



# MARKETING OUTLOOK

# 2021

AGILE TIPS, INSIGHTS AND STRATEGIES TO KEEP YOUR BRAND TOP OF MIND WITH YOUR AUDIENCE.

**“IT’S ONLY BY BEING  
BOLD THAT YOU GET  
ANYWHERE.”**

**Richard Branson**

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# FOREWORD

As we prepare this document for publication, the Los Angeles Times posted this headline on the front page: “State on brink of lockdown, Newsom warns.” Good morning to you too, Governor!

2020 was a gut punch, and after 10 months of wavering hope and turmoil, many of us are still catching our breath. We’re ending a year where we’ve seen historic levels of economic uncertainty and unemployment, surprising degrees of economic stress and then improvement, encouraging reductions in unemployment followed by more, bigger layoffs, increases in consumer spending, record corporate profits and the promise of massive vaccine approvals that give us all hope that business and life will recover sometime in mid to late 2021.

2021 and the next several years will be messy.

We need to have goals and objectives, of course, but need built-in “agile” thinking processes as well to enable us to move faster than ever before and stay ahead of the certain-to-develop hiccups that will disrupt our efforts from just the week before.

Like everyone else, we learned a lot during the last year and, like many, were sometimes surprised and happy we made it to the other side – we’re just not sure this is the “other side” yet or when that will materialize.

Even so, our Marketing Outlook for 2021 is positive!

Regardless of the crazy circumstances we continue to deal with, marketers have proven methods and practices to work with. If one strategy fails, we shift to another, and to another. If ever there was a time for Jack to be nimble, this would be it.

It is with this as context that we share our road map for marketing success in 2021.

In our previous [2020 Marketing Outlook](#), we suggested, “2020 should be an exciting year for marketers.” What an understatement!

To succeed, we've got to look forward. Even more, we need to look further forward more than ever, and see around distant corners, through dark spaces, and take leaps over invisible chasms.

As Scott Steinberg said in CNBC.com, we need the ability to "predict events and trends and how they might impact [our] industry and professional development." The good news is the best marketing practices of the past are the same for our future; it's the mix that has changed and will likely continue to.

Even though the immediate future isn't clear, businesses will need to take decisive action to ensure their organizations are resilient. As Peter Drucker said, "The greatest danger in times of turbulence is not the turbulence itself, but to act with yesterday's logic."

So, we've got some serious work to do. The competitive environment a business is in will dictate its brand strategy. For many businesses that were expanding their scope and reach through 2019, this might mean a narrower focus to punch up their brand after it got punched out. And, if you've got business problems, debt stress, operating issues, etc., a simple rebrand just won't do the trick.

As you'll read in the following pages, take a good look at your brand promise and figure out how to communicate your value with language that fits today's consumer mindset. Messages in today's environment that were relevant two years ago or longer will signify laziness on the business's part, or worse, myopia.

After almost a year of not being in control of their environment, brands will need to reactivate in order to succeed.

**Bold brands with purpose are the ones that will persevere.**

**To a prosperous 2021,**

**Eric Morley**

Co-Founder/Chief Operations Officer

**Jeff Bentley**

Co-Founder/Executive Creative Director

**Allan Rahn**

Chief Marketing Officer

# OUR CURRENT ENVIRONMENT

Many retailers reported significant revenues year over year but warned Wall Street that those revenues and profits will taper off in Q1, and while most businesses that could shifted significantly to online sales, they're hesitant to predict long-term sustainability (fewer will venture to define "sustainability" at all).

Consumer confidence dropped in November amid the rising case positives, or the resurgence of COVID-19. According to the Wall Street Journal (November 24, 2020), "the US economic recovery is continuing but growth in retail sales and employment has slowed," with jobless claims showing signs of rising.

The general outlook for the U.S. (AP, November 26, 2020) is "not a pretty picture."

It boils down to this. We need consumer spending to drive a recovery from the pandemic, but consumers are "nervous and under pressure from persistent layoffs and diminished income." While many fear a double-dip recession is imminent, the general uncertainty of the presidential transition, business re-closings, a winter threatening to keep us indoors, and whether those vaccines will actually work, or that people will take them, is driving continued stress.

It's clear that the economy will not grow quickly. Slower growth will keep the unemployment rolls higher than anyone wants. And this will contribute to rigid consumer spending.

eMarketer's B2B Digital Advertising 2020 Report confirmed what we already know, that B2B advertisers are relying more on digital ads like sponsored webinars, virtual events, search, social media, email, video, and so on. The most significant industry shifts to digital have been healthcare, followed by technology products and services, financial services, and even telecom.

Harvard Business Review published a report called "Is Your Marketing Organization Ready for What's Next?" (Nov-Dec 2020). Their results suggest that success will require that marketing departments become more "agile, interdependent, and accountable for driving company growth."

They go on to suggest that only "20% of those in traditional corporations are satisfied with the effectiveness of their [marketing] departments." What's missing? A structured methodology and clarity. The report offers an online digital scoring tool to help define a marketing value proposition, select the necessary capabilities and design a next-gen function. They defined six broad areas of value and 72 marketing capabilities broken out by value for the customer or value for the company.

