

Bob is a fast-moving buyer. Digital technology and the ease with which anyone can find information online has empowered Bob to move really fast when he’s motivated to self-educate. His B2B content consumption behavior is very similar to the way TV viewers binge-watch their favorite shows. The fact that he engaged with multiple content assets in a single session demonstrates the intensity of his interest.

As a marketer, your value to a fast-moving buyer like Bob lies in your ability to help him get a good portion of his research done in those moments when he is ready to do it. Attention is Bob’s gift to give. The challenge is to make sure Bob engages with enough of your content to influence him and convert him to your point of view before he goes looking elsewhere.

Sally, on the other hand... well, that click didn’t do much for you or for her, did it? The problem is that all too often Sally gets passed to sales based on her having clicked on something – even though she never meaningfully interacted with the content.

Engaged buyers like Bob are in a natural state of sales readiness. Marketers need a better way of assessing the sales readiness of Bob, Sally and all the other visitors to their website and content. The ability to accommodate fast-moving buyer behavior with the right type of content experience is a tremendous advantage. However, most marketers today have absolutely no idea what happens after someone clicks on their ad, fills out their form or downloads their content – maybe they read or watched, maybe not. This needs to change.

Content Engagement is a Definitive Indicator of Sales Readiness

New research shows that over one third of prospects will consume multiple pieces of content in a single session and prospects who binge are at least 2.4X times more likely to be sales-ready.

You need to be able to identify content bingers and faster-moving buyers like Bob and treat them differently than you treat Sally in the example above – you want to fast-track Bob to sales, while continuing to nurture Sally. The ability to capture real attention metrics and classify visitors based on how they engage with your content is incredibly powerful.

“It’s time to start viewing the attention people pay to your content as a unit of currency.”
Righting the Balance

How much of your marketing effort is focused on acquiring attention (getting people to click) versus sustaining attention (getting people to actually spend time with your content)?

In order to hold on to their buyer’s attention and get more value out of every click, marketers have to shift their focus to delivering post-click content experiences that engage buyers.

With attention in such short supply, you need to hold on to it for as long as you can. Think in terms of content journeys, rather than one-off content events, and consider how your content is organized, packaged, delivered and tracked.

Content marketing automation solutions optimize content delivery and take the guesswork out of ensuring that your prospects always see the next most relevant content asset. It’s about holding on to your prospects’ attention by delivering rewarding content experiences that match the buyer’s journey and behavior. It’s also about allowing buyers to move through your content at their own pace, not yours: fast-moving buyers will self-accelerate; slower moving buyers will get there eventually.

By shifting the balance from capturing to keeping attention, B2B marketers can better accommodate the educational needs of their most engaged prospects and identify the content bingeing behavior that is a telltale sign of real sales readiness.

How do you combat attention scarcity in your own life?

Spotify and a good pair of headphones! I listen to music constantly to tune out distractions and help me focus on what’s important in the moment. Lately, my personal ‘attention playlist’ includes a lot of David Bowie (what a legend – I’ve been binge-listening to his entire catalogue) and Father John Misty.

Nick Edouard is co-founder, president and CMO of LookBookHQ, the only content marketing automation platform for B2B marketers. He has previously founded or led several high growth technology companies in Canada, the US and the UK. Prior to LookBookHQ, he was President, North America of Nomad Digital. A frequent speaker at marketing conferences and author of numerous articles on marketing best practices, Nick holds a MA (Hons) degree in Classics & Philosophy from Trinity College, University of Oxford. He is still trying to figure out what to do with it.
Winning the Battle for Attention by Focusing on Targeted Audiences

We’re all competing to capture the attention of our best prospects and customers; and let’s face it – that’s no easy feat. We’re bombarded daily with information from all sides and individually choose to let in what we care about in the moment and block out anything that just creates overload.

With research and buying habits from our personal lives bleeding into and influencing our professional lives, there’s a battle for attention that’s getting tougher to fight every day. Just like we’ll disregard a commercial on TV or an ad in a magazine due to its lack of relevance to us, we’ll also block out communications from brands that don’t resonate with us or simply don’t address challenges we’re facing.

