

B2B Digital Marketing Playbook for the COVID Era

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What's changed?





The coronavirus pandemic & the resulting economic lockdowns have made traditional marketing, sales, and lead generation techniques redundant.

• People have started to go "**contactless**". That makes newspaper & magazine ads redundant.

• People spend more time **indoors**. That makes billboards redundant.

 People have started working from home and following social distancing. That makes conferences, tradeshows, events and face-to-face meetings redundant.

 Platforms like Netflix and Amazon Prime are gaining enormous popularity. That makes TV ads redundant.



• **Cold calls and emails** are very irritating. OK, this has nothing to do with the pandemic. They were always irritating.

• Our **attention spans** are also getting smaller. Studies have shown that since the year 2000, the average human attention span has dropped from 12 seconds to 8 seconds. That's less than that of a goldfish!

The importance of historical trends has reduced dramatically. Instead of monthly / quarterly data, marketers must look at **real-time data** at a granular level.

The distinction between "above the line" and "below the line" marketing is also blurring rapidly.



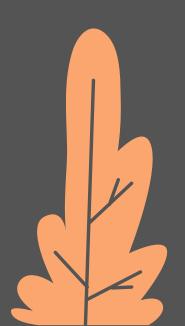
Customers have changed.

Spending patterns have changed.

People's priorities have changed.

How people spend their time has changed.

So naturally, marketing & sales techniques NEED TO CHANGE.





The Playbook

- 1. Understand what you are selling
- 2. Understand whom you are selling to
- 3. Design your digital marketing strategy
- 4. Optimize your website
- 5. Incentivize influencers
- 6. Optimize your digital marketing assets
- 7. Distribute your digital marketing assets
- 8. Make it easy for potential customers to contact you
- 9. Capitalize on Quick Response and Moment Marketing
- 10. Use dynamic QR codes
- 11. Use Artificial Intelligence
- 12. Use Precision Marketing

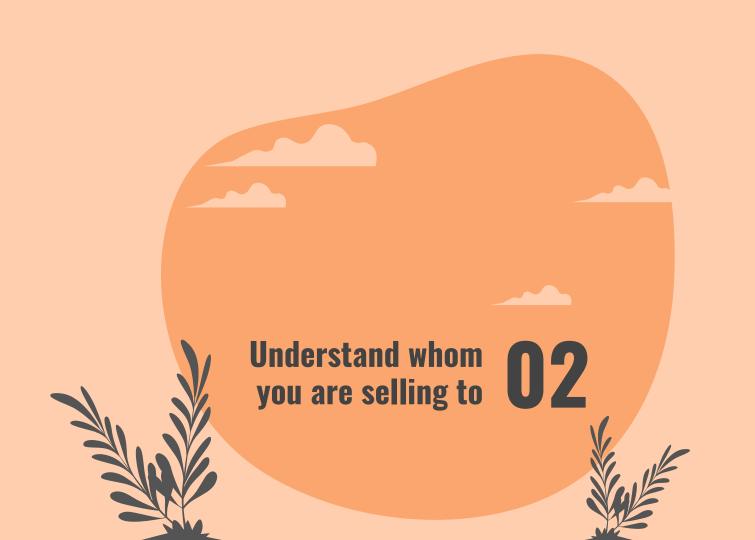


There is a cliché that goes "people don't buy products/services, they buy solutions to their problems". Think about it. Does someone buy hair color or do they buy a solution to look younger? It doesn't matter whether it's B2B or B2C or any other abbreviation, it's always about the solution and not about the product or service.

A classic example of this is the blockchain industry. For years, startups, and even large companies, have tried to sell "blockchain-based solutions" and have met with very little success. But the world's first blockchain solution - bitcoin - has done exceedingly well for itself. The reason - bitcoin solves a massive problem for a ton of people. A company will pay for a blockchain solution only if it solves a big problem.

So the first step is to understand what you are selling.