# CONSUMER ATTITUDES

1. Consumers continue to gravitate toward brands that demonstrate social responsibility and purpose, who try to protect the planet, or harm it less than other brands do, and who give back to the communities they serve with real service, not just donations.
2. Consumers are okay with brands using a mix of traditional and digital communications to bolster their brand image – as long as they're honest about it. Don't cover up the flaws, fix them.
3. Consumer interest and loyalty are tied to a brand's authentic value and honesty, how the brand demonstrates a focus on the consumer's needs and preferences, and how effectively the brand connects with consumers in their favorite media without any hiccups or delay.
4. Consumers are on the hunt for the next shiny penny, and they have horribly narrow attention spans and very little trust for corporate America. In fact, the word "corporate" itself is becoming a four-letter word.
5. Consumers want a deep emotional attachment with a brand and will love it if there are no hurdles, complexities or confusing processes and if the brand doesn't make them wait any longer than they feel is necessary.
6. Consumers' buying decisions are heavily influenced by social media and influencers – more than by brands themselves.
7. Consumers typically consider up to 12 sources of information before making a buying decision.
8. Consumers actually like to see good content – they want to be entertained, engaged, informed, enriched and educated; they want something meaningful and they want to connect with it and share it seamlessly through mobile.
9. Consumers want brands that take a stand, have a point of view, and connect with their lifestyle and community. They want to see proof that brands treat their own employees well.
10. Consumers want purpose and functionality, and they'll abandon you in an instant for the next shiny penny.

**I can work from home.**

**I can work from anywhere.**

**I can shop and buy from anywhere, at any time and that's good for me!**

NOTE: We updated our Consumer Attitudes from our [2020 Marketing Outlook](#)

# CONSUMER DEMAND

“There is likely going to be a radical shift,” says Jenny Dinnen, President of Sales and Marketing for MacKenzie Corporation, “in what consumers define as ‘essential’ or ‘discretionary’ purchases that will influence their frequency of consumption.”

Demand goes up when there is economic certainty and goes down when there is economic uncertainty. The state of the economy for most of 2021, and the year beyond for sure, is uncertain, but with continued layoffs looming, evictions threatened, and loans called, cities and states are projecting billions in deficits. The year is going to be very tough, and the need for high-quality marketing and laser-focused communications will accelerate over time.

## Small Business Vulnerability

The position for small businesses is still bleak. About a third of small businesses stopped operating in early 2020. Many reopened with limited capacities and closed permanently within the first half of the year. With continued economic and pandemic stresses, the outlook for 2021 is grim.

Forrester projected a 28% drop in US marketing spend – including media, services, technology and internal headcount – by the end of 2021. Offline media and staff payroll are expected to suffer most. If this is correct, then every marketing dollar is quickly turning into just \$.72.

Ninety percent of executives polled in 2020 believed the crisis will fundamentally change their business over the next five years. Eighty-five percent were concerned about a lasting impact on their customers’ needs and wants. And only 21% of them felt they had the expertise and resources to pursue new growth successfully.

**“Companies that marketed aggressively during the ‘80s recession had 256% higher sales than those that did not continue to market.”**

McGraw-Hill research study. Harvard Business Review, Bain & Company, Journal of Advertising Research, McKinsey & Company, and others agree. Summarized by Inksights (April 2020).

## 4 Out of 5 Executives Need Additional Expertise

Brands are going to need additional external talent and support to supplement their internal operations, and this is where Blue C comes in. Growth in this period of reduced demand is going to require new thinking, more and immediate focus and effort, innovative engagements and strategies, and persistence.

We believe like many that life will forever be changed, and the marketers who boldly embrace the movement will be leaders in all fields – not just right now but for years to come.



# SO, WHAT'S NEXT?

There is no question that recent global economic events created significant challenges for all brands. To succeed, brands have to quickly adjust their stories to connect with consumers who are responding to a new narrative. Long-term planning is no longer a five- to ten-year plan for many businesses – the world just achieved about 10 years of digital transformation in less than 10 months.

Brands need to boldly meet the challenges ahead in these uncertain times by keeping their value propositions top of mind with their consumers.

## Is there a road map for us to follow?

The map isn't the same for everyone, but the turns, points of interest, rest stops and so on are mostly common marketing best practices.

### Recommendations:

First, don't underestimate the value of quick and regular SWOT analyses and brand audits. While these can typically be things we have to do, they still create the clearest lens through which we can accelerate our actions.

**"The best way to predict the future is to create it."**

Peter Drucker

Often, we look at these as part of calendared marketing routine, but in these times, we see these as very needed and frequent assessments. Make them quick, make them unique to your brand, through storytelling make them fun – but make them happen.

Second, focus on clarifying your story. We've found there are five key systems to marketing success for 2021 and beyond. How marketers get to these systems, how they strategize, which channels they engage with and so on will differ from one marketer to another. But these five systems make up a platform that is critical, and we'll show you how we approach them.

For certain, achieving power in any one of the systems will help a great deal. Even better, achieving power in all five of the systems will secure the marketer's ability to generate consumer demand, sales, and loyalty.

And these will work for companies of all sizes and in all industries.

We think 2021 will be tough indeed, but we also think it will be a great year for the marketer to create their brand's future.

# SWOT ANALYSIS

As important and timely as a brand audit, pull out your most recent SWOT analysis and give it a quick review. With the frequent changes in the market we're going to sustain for some time, success will be hinged on speed to market, and doing it right is imperative.