Engagement is the new currency for B2B marketers. When we can capture and hold the attention of our audience, we have a real opportunity to nurture and mature our relationships. Here are 4 things to consider when trying to build trust with your audience:

1. Focus Your Efforts on Those You Want to Engage

The notion of mass communication has been proven to reduce engagement and ultimately dilute performance. Getting tons of people to read your latest e-book or visit your website is great – but if none of them have the potential to turn into customers, have you really achieved anything? A better way is to get specific about who you want to reach. An Account-Based Marketing (ABM) strategy is a great way to help focus your efforts on targeted audiences that have the highest propensity to engage with your message as well as to turn prospects into customers at a higher rate.

2. Target for Engagement

You first need to build your target account list with your sales team. In doing so, you should answer these questions: What companies are most important to achieving your revenue for the year? Who are the 20 percent that are going to drive 80 percent of your results? There are a few different approaches you can take to build this list – hire a predictive analytics company, identify the vertical industries the sales and marketing teams are already targeting, or understand how sales is aligned and ensure their strategic accounts are included in your target account list.

Approximately 80 percent of website visitors aren’t from accounts that are likely to buy our solutions.
Whatever path or combination of paths you choose, you need to collaborate with your sales team along the way and ensure they iterate on the list based on their experience in the field. Once you have your target account list, begin marketing to these target accounts to increase your awareness within them. You can’t control when those accounts will be evaluating solutions like yours, but you can make sure that you are top of mind when they do and that you deliver relevant, contextual content that keeps them engaged and helps throughout a buyers’ journey. Consider always-on campaigns that will keep you in the game, but reduce waste through specific targeting:

- **Account-Based Advertising** is a great way to keep your message always in front of target accounts without wasting valuable ad dollars on unintended recipients.
- **Account-Based Retargeting** (retargeting only to valued account visitors) or always-on nurturing gives your target the ability to self-select a prospect’s journey and information consumption process.

3. Measure by Engagement

Most marketers want to focus on an attribution model that shows revenue optimization for channel and assets – and that’s a good thing. But don’t lose sight of upstream indicators that can provide key insights into what drives that downstream attribution. Before you begin your engagement-focused campaigns, take a benchmark for 30 days to understand how your accounts are currently engaging with your campaigns. This will be imperative to understanding the impact of your marketing on those accounts. Then, as your campaigns launch and complete, measure the engagement you achieved with your target accounts. The accounts in which engagement increased the most represent the lowest hanging fruit for deeper funnel campaigns that drive those directly attributed results.

**How do you combat attention scarcity in your own life?**

I celebrate my attention scarcity. It’s something so ingrained in me that it’s difficult for me to overcome. In fact, I often… wait a second, what were we talking about?
4. Enable Sales to Identify and Take Action on Engagement

At Demandbase, we see that approximately 80 percent of website visitors aren’t from accounts that are likely to buy our solutions. So just as we have to cut out the noise from around our targets, we have to help the sales team cut through the noise to focus on what matters to them – accounts that are engaged and those that they can turn into sales opportunities.

When there are spikes in engagement from an important audience segment (AKA a target account), Sales has to be made aware immediately in order to capitalize on and covert that engagement into business results. This can be fairly easy to do when you have known people in your database, but proves trickier when those triggers are anonymous. It’s critical to be able to identify both and empower sales with the intelligence they need to get ahead of the competition.

Leads are no longer okay for your sales team. With limited attention spans, we have to be able to drive deeper engagement with our target accounts and turn that engagement into actionable insights for our campaign performance and sales teams to take into action. Engagement through relevance, timing and enablement is how we’re delivering on this shift.

Peter Isaacson is a proven business leader with over 25 years of marketing experience in job responsibilities ranging from branding and advertising, to corporate communications and product marketing. This includes deep experience in both B2C and B2B marketing and managing large teams across international markets.