Once you have understood what you are selling, the next step is to understand whom you are selling to.

And this can get tough in the B2B world.

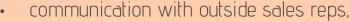
Many people have really fancy designations, but it's really unclear what they do.

Some examples - Digital Overlord, Dream Alchemist, Conversation Architect, Director of Fun.



To add to your troubles, B2B purchase decisions are made by multiple people. These could be Primary Decision Makers, Technical Buying Influencers, and Internal Influencers. The 2019 B2B Buyers Survey Report by DemandGen has covered this issue in depth. Some extracts are mentioned below.

Primary Decision Makers have a major hand in all aspects of the purchase decision. They usually participate in each part of the buying journey including:



- engaging in calls/demos, and
 - seeking RFP / competitive bids / pricing info from selected vendors.



Technical Buying Influencers have a smaller stake in the end-to-end sales cycle. Most of their time spent in the purchase decision was involved in:

- evaluating which solutions would fit well with existing partners,
- speaking with the sales rep at the selected vendor, and
- accepting outreach from vendors and engaging in calls and demos.

Internal Influencers or Champions have a heavier hand in earlier parts of a purchase decision, such as:

- speaking to and engaging with sales reps,
- developing informal lists of potential providers, and
- seeking input from peers / existing users in the community.



- Use Hubspot's **Make My Persona Tool** to create a buyer persona that your company can use to market, sell, and serve better.
- 2. Use **LinkedIn Sales Navigator** to identify the right people in the right organizations.
- 3. Use **Audiense** to identify relevant audiences, and to discover actionable insights...





What Is a Buyer Persona?

Learn what a buyer persona is and how to conduct research, surveys, and interviews to build your own.

Learn More

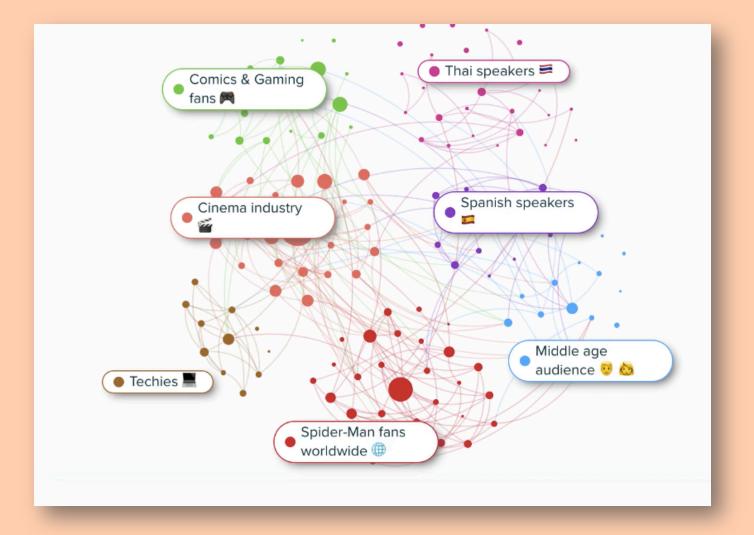


Make My Persona Tool

Create a buyer persona that your entire company can use to market, sell, and serve better.

Build My Persona

Use Hubspot's "Make My Persona Tool" to create a buyer persona that your company can use to market, sell, and serve better.



Use Audiense to identify relevant audiences, and to discover actionable insights.

Looking forward, B2B companies see digital interactions as two to three times more important to their customers than traditional sales interactions.

McKinsey 2020 survey of B2B businesses across 11 countries in 7 sectors and across 14 categories of spend.



Now that you have identified what you are selling and whom you will sell it to, it's time to design your digital marketing strategy.