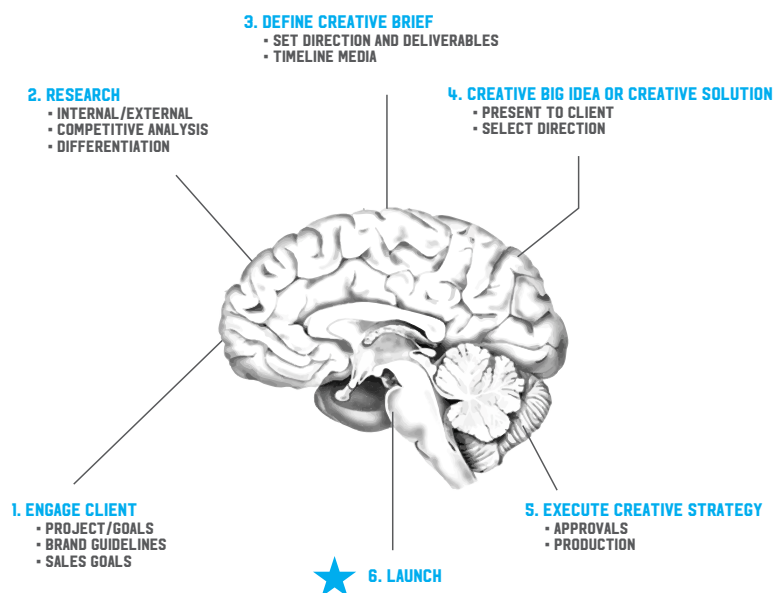
## SWOT internal evaluation:

- Your strengths and weaknesses
- What you control
- Capabilities and resources that enable you to perform
- Tangible and intangible assets and core competencies
- Should you keep going as usual?
- What will make you most attractive under changing circumstances?
- What are your disadvantages? What do you lack or do poorly?

## SWOT external evaluation:

- What can you capitalize on – trends, forces, events – coming up?
- Look broadly and calendar possible lightning bolts
- What is your ability to weather the changes?
- Threats are everywhere – list what you know
- Are your campaigns updated and focused on the right outcomes?

## BLUE C CAMPAIGN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS



# BRAND AUDIT

Performing a brand audit is a big undertaking. It becomes easier when you know what to do and why you are doing it. More so than ever, a brand audit is required to be successful in the new normal. Here are the key steps in performing a brand audit:

## 1. Make a framework.

Develop the mission and strategic objectives that you have toward the improvement of the brand. Analyze your internal and external marketing materials. Is your message clear and concise? Does it speak to your audience and address their wants, needs, desires and outcomes?

## 2. Do a survey. The outcomes never lie.

Primary research such as surveys, intercept studies and focus groups are the best way to gather data from your customers. Their perception about your brand as well as your competitors will give you an idea of how to change these perceptions for the better.

## 3. Look at the web analytics.

Take a look at the web analytics to get to know the traffic your website gains from web searches. Bounce rates and pageviews are very important in determining the position of your brand in the market.

## 4. Take a look at the sales and social data.

The sales data tabulates the numbers on how your brand is performing and the revenue it generates. The social data gets you to understand your audiences better. This kind of data allows you to see who shares the content that you provide on your website, and how your brand gets boosted by the audience.

## 5. Monitor Competition.

Competition is inevitable in business. In every decision that you make, you have to take competition into consideration. It also gives you an idea of how to get ahead of other businesses by focusing more on your brand.

## 6. Track the results.

Always track the results and progress after implementing the necessary changes to the brand. The results can sometimes change your initial plans so you can come up with something better.

## Add a BOLD audit!

In today's market, if your brand isn't **BOLD**, it's...old.

Is your brand 100% **BOLD**?

Simply rank and score your position in just these four critical areas to reach 100%.

What's your score on:

- B** – your brand power
- O** – your outreach practices
- L** – leverage in your industry
- D** – your demonstration

Blue C BrandPWR Platform

7. Graphical imagery – Are your digital content toolbox and library current or old and dated?
8. Email architecture – Make sure to evaluate confirmations, meeting requests, thank-yous and referrals, and establish protocols for all staff on the right language to use, automatic signatures, even out-of-office notifications – look at everything.

## Public Relations Tips

Work on these three key areas first:

### 9. Communicating Compassion

– Check overly edgy collateral and keep health and safety top of mind when crafting key messages.

### 10. Merging Internal, External and Executive Communications

– Strengthen stakeholder relationships by keeping employees, customers and shareholders informed. This equips a company to proactively address any misinformation before it gains traction.

### 11. Social Listening

– Carefully scan comments on your social posts (and your competitors') and solicit feedback through surveys to better understand your stakeholders' wants and needs.

Powerhouse Communications  
(Orange County, California)

12. Forms and assessments – Any content can be transformed into an interactive form, an assessment, a survey.
13. Promotional items – Be topically sensitive and focus on how an item integrates with the larger campaign.
14. Landing pages, load times, and continuity.
15. Blog posts and other social posts – Exercise caution against the rogue post that positions a personal opinion as a company value and update your strategy with relevant connection and messaging pillars.
16. Ads – Stop the presses if you can. Adjust headlines, messaging, and images, then restart the presses. Leverage digital advertising as well as to precise landing pages.
17. Syndication opportunities need validation to ensure that a brand's purpose isn't clouded by odd content placement.