As Chief Marketing Officer for Demandbase, Peter is responsible for overall marketing strategy and execution, including product, corporate and field marketing. Prior to joining Demandbase, Peter was CMO at Castlight Health, helping to scale the company and build the marketing team prior to their successful IPO. Peter has also held leadership positions at Microstrategy and Adobe, where he led various functions, including brand marketing, WW field marketing, and the WW Education vertical business. Peter got his start in advertising, working at agencies in New York on accounts ranging from Procter & Gamble to Compaq computers.
I hate to break it to you, but as a modern B2B marketer you have the most challenging job out there. You have to compete with cat videos and memes, Facebook and Twitter feeds, Slack channels and hundreds of emails, and a bazillion other digital interruptions that vie for your buyers’ attention every day. “Impossible!” you say. Don’t lose hope.

The attention economy is very real and it is forcing us all to be at the top of our games. It’s harder than ever to get someone’s attention and even more difficult to keep it. Therein lies one of the greatest challenges for modern B2B marketers, but with it, a massive opportunity.

From Getting Engaged to Saying “I Do”

In this new world, engagement is king. Clicks, views and likes are nice, but they demonstrate behavior rather than interest. Kind of like a flirtatious text, or at best, a blind date. The real measure of success for a piece of content or a marketing campaign is the level of actual engagement it drives with potential buyers and influencers. Engagement in your content demonstrates relevance, interest and intent, and it gives you the precious opportunity to educate, convince and convert. Like someone who chooses to go out on a second or third date! There’s a reason we call the intent to get married an engagement. And once you’re engaged, the natural next step is to say I do.

What does this all mean in practice? It all comes down to a strategic investment in both the art and science of generating engagement and activating intent.

The Art of Attention: Getting Your Message Heard

Modern buyers don’t want to be sold, they want to be educated, entertained and inspired. But their time is precious and they’ve become accustomed to quick hits of engaging content (thanks YouTube!) and the ability to consume curated information in binge-mode, on-demand (thanks Netflix!). They also demand relevance and content that is curated and personalized to their needs.

As marketers, we need to think about how to create content experiences that align with these shifting paradigms. Content must be visually engaging, relevant, personalized and offered in a format that is quick and easy to consume. This is one of the reasons why I’m so passionate about video as a content medium.

Audiences love it, it works well for marketers, and it enables you to share a wealth of information in a very short period of time in an inspiring or emotional way. It’s premium currency in the attention economy. And when you go to the extreme and deliver personalized videos to someone’s inbox with their own name woven into the story, it’s not surprising that click-through and engagement rates skyrocket.
The Science of Engagement: How to Listen to Your Data

As we shift towards a focus in driving greater engagement, it’s a natural extension to track and measure that engagement as a way of better qualifying intent. This idea suggests an interesting future for lead scoring, segmentation and prospect nurturing. If we’re able to measure each individual’s actual engagement in our different messages and pieces of content, we can quickly identify our hottest prospects and infer what topics they are most interested in. The potential here to drive organizational efficiency and higher conversion rates in marketing and sales is substantial. This is the real opportunity that stems from the attention economy. So don’t be frightened, be excited!

Modern buyers don’t want to be sold, they want to be educated, entertained and inspired. But their time is precious and they’ve become accustomed to quick hits of engaging content (thanks YouTube!) and the ability to consume curated information in binge-mode, on-demand (thanks Netflix!).

How do you combat attention scarcity in your own life?

I never take for granted that there are people, important people, who depend on me every day for guidance, wisdom, direction or support. It’s easy to get lost in a sea of digital interactions, but by remaining empathetic to the real individuals who make up that vast network I ensure my priorities stay in line with what really matters to myself and those around me.