18. Your testing processes – You may have to go to market without the level of confidence you need, but you need to go to market, so test when you can, and in some cases, test as you go.
19. Internal communications and updates, FAQs, training, leadership tone – spend more time on this than you ever have and provide your employees with approved content they can use in their own social posting. Remember your employees are your biggest brand ambassadors and your employees now are able to amplify your reach.
20. Metrics and reporting – Keep a consistent eye on your reporting. The best thing to do is watch your metrics and make sure your goals are being hit. Analyze your reporting in order to improve your next campaign.

**"I LIKE GETTING TO THE  
DNA OF THE BRAND,  
AND THEN BRINGING IT  
INTO THE LIGHT"**

**Jeff Bentley, Co-Founder,  
Executive Creative Director, [Blue C](#)**



# PURPOSE. PEOPLE.

Consumers will remember brands whose behavior was and is particularly responsive to the crisis and to the people impacted (MacKenzie Corporation). Tap into your brand elements that are relevant to the current situation and can make a difference outside of your core business focus.

B2B buyers will expect more from marketers – both in services delivered and how marketers help their customers' actual operations. The marketers' roles will expand as needs change. Inside sales operations will expand and field sales will be reduced.

- ❑ If you're doing good work, share it without boasting. Share it in a humble tone with the purpose to educate and be helpful.
- ❑ Become a resource to anyone you can – be helpful not harmful.
- ❑ Develop something that many people will want to receive or engage with. And help your clients beyond marketing for them. Help them see new markets and new opportunities and strategize forward. Sometimes the difficulties of today can be balanced with the excitement and optimism about tomorrow.
- ❑ Optimize your content quickly and take advantage of the opportunities available in all markets.

## Generating Revenue

Businesses have been operating under new, harsh and frequently changing or unclear requirements. The marketer's primary job is to help the client, or the brand, make sales. But marketing is usually seen as a cost and one of the first expenses to be cut during a crisis.

What marketers need to elevate in their own brand positioning is their ability to drive demand and revenue, not just design. As Jeff Goodby said, "art serving commerce."

## Confirm Your Marketing Spend

Do I spend more? Do I spend less? Do I spend differently, evaluate tactics differently, trash my projections and start over?

Marketing spend will decline over the next several years. Just how much is anyone's guess, but it's fair to assume that if we see a level recovery in early 2021, we should see spending increases in mid to late 2021.

# PRODUCT. PROCESS.

## What's the Right Strategy?

It's important to keep refining your strategy as new information becomes available, but always continue your marketing efforts.

MacKenzie Corporation research suggests that "companies are more likely to thrive if they act aggressively to capture market share during downturns rather than wait for the recovery to begin." No one is sure when the recovery will begin, what it will look like, or how long it will take for the economy to regain some new normal.

Combining the above with "a focus on customer value and support" can give a company a "first mover" advantage over others that will support their ability to emerge even stronger.

## What should a brand do?

- ☐ Revisit Brand strategy with a deep dive on message clarity, positioning and customer personas
- ☐ Update content marketing strategies for all internal and external audiences
- ☐ Continue marketing with ongoing communications adjusted for changes in the market

Offline media will decline for sure, but new forms will surely develop. The best tech stacks will win, and those companies that focus on specific clarity in their messaging and helpful communications with updates will perform better than others.

**Do not stop marketing.** It's important to be consistent and frequent in your communications, and adjust your messaging based on the times, or the environment.



**KEY SYSTEMS**

For Top-of-Mind Brand Positioning

# NAVIGATE THE CONSUMER JOURNEY WITH PWR!

Our job is to intersect our brand value with an audience so that when they consider buying or decide to buy, our brand value is recalled.

The first key step is to [clarify](#) the brand's value to a consumer by bringing out the greatest number of emotional connections we can. Logic comes later, but clarity is all about identifying that benefit. It's about [lean](#) and muscular copy that compels one to desire with a big idea. It's a worn-out adage, but people don't want a fire extinguisher, they want to put out a fire.

Once your brand value, promise and story are tight, we need to find ways to [amplify](#) that value. Most business owners and executives downplay the theatrical side of what they represent and feel comfortable, safe, detailed and almost regulatory. We want to turn up the lights and volume on your offer to stop people in their tracks – to take note, record an emotion and save to their mental drive. This is all about identifying the best audience to have that experience – they're your buyers, not the other guys.

With our strategy drafted, we shift to uncompromising experimentation to find the most striking creative without any copy. Like carving pictogram stories inside granite caves, we explore the wildest, the safest, and the smartest visual representations to [infuse](#) the brand, the value and the offer, unapologetic pride and love. This translates your brand's solutions into stunning creative with compelling and motivating offers directed at the right audiences.

We pull it all together with a brand's historical content and [integrate](#) the BOLD with the tradition to make sure we respect and honor the DNA of your brand and connect the fully loaded content marketing and social media communications campaign to inform all the digital and traditional elements. We love it when an audience can easily shift from clear brand message marketing to the web, to mobile, to a service rep, and get the same experience!

And, when we [engage](#), we really engage. Everything comes together in an agile supported, evidence-based execution that fires on all cylinders. The creative, the copy, digital, traditional, dimensional, video, and everything else drive levels of energy for the brand's employees to up their game as ambassadors – we generate demand and customers generate loyalty.

Our 5 Step [BrandPWR](#) platform helps brands bring to life a brand's most powerful and compelling attributes – sometimes all at the same time, other times one, two or more, and other times building on each other.

- ✓ **BRAND CLARITY**
  - ✓ **YOUR AUDIENCE & BIG IDEAS**
  - ✓ **BOLD CREATIVE**
  - ✓ **INSPIRING CONTENT &**
  - ✓ **MESSAGING**
  - ✓ **MULTICHANNEL EXECUTION**
- 
- = SUCCESS**

**SYSTEM 01**

**CLARITY**



# BRAND CLARITY

Is your brand value clear, your solution understandable, your ability to execute credible?

A brand's power emanates from its clarity, demonstrated by its content, and generates demand by how it educates and supports its audience through any economic environment.

Buyers are always on the lookout for something that will help them solve a problem, fill a gap, move them forward – you just need to send messages through the right media to get them to remember your brand at the right time.

If it isn't clear, you run the risk of missing buyers, and even attracting the wrong buyers.

Marketers know how to accomplish our objectives because we do our research, then test, and measure constantly to accelerate course corrections and achieve positive results. And while many brands are revitalizing all of their attributes, some are zeroing in on a specific area of need, then expanding.

It's all about taking the right steps at the right time, and marketers will look at various tactics and strategies to accomplish this. Some of the many avenues to pursue:

- ❑ Brand positioning
- ❑ Design and architecture
- ❑ Maybe a brand refresh or complete brand development
- ❑ Logo and corporate identity development
- ❑ Naming and messaging clarity
- ❑ Brand story development
- ❑ Development of graphic standards and guidelines
- ❑ Brand presentations and continuity through various media

Brand authenticity and clarity have always been important considerations, but now they're paramount.

Just slapping contemporary slogans on packaging or advertising is like taking credit for something you never did. That won't work anymore. We must adapt to the new times.

**Consider:** Why should someone pay attention to your offer today if they didn't yesterday, and if they did pay attention yesterday, why should they continue to tomorrow?

The background of the image consists of several concentric circles in shades of gray, creating a target-like or ripple effect. The circles are centered and expand outwards from the middle of the frame.

**SYSTEM 02**

**AMPLIFY**

# YOUR AUDIENCE & BIG IDEAS

If no one is listening, all your effort is wasted. This takes us to the critical importance of audience and development. If we thought getting the attention of buyers was tough before, it's worse today. People have more time to evaluate before they buy. With the work-from-anywhere reality, we're spending more time online, and thus have more time to review – getting our messages to the right buyers at the right times is critical. Consider these tactics in your steps to turn up the volume.

- ❑ Social media strategy
- ❑ Social media creative activation
- ❑ Content development and distribution
- ❑ Sales lead generation
- ❑ Influencer activation
- ❑ Marketing automation
- ❑ Develop your Big Idea. Important!

## Total Addressable Market and Segmentation

Update your lists! The companies may be the same, but your target contacts might be moving around.

Find current local research for your target area. Consumers' needs, concerns and preferences differ by geography, gender, age, etc. Find a firm that can tap into exactly what you're looking for and add any specific consumer insights into your strategy that refines and strengthens your campaign.

Speak directly to the consumer. Using specific data points that illustrate your awareness and "locality" boosts your value.

Share insights that can be further shared – things that can educate and even provide help.

There are dozens of data platforms and firms to consider, and most do just about the same thing.

Look for those with the most current updates and comprehensive list hygiene and compliance processes. It's all about the lists.

### Consumer Insights Survey by MacKenzie Corporation

Brands could benefit by including some of these attributes in their outreach:

- Develop and distribute content that highlights convenience, personalization and exclusive consumer experiences
- Boldly highlight the values of your essential or discretionary products or services
- Highlight your creation process for products and services – the "how to," "how we do it" – to increase engagement
- Devote specific focus to key target personas in your mix
- Help people find new interests and activities
- Deliver a message of clarity, consistency, confidence and control
- Streaming winners: Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hulu, Spotify, Disney+
- Provide a level of "certainty during uncertain times"
- Important brand qualities: Consistency, Delivery, Quality, Entertainment and Empathy

"The Way Forward," MacKenzie Corporation, June 2020



**SYSTEM 03**

**INFUSE**

# BOLD CREATIVE

With insightful and meaningful brand clarity, a comprehensive audience and data strategy, we translate your brand's solutions into bold creative with compelling and motivating offers.

This is where we infuse creative developments into the marketing strategy.

If your brand is clear and your audience is laser focused, you can then translate your offer into the kinds of relevant and powerful creative content that will get and hold attention.

Your marketing strategy no longer just uses creative; rather, creative is inserted into your strategy as the strategy itself.

- ☐ Brand and product launches
- ☐ Development of subscription assets
- ☐ Serialize thought leadership materials
- ☐ Transform content into interactive tools
- ☐ Customer persona development
- ☐ Media strategy and planning
- ☐ Marketing road map and execution
- ☐ Tradeshow and sponsorship activation
- ☐ Webinars and digital events
- ☐ Account-based enterprise campaigns
- ☐ Marketing automation



A background featuring a Venn diagram with two overlapping circles. The circles are filled with a dark gray color, and their outlines are a lighter gray. The intersection of the two circles is a darker shade of gray.