Tyler Lessard is the Chief Marketing Officer at Vidyard, a leading provider of video marketing and video analytics solutions for the enterprise. A recovering Engineer, Tyler drives global marketing strategy for Vidyard as well as thought leadership in the areas of content marketing, video marketing, demand generation and sales enablement. When Tyler is not chasing his marketing dreams, he’s chasing at least one of his four adorable children.
There was a time when our only coffee options were Folgers, Sanka and some other unmemorable brand. Today, we can literally choose from options that satisfy not just our needs, but that conform with our personality types. Like coffee shops, we are fighting for the right to serve a finite population of customers in a dizzying field of marketing vendors. So how do we stand out in the crowd, to make sure our message is heard, and that we don’t fall victim to the early morning roundup and deletion of emails?

Personas, that’s how. I know you’ve heard it all before, but if you do not understand what motivates your buyers at every stage in their journey, you have no chance of getting them through the door. Think of your subject line as your welcome sign. All of the coffee shops have welcome signs, but what makes yours more enticing to a customer than another?

You may have already gone through the exercise of writing personas, perhaps you are even using them. Your personas are going to help you to articulate your customer’s pain points. Ask yourself, “What would motivate prospects to seek out your particular service, and how do you guide them to choose you instead of your competitors?” The answer is pretty simple: They want you to make them feel awesome. It doesn’t matter if your consumer is looking to fulfill a need at work or in life; the solution must make his or her life more awesome.

Once you have given your personas names, pain points and motives, you can pinpoint what delights them and start crafting your story to appeal to them specifically. Think of the story as a courtship – you’ll start with an introduction and with each incremental email, they will get to know more about you and vice versa. Think your story through from the beginning all the way to the happy ending where you pop the big question, “Download our Trial” or “Schedule a Demo.”

It doesn’t matter if your consumer is looking to fulfill a need at work or in life; the solution must make his or her life more awesome.
The Subject Line – AKA Getting Them in the Door

This is where your message lives and dies. If you can’t get them past the subject line, the rest of your message will live in obscurity. Your personas should always inform your subject line.

Here are some examples of personas, and how you can use them to craft compelling subject lines:

**Persona 1: Mike**
Socially active, hip, cares about the environment

**Mike Subject Line:**
“Coffee that grows your beard and your garden”

**Persona 2: Janet**
Busy commuter, convenience is a top priority

**Janet Subject Line:**
“Coffee that is hot and ready when you are”

**Persona 3: Maria**
Student, limited income, drinks coffee for the wakeup buzz

**Maria Subject Line:**
“Your morning wake up, not stick up”

These subject lines imply that you know your prospects. You’re appealing to the things they care about. You want to make them feel awesome. Now let’s talk about ‘you’. You literally, and figuratively. YOU are attempting to build a relationship and should avoid talking about yourself, but do use ‘you’ liberally. Avoid using your company name and dry resume style facts.

**Subject Line Don’t:**
Weekly Newsletter: Java’s House of Copy

**Subject Line Do:**
Your daily dose of copy just arrived – and it’s fresh

Consider using more interactive content to engage your reader – and decrease the chances of them dropping off from boredom.
Content

The Demand Factory is a hungry beast. Creating timely and relevant content can be a huge expense for any organization, which is why you need to invest your content dollars on the right assets. While white papers still have their place, they are becoming increasingly unpopular, because of the time it takes to digest them. Many readers are easily frustrated with having to dig through the fluff and technical jargon to find the few important tidbits they need to validate that your service will make them more awesome. Consider using more interactive content to engage your reader – and decrease the chances of them dropping off from boredom. Here are some of our favorite asset types:

- **Interactive quizzes** that engage clients (and provide us with important data)
- **Infographics** with a fun but informative summary of important facts
- **eBriefs** and one-pagers that condense a white paper into a more digestible format

Sure, it’s easier to serve all of your clients the same trusty mug of generic black coffee, but eventually you are going to lose them to the guy next door. If you really want to break through the noise in email marketing, you will need to serve Mike his skinny latte with a doggy bag of coffee grounds for his garden. So ask yourself, ”what kind of coffee drinkers are my customers?”