**SYSTEM 04**

**INTEGRATE**

# INSPIRING CONTENT & MESSAGING

It can be arduous or fun to assemble your history of content, case studies, relevant story arcs, brochures, ads, other collateral and evidence of thought leadership to mix with contemporary materials (most businesses find it arduous; we think it's fun).

As we shift your communications to “conversations,” a pure business tone shifts to a social one, a humanistic one, and we evolve the brand messages into influential endorsements that are original and shared.

- ☐ Digital media strategy
- ☐ Social media
- ☐ Social leadership within LinkedIn
- ☐ Website development
- ☐ Audio, video, podcasts, digital conversations
- ☐ Sales funnels and lead nurture
- ☐ Email marketing
- ☐ Paid and organic search
- ☐ E-commerce

A recurring theme through various search results, and not much different than pre-pandemic marketing searches, is that brands need to connect with audiences in relevant ways and offer valuable content that educates or entertains.

According to Influential's March COVID-19 Media Impact Report, people have “increased their time on social media by 29%,” from 143 minutes a day to 184, with Instagram and YouTube seeing the biggest increases, of 32 percent and 44 percent, respectively.

And, the number of media being viewed or attended to simultaneously has jumped – a buyer may have their TV on, be reading something on a tablet, and searching on their phone.

Further, they found consumers responded 80% more positively to messages delivered by an influencer campaign versus 24% to brand channels like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. So, getting the message out there by the right voice and through the right channel for your audience gets a brand the best outcomes.

Relevant, interesting, credible, topical, print, audio, video – substantive. Constructed through a marketer's lens, just about anything can be content. And, you can boost the power of your content by ensuring that it's original and sharable.

If your content breaks the “new” barrier or satisfies the “cool” test, it will likely be “shared”. If it is shared, it can go viral, and this kind of virus is one all brands want.

**SYSTEM 05**

**ENGAGE**

# MULTICHANNEL EXECUTION

It all comes together in your digital-first, multichannel marketing strategy. Studies tell us that four to six channels give us the best results – so why would you only use three, or two? Frequent analyses of outcomes drive adjustments to content, frequency and medium.

Viewers will spend more time evaluating a message's authenticity, its sensitivity to the state of the world, how it addresses a specific need, and whether it delivers some value that is greater than the amount of time needed to review it.

- ❑ Creative strategy
- ❑ Campaign development and execution
- ❑ Digital and brand collateral
- ❑ Video content
- ❑ Photography
- ❑ Content and copywriting
- ❑ Content distribution strategy

## Multichannel Marketing

Distributing your content is all about attracting and acquiring a clearly defined audience and getting them to act.

The channels marketers used before the pandemic haven't changed. Email, TV, radio, social, blogs, podcasts, videos, sidewalls, outdoor, etc. – all have some impact on any audience.

We know that multichannel marketing beats any single channel, and the mix can make a difference. We also know that there is an abundance of content forced on us – much of it out of date, irrelevant and inaccurate – that may interfere with the quality content consumers actually want to receive.

The consumers' journey needs our help sifting through the messy digital clutter they run into, but the channels are still the channels.

Advertisers will spend more on digital – period. We think there will be room for dimensional as well. A business that hugs its customers with special branded communications and promotional elements stands out from the digital hacks.

### Multichannel Success Tips

- Three to four channels are used in most campaigns; four to six get the best results
- 84% report that direct mail improves campaign performance
- 56% get good or very good ROI from their campaigns
- C suite and executives – best way to reach them is direct mail, video content, events, and email
- Webinars and virtual events, integrated with branded personalized direct mail, are most effective for reaching target audiences
- Multichannel marketing campaign success factors: data accuracy, understanding audience needs, design and branding of delivered messages

PFL & Demand Metric, 2020 "State of Multichannel Marketing Results" (Survey of 600 marketers in companies with millions to billions in revenues)

**“EVERYONE HAS GOT  
TO REALIZE YOU CAN’T  
HOLD ONTO THE PAST  
IF YOU WANT ANY  
FUTURE. EACH SECOND  
SHOULD LEAD TO THE  
NEXT ONE.”**

**- Joe Strummer**



# CREATE A BOLD FUTURE

The future will be different. Stores, malls, schools, and every place where people congregate will continue taking hits. Outdoor engagement was in, then not, then it was in at a reduced level, now not at all. Business trips are out. Vacation trips are sort of in but come with various inconveniences. Dreamforce probably not happening in 2021; certainly not as we remember. CES and SEMA? C'est la vie, at least for now.

## Start-ups

In many instances, your clients will make such dramatic changes in their business models that it will be like starting a brand new business – as radical as it sounds, it's already happening. In a way, all businesses, no matter how mature, could start acting as start-ups.

For those companies that do act and move like start-ups, marketers will need to make sure you're there to help with all aspects of setting up a business – and if you don't have the internal talent to do it, expand your own network to fill the void. Become the "estart-up" experts.

## Drive Demand

Create lead magnets that cause people to take note of your brand and that increase awareness of your robust offerings, and collect emails. People haven't changed much about themselves in the last several months, although many haven't changed their pants as often.

## Digital Is the Present

Seventy-five percent of people using digital channels for the first time say they'll use them when things normalize (MacKenzie Corporation). Digital access is key; a company whose presence is weak has poor message clarity, slow load times and dull content – forget it. Any digital laggard will be severely disadvantaged.