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**How do you combat attention scarcity in your own life?**

Since we have unlimited amounts of information sitting in the palm of our hands these days, it’s far too easy to be “somewhere else” by reading, posting, texting or watching a video rather than unplugging and taking in the experience you’re in. I keep my phone in my pocket when I’m with people, at the gym and even at concerts. To get some downtime and unplug, it’s mixing music and flying drones that clears my head and restores my balance.

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*For more than 20 years, David Lewis, founder and CEO of DemandGen, has been a pioneering innovator in digital marketing, and has overseen marketing for some of Silicon Valley’s leading technology firms. David and his team at DemandGen have been at the forefront of the transformation taking place in marketing by helping 100s of the top sales and marketing teams around the world incorporate marketing technology to drive sustainable growth.*
They say records are made to be broken, but no one thought this one would, until it was. The 2015-16 Golden State Warriors, under the direction of Coach Steve Kerr, won 73 out of 82 games and basketball aficionados and experts agree that one of the keys to the Warriors success is the depth of their bench. Everyone, each and every player, knows the system, supports each other, embraces their own role and rallies around the mantra “Strength in Numbers.”

We can take lessons from the Warriors’ “Strength in Numbers” as we focus our internal teams to combat attention scarcity. How? By ensuring all your players work from the same PlayBook, you can ensure that your customers have a more personal and relevant experience with your team at any touch point. Orchestrating that personalized and relevant experience for your customers across departments and channels is not an easy task, but it’s worth the effort. Organizations that can deliver on this promise will win the attention scarcity battle.

Much like a star player on a basketball team, Account Executives often get the glory when deals close, but it takes a true bench of players, an entire well-oiled machine to win consistently. In B2B, this includes all customer touch points such as sales, development, marketing, customer success, professional services, support, finance, education, the executive staff and more.

What does a Winning PlayBook look like? In a nutshell, the Playbook puts all the players “In the Know” across these elements:

- Target Accounts
- Target People within the Target Accounts
- Channels to engage the Targeted People where it is most effective
- Plays that work across departments and channels
- Equipping your players to run plays across departments and channels to engage Target People within Target Accounts

**Know your Accounts** – For account communications, understand what is happening in that customer’s industry, their geographical area and in their company (mergers, acquisitions, management changes, strategy changes), financial health, competitors, growth drivers and inhibitors.

**Know the People** –
- What motivates those people?
- What are their personal challenges?
- What inspires them?
- What other initiatives are they working on?
- Where are their synergies?
- What connections can your players take advantage of?

“It takes a true bench of players, an entire well-oiled machine to win consistently.”
Know the Channels – Get really good at being where your customers are. What events do they go to, what channels do they participate in? Watch for evolving communities and affinity groups. Be there, live it and be a part of it!

Know the Plays – What series of steps and series of communications have worked in the past? For example, common steps may include research, human email, phone call, direct mail, social, an event, etc. Put that play into action, but make it easy for your players to personalize the steps so it resonates even more.

Equip All Your Players – Your own staff are a part of the attention scarcity challenge too. Did your sales team read the latest events summary? Is your customer success team using the same terminology as marketing and sales? Maybe. Maybe not. Your internal team needs to be inspired through the alignment of goals (context: what’s in it for them so they pay attention?) and easy access to tools that don’t bog them down.

Across your organization, communication and collaboration is key. Over-communicate all of the above, ensure there is consensus on your target accounts and the people you want to reach and engage. Be collaborative and not combative. Communicate some more. Make adjustments. Fine-tune what is working and re-evaluate what is a bust. Keep improving. When one player falls down, have someone else pick up the slack. Communicate some more both internally and externally. Keep equipping, make new plays, motivate your players and communicate some more.

“Strength in Numbers” isn’t just a slogan on a t-shirt, it is a culture, a way of structuring your organization for success, across departments and channels to be personalized and help you land and expand at your target accounts. And when everyone is working toward one goal and gets on the same PlayBook, magic can happen. Like the Golden State Warriors, your team can come together, break through the attention scarcity dilemma and make your own records!