Bold brands have a high level of self-awareness and market in real time. They know their flaws and strengths. They stick to clear priorities and speak up, or out, if it helps them stay on track. Bold brands pair best practices with knowledge and relentlessly build momentum.

## The BOLD Manifesto

The BOLD approach is one of accelerated study and mastery, a fearless pursuit of what is right, a laser focus on intersecting a brand's value proposition with a consumer's purchasing journey, seeking a human, emotional connection and joyful response. The result must be striking to the eye and inspiring to the spirit.

# A NOTE ON LEADERSHIP

Effective leadership is key to any business's success. This crisis makes it even more important. We see examples of business and corporate leadership throughout the world. The leaders who stand up in front, articulate powerful values, remain devoted to purpose and engage in ways that make their employees feel safe, secure and respected are the leaders who will come out of this with success.

It could be any business – the necessary leadership competencies are the same. What separates leaders is what's truly inside them. If you can brand your leadership, your market leadership, your focus on a consumer need – without bragging – you win. Don't talk about it; do it. Take action and inspire great marketing.

Your brand should be a role model – just like you. And, a positive outlook is easy to adopt. Regular and routine expressions of positivity create movements. Communicate more, sell less. Treat any market and all personas as people first, then as family, then as a treasure, then as a consumer.

Brands that continue to dream will not be successful. Brands that execute win.

So, make something happen – and share that with the market, your customers, your colleagues and your mom.

# BOLD MOVES IN 2020 FOR A BETTER 2021



My brothers Ed, Mingo and I never imagined how successful Wahoo's Fish Taco would be, but it's always been about doing what we really care about, showing compassion for our community and always being authentic. Like most other businesses, this pandemic forced us to change how we do what we do – on a dime. But, it didn't make us change what we do.

**"Keep your brand promise honest and your business will bring you success."**



Wing Lam, Co-Founder, Wahoo's Fish Taco  
Blue C Client Since 2017

Our deeper purpose has always been about our family being in business to feed your family. We see that as a stronger and more emotional connection with our customers.

And, we've been able to pivot what we've been doing in our stores during this pandemic to take care of our employees and their families, and even get meals to over 19,000 hungry frontline workers! This effort turned into the California Love Drop.

It's because of our connection with our loyal customers that we have the power to do this. And our customers are loyal because we keep our promise to them every time they come into a Wahoo's store.

We never let them down. They can count on us for anything. That's the power behind our brand. Keep your brand promise honest and your business will bring you success.

## POSTSCRIPT:

We think Wing's mid-year 2020 message is as relevant today as it was when he wrote it. Even more relevant to all marketers and brands is his final line, "keep your brand promise honest and your business will bring you success." The following pages are chock full of best practices, some traditional, some next gen, but all founded on the premise that brand clarity drives everything else – especially during uncertain times.

The California Love Drop wouldn't be possible without the partnerships and founding friends:



**5**

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# 50 EXECUTABLE MARKETING TACTICS

Scouring the internet for the most current marketing techniques is like searching for almost anything; there's too much content. And, if you do search, you'll come up with the same conclusion: marketing best practices really don't change. What changes are the trends that frame the need for the best practices.

The world is in a situation that it hasn't been in before. It's acceptable that there is confusion, fear, hesitance and more. We're marketing in a crisis. So, what follows are quick tips that are merely good reminders. Get started on these right away – do as much as you can as fast as you can. If you have questions, reach out to [letsdothis@bluecusa.com](mailto:letsdothis@bluecusa.com).

1. Do a SWOT analysis as soon as you can, and often. (see page 11)
2. Do a brand audit and get your strategy on. (see page 12)
3. Try to identify how BOLD your brand is, how BOLD you want to be, and make adjustments. (page 12)
4. Shift your messaging as needed and be ready for quicker shifts. It took major brands 60, even 90 days to pivot their messaging, and some are still using last year's material. Most are using messaging from three to five years back.
5. Be upfront and direct. Present your value, while recognizing the current state, and offer hope for the future state.
6. There is nothing attractive about nostalgia right now. Using images of the plague, or other crises where masks were used, probably won't support your efforts.
7. Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella recently said that we "just went through two years of digital transformation in two months." Add Moore's Law, and we could go through another 20 years of transformation by end of year. Better buckle up.
8. Be bold in your branding and try to innovate new products or services. Try to see around those corners ahead and theorize on what's coming next. Market toward that.
9. Be upfront with customers and prospects that you want to stay in touch as needed and find out, from them, when to reach out. Keep communications going in a non-obtrusive way – their desired way.

10. If projects are “on hold,” send suggestions on how to adjust the project or the timeline or how to aggregate the project with something else.
11. Create an old-school “clipping list” of media, press, journals and public forums, maybe even travel or cooking programs, that you can share with those who might be interested in escapist thinking.
12. Outside meeting spaces will pop up everywhere – on roofs, decks, parking lots. Find ways to stage activation events that can be captured on film, streamed or even engaged through multiple screens and ultimately shared 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
13. Search marketing is seen as key during times of crisis – make sure your efforts support your ability to capitalize on increasing traffic.
14. Check all headlines, navigation links and the placement and appearance of links, and make sure that if you’re moving a visitor to another page, that page is current, correct and continuous.
15. Determine how you can communicate the trustworthiness of your brand without braggadocio – use facts based on consumer experiences and outcomes.
16. Case studies do the above but provide more narrative and more detail in a video format. Update and refresh your library of case studies and use cases, and develop current versions, even updates.
17. Work hard to eliminate the assumptive close from your communications and shift to collaboration as a part of their team, a partner in their cause.
18. Revisit all past successes to find ways to share best practices of others, or how others are working through projects and challenges – not gossip, but collegial advisory.
19. Consider highly targeted, dimensional video, personalized direct mail to executives and the C-suite.
20. Publish a scorecard that correlates with developments locally, nationally and globally.
21. When things go the wrong way, or projects don’t deliver the right results, spend more time on testing – and keep on marketing.
22. Morph promotional messages into helpful and meaningful messages.
23. Make sure to treat and comment about your employees as customers, family members, and trusted and valued colleagues.