How do you combat attention scarcity in your own life?

Ruthless prioritization! I have to evaluate opportunities from the lens of: Is this a priority for me, my family, my team? Saying no can be hard, but I’m getting better at prioritizing so I can say yes with my full attention on the right things.

Jon Miller is a marketing entrepreneur and thought leader. Prior to his role as CEO and co-founder of Engagio, Jon was a co-founder at Marketo (Nasdaq:MKTO), a leader in marketing automation. He is a speaker and writer about marketing best practices, and is the author of multiple marketing books including Engagio’s Clear and Complete Guide to Account Based Marketing and Marketo’s Definitive Guide to Marketing Automation. Jon has a passion for helping marketers everywhere, and is on the Board of Scripted and is an adviser to Optimizely and Newscred. In 2010, The CMO Institute named Jon a Top 10 CMO for companies under $250 million revenue.
April 30th, 2013: Just my 7th day at The New York Times as Director of Programmatic Advertising. Mark Thompson, their CEO, had invited me to spend 30 minutes one-on-one with him to discuss programmatic. I looked at the meeting as a tremendous opportunity to share all the advantages of programmatic advertising and content, especially for such an esteemed and data-rich publisher like NYT.

What I realized just before the meeting started is that it was more realistically Mark wanting to know why in the world I was hired and what this relatively new word “programmatic” meant. Not that my job status was completely dependent on these 30 minutes, but it certainly would help if I could show him how this evolution could help NYT in ways beyond what anyone ever thought.

We began by describing what programmatic advertising was at that point: an isolated initiative where any ad unsold by a publisher’s sales team went to these Open exchanges where thousands of buyers were waiting to pick up bargains – sort of like dollar stores in retail. We then discussed our strategy, where their great head of advertising, Todd Haskell (now at Hearst) allowed me to carry out this crazy idea where a sales team would handle programmatic ad sales themselves, as part of their normal job, in these so-called Private exchanges. Imagine a retail store where customers received a special time to shop on their own for the best products, before the general public.

So about one-third of my job became teaching 180 salespeople in 11 countries how to add programmatic selling to their portfolio. We were a little early to market, especially outside the US, Canada, and Europe, but had a hunch that this would be an increasing way of doing business. Back in early 2013, about 25% of all US display and mobile ad sales were done programmatically; by the end of 2015, more than 60% were sold this way. And in 2013, no one sold more Private deals in the world than The New York Times.

Part of that certainly had to do with the publication itself, which has earned some of the best brand equity of any publisher, given its respected history of more than 150 years, so there was already of course established advertiser interest. But we scaled because salespeople themselves learned to execute these deals, instead of a separate small group or individual outside of the traditional team. I was humbled by how Mark Thompson,
who had such as esteemed career and focus on so many things in running The New York Times, was actually engaged and seemed to “get it” certainly more than most “traditional media” CEOs.

So with that good feedback, I took a risk and laid out a vision for how leveraging the overall benefits of programmatic – efficiency, speed of the transaction and better audience targeting – can apply to content as well.

We found an easel in his office and I drew an outline of the front door of the Business section of NYT with an empty box top right of the page. NYT, like many digital publishers, can place four different things in that box: a paid ad, a subscription promotion, an e-commerce promotion, or an editorial callout. Usually different departments get their separate space to sell their wares and drive their own performance goals – ad revenue, subscriptions, sales or story page views.

But what if the entire page dynamically delivered content, ads and all promotions tailored to the person coming to that page, based on where she has been and what she has done throughout her history reading NYT – and predicting what she will do next – all within two-tenths of a second?

This way each individual reader is viewed more holistically, almost generating a “lifetime value” for each person. Certainly an important publication like NYT should have certain editorial for everyone, like important global and local stories, and certain advertisers do want to reach everyone a publisher has. But leveraging data to better understand what content will receive the best reaction and action from each person individually creates a more custom experience, generates more loyal readers and drives higher overall revenue. Publishers are not there organizationally yet to operate like this, but some are starting to think this way and the data platforms are now in place to provide this sophisticated level of analysis and delivery.

Thankfully, I didn’t get thrown out of Mark’s office and we actually went over time. I will never forget the opportunity to speak with him and help The New York Times build their programmatic practice. They, like many publishers around the world, are now poised to expand their digital operations even further and not only survive but thrive in this new world.

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**How do you combat attention scarcity in your own life?**

I combat attention scarcity in my life in part by actively blocking out calendar time for major items. Given how fast our company is growing, my attention can be easily diverted to reacting to the latest demand vs. taking care of important tasks like preparing for a key client presentation and meeting with potential new clients or teammates. My calendar still is back-to-back with meetings, but organizing my schedule allows me to focus on the right areas as much as possible.

**Matt Prohaska.** CEO and Principal, heads Prohaska Consulting’s efforts to drive clients’ revenue and/or reduce costs. Matt has been a contributor to the growth of online advertising since its commercial inception in the early 1990s. He created the first online media practice at BBDO (now part of Omnicom) and opened CNET’s New York sales office.

Over the course of his career, Matt has managed six different regional and national sales teams, consulted for more than sixty companies and founded four others. He has held executive roles at ad agencies and publishers and was most recently the Programmatic Advertising Director for The New York Times.

A Buffalo area native, Matt received an dual B.A at Syracuse University – in business from the Whitman School of Management and media at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communication. He lives in Connecticut with his wife and daughter.
In today’s age, when a consumer goes to purchase an item, she is faced with an unprecedented level of choice. Purchase in-store or online? Name brand or generic? Local store or big box retailer? Coupled with the number of channels brands have to reach a consumer during and outside of purchasing time, it is no surprise that consumers show a limited threshold for the amount of attention they give to brands. Today’s consumers have neither the time nor the energy to absorb every message that companies deliver to them each day. There is simply too much information out there to digest it all at any given time. This makes it critical for brands to create unique, timely and personalized experiences with each engagement to capture the consumer’s attention and generate sales.

Today’s marketing leaders are faced with a perfect storm of business, consumer and technological change that is exponentially increasing the complexity of every single marketing activity. In this new business environment, marketers need to rethink existing processes and embrace data, technology and content to deliver more meaningful customer experiences. Personalized and engaging customer experience across channels. In order to address this challenge and tailor content and experiences to individual customers, marketers need to be able to listen to and capture contextual and behavioral data across social, mobile, web, email, video and other digital channels, and combine this with relevant data from their “offline” behavior. By capturing and leveraging the right data, it is easier than ever for marketers to deliver a personalized and engaging customer experience across channels. Delivering this level of engagement to your buyers opens the door to meaningful, engaging relationships.

Without the right data, however, it is impossible to deliver this type of consumer experience. According to a recent CMO Club study, only 13% of CMOs surveyed said they are able to truly deliver a personalized and engaging customer experience across channels. In this new business environment, marketers need to rethink existing processes and embrace data, technology and content to deliver more meaningful customer experiences.
At the end of the day though, modern marketing is not about gathering as much data as possible. There is no silver bullet when it comes to collecting and using data. Ultimately, marketers must develop a strategy that is centered on using the right data, in the right way, in the right channels, at the right time. If marketers can achieve this level of targeting, they have a chance to capture the consumer’s increasingly scarce attention and turn them into a repeat customer. Without this type of focus, however, brands will find their messages fall on deaf ears as consumers face an avalanche of information.

Marketers need to be able to listen to and capture contextual and behavioral data across social, mobile, web, email, video and other digital channels, and combine this with relevant data from their ‘offline’ behavior.

How do you combat attention scarcity in your own life?

With limited time to make a decision quickly, I rely on finding solutions that are recommended by my trusted friends and colleagues, and from brands that make it easy for me to do business with them.