24. Think short-term revenue-improving tactics and long-term strategic initiatives that might not drop for months – but keep looking forward.
25. CVCA – Clarify, Verify, Confirm – then Act.
26. We need to drive demand and sales – but we don't want to sound desperate or ignorant, or appear sleazy, or overly trendy.
27. Give to Get – prospects know you're inserting them into some funnel of your own, with numerous "sincere" touchpoints. Make it interesting and helpful – don't pretend to offer something for free and then require an "upgrade" to fulfill your offer. Give, and you will get.
28. Transition your high-performing blogs into video and repurpose the video across your content channels. This will give all your channels a boost.
29. Check your copy and creative for a calm and safe tone – make sure to reduce, even eliminate, slang, criticisms or individual editorial. Consumers are looking for brands with class and character.
30. Stress learning and a quiet strength, confidence.
31. Adjust your publishing schedule to make the best sense – the number of emails, spam calls, schemes and shlock amateur attempts at getting your clients' attention is on the rise.
32. Have a point of view – your brand's values, belief systems, your vision of the future.
33. Work on your brand's social awareness and efforts to celebrate diversity of ethnicity, gender, age and values.
34. Find your best multichannel mix and execute.
35. Make sure your tech stack is efficient and capable and doesn't get stuck.
36. Dig in deep on your data and segmentation, and if you haven't actually populated your CRM with data, now's a good time.
37. Refocus and accelerate your digital investments into campaigns and programs versus singular efforts.
38. Use new data and AI to improve your operations and increase organizational agility to deliver more, more quickly.

39. Reimagine customer journeys to make it easier, safer and more secure for your customers to work with your brand.
40. Identify your best customers and benchmark against them – not against all of them.
41. Humor is great – if everyone thinks it's funny. Exercise caution in this, and if it doesn't help your story or offer, don't use it.
42. Illustrate how any brand can fit into a changed world and one that will continue to change.
43. Hire professionals with credible track records to work with you.
44. Try to lock in demand for several years.
45. Speed up your payment schedule. Make sure your internal teams truly understand your messaging, goals, objectives and strategies.
46. Headlines need work – look for the top phrases or numbers to use; check platforms like BuzzSumo for keywords, topics or phrases that get the most engagements on Facebook, Twitter and more.
47. Wanamaker's classic phrase that only half of his marketing spend works but he just doesn't know which half is no longer funny. We have the tools to know.
48. Reduce a prospect's anxiety in trusting your brand, reduce the friction in the steps to get engaged, improve your offer and the incentive, and you win.
49. Be cool and relevant.
50. Wear fresh underwear every day.



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NOTE: We review a lot of information on a regular basis. This is a partial list of the sources that helped us formulate our thoughts. Others were on little scraps of paper, Post-it notes, and bar coasters. If we left something out, it was unintentional.

**BOLD. IT IS IN OUR DNA. IT IS THE  
DRIVING FORCE THAT WE LIVE AND  
BREATHE. IT COMPELS US TO LOOK  
BEYOND THE ORDINARY AND THEN  
BLOW PAST IT. IT IS ABOUT CHANGE.  
KNOCKING DOWN WALLS AND MAKING  
A DIFFERENCE. NO MATTER WHAT WE  
DO, YOU WILL KNOW OUR BOLDNESS  
HAS BEEN THERE. AT BLUE C, WE ARE  
DEDICATED TO GIVING BRANDS THE  
POWER TO BE BOLD. TO FORGE THEIR  
OWN PATH AND DRIVE SERIOUS GROWTH.  
TO LET THEIR VOICES BE HEARD AND  
CRUSH THE COMPETITION. THIS IS THE  
TIME TO RISE. TO BE BETTER. BOLDER.**

**BRAND. BOLD.**



**BRAND. BOLD.**

# GIVE YOUR BRAND THE POWER IT DESERVES.

**BRANDPWR<sup>®</sup>**

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[bluecusa.com](http://bluecusa.com)

In a highly competitive and challenging business landscape, your brand's image, story and messaging need to be clear and bold enough to keep you ahead of the pack. The **Blue C BRANDPWR Platform** is specifically designed to help define, build, refresh and position brands to keep a leadership position, elevate awareness, connect with consumers and inspire employee recruitment. It's time to unlock your brand's power.

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- A brand refresh and repositioning
- A defining new brand identity and architecture
- To develop new creative expression(s)
- Branding for new market penetration
- Branding for acquisition or post-acquisition
- Brand storytelling and messaging
- New product branding and launches
- To clarify company purpose/understanding

## OUR COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

Our approach refines and accelerates your brand-building process for robust outcomes.



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