Andrea Ward is Vice President, Marketing for Oracle Marketing Cloud. In this role, she is responsible for leading all aspects of marketing including product marketing, social business and communications, web marketing, demand generation, field marketing, marketing operations and customer advocacy.

Ms. Ward’s previous responsibilities at Oracle include leading marketing integration and communications for Oracle’s M&A practice, head of marketing for the communications industry business unit, and managing Oracle’s customer visit centers globally. Prior to joining Oracle, Ms. Ward held a number of marketing leadership and financial management positions at high technology and pharmaceutical companies.

She holds a BA in History from the University of California, Los Angeles and an MBA from Santa Clara University.
In our daily lives as consumers, we are constantly facing information overload. Brands are vying for our attention everywhere we look. It’s overwhelming and annoying. We do everything we can to skip, block, delete, close or ignore it. Year after year, the research shows that people trust marketing and advertising less and less in favor of recommendations from their friends and family.

Consumer-style advertising is infiltrating business-to-business marketing too and it’s having the same effect on B2B buyers as it has on consumers: they’re tuning out the noise and looking to their peers for help to make the best buying decisions. It’s becoming more clear with each passing quarter that buying attention has increasingly diminished returns.

How many more inquiries can you squeeze out of emails to your tired old database? How much lower can the cost per lead on your next ad campaign go? How many more scans can you get at your next tradeshow booth? How many more touches can you add to your SDR team’s cadence?

Even if you get someone’s attention, it’s only for a moment. Meanwhile, the conversion rate on all those leads isn’t getting any better.

This scarcity of attention is not a problem you can simply throw more money at or Mad Men your way out of by being more creative. It’s time to put yourself in your customer’s shoes and design a modern marketing strategy that aligns with how they actually buy. Buying on their terms, not yours.

But you can’t do it alone. If peers are what your buyers trust most, then as a marketer you must find interesting and authentic ways to place social proof from those peers at every step of the journey. Those peers – your customers – are the key to grabbing the attention of your next customer. Without their help, your marketing is doomed.

More importantly, without a strategy to identify, mobilize and recognize these powerful evangelists, ambassadors and advocates, your business won’t survive the age of the customer. Not only will you have serious trouble attracting new customers, but you’ll also struggle to retain and grow the unengaged and underappreciated customers you’ve “invested” so many marketing dollars to acquire.
An advocate marketing strategy can help you achieve your goals in three primary ways:

1. Reach a wider audience through the voice of the customer on trusted channels
2. Accelerate sales pipeline and revenue growth with social proof
3. Increase customer engagement, retention and upsell/cross-sell

My recommendation is not to flip a switch and kill every ad campaign, nurture track or event sponsorship in your marketing plan today. Not yet, anyway. First, you need to flip your leaky funnel with a robust advocate marketing strategy to augment, and maybe even one day replace, all of those traditional tactics.

So, instead of debating which segment your next email blast should be sent to or wondering how much to spend on your next ad campaign, start asking yourself some more important questions:

How can you help make your customers happier and more successful?
How can you get more genuine customer reviews on trusted third-party websites?
How can you collect and share more customer success stories?
How can you feature more customer voices in your marketing?
How can you empower your customers to distribute your content and campaigns for you?

How do you combat attention scarcity in your own life?

My network is the only channel I pay attention to. I listen to other marketing leaders to learn what they’re doing right and how to avoid repeating what they’ve done wrong. If I don’t know anyone who has the insight I need, I ask for help finding someone who does.

Jim Williams is the Vice President of Marketing at Influitive. As a veteran marketer for early- and growth-stage technology companies, Jim is passionate about bringing transformative concepts to market. Before joining the Influitive team, he spent seven years in a variety of marketing leadership roles at Eloqua, and also directed marketing efforts at Unveil Solutions, Lernout & Hauspie, and several PR agencies. Even though he loves the challenge of building revenue engines at exciting companies, he directs most of his energy toward ensuring that his two kids have fantastic and memorable childhoods.

My fellow marketers: it’s time to shut up and let your customers do your marketing for you.