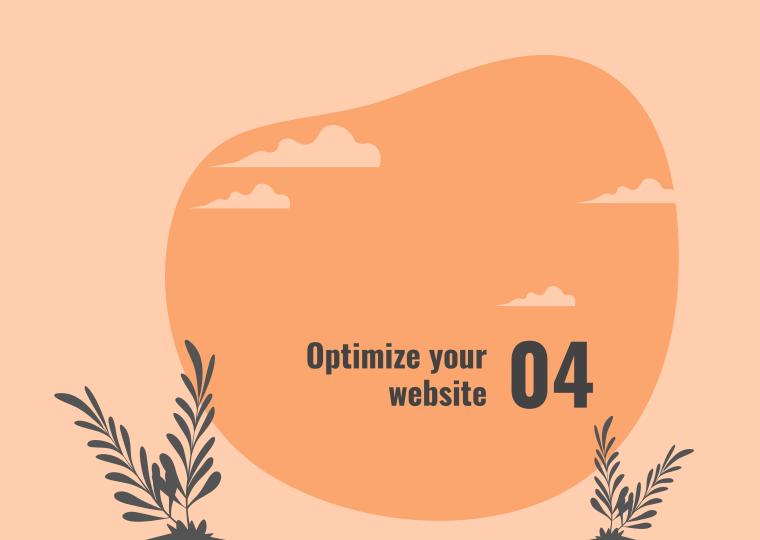
I have put together a **Digital Marketing Preliminary**Questionnaire to get you started.

You can download it from: https://www.meragr.in/docs/Digital-Marketing-Preliminary-Questionaire.pdf



Similar to what we've seen in the B2C environment, the importance of digital channels for B2B companies has grown significantly in the past few years and has radically increased since the COVID-19 crisis began.

McKinsey 2020 survey of B2B businesses across 11 countries in 7 sectors and across 14 categories of spend.



A B2B seller's primary website is its most important digital property. All your digital marketing assets should be accessible from your website.

Your website must showcase:

- · expert endorsements
- . client success case studies
- testimonials from happy customers

Search engines are the most important way that people will find your website. An **SEO** (Search Engine Optimization) audit is done to improve a website from a search engine point of view.

A **website audit** is done from 2 points of view - search engines as well as human visitors.



- Check out this quick guide to conducting **SEO / Website Audits**https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/conducting-seo-audits-rohas-nagpal
- 2. I have put together a **Website Audit Questionnaire** to get you started. You can download it from:

 https://www.meragr.in/docs/Website-Audit-Questionaire.pdf
- Use Open Graph Meta Tags to maximize the shareability of your website. Ensure your site is compatible with Google Rich Results. Use Google Search Console for all your websites.



The most frustrating issues with suppliers' websites are length of the ordering process, difficulty of finding products, technical glitches with ordering, confusing websites, a lack of information on delivery and technical support, and difficulty setting up payments.

McKinsey 2020 survey of B2B businesses across 11 countries in 7 sectors and across 14 categories of spend.



A happy customer can be your best influencer.

You must incentivize happy customers to become influencers. And money is not necessarily the best incentive here.

Showcasing someone's testimonial on your website and social media may work even better.

Figure out what works best for your influencers and then do it.





- Every company MUST have a **loyalty program**. Recently, Maldives became the world's first country to start a loyalty program for frequent visitors. Loyalty programs are one of the best and most economical ways to grow sales. If you sell physical products, you can use **meraQR codes** for quick loyalty program creation.
- Every company MUST have an **affiliate / referral system**. These programs are easy to run and can lead to a huge spike in leads. If you sell physical products, you can use **meraQR codes** for quick loyalty program creation.



Depending upon your specific business and target audience, you must build some or all of these digital marketing assets.

- Blog posts on your own WordPress blog or on a platform like Medium. Use Hubspot's Blog Ideas Generator or BuzzSumo if you are stuck for ideas.
- **eBooks** are specially created documents, optimized for viewing on computers, tablets, and mobile phones. eBooks typically contain lesser text per page and more images. If done well, eBooks are the BEST methods of building credibility and establishing yourself as an expert. The simplest way to create eBooks is MS Word or PowerPoint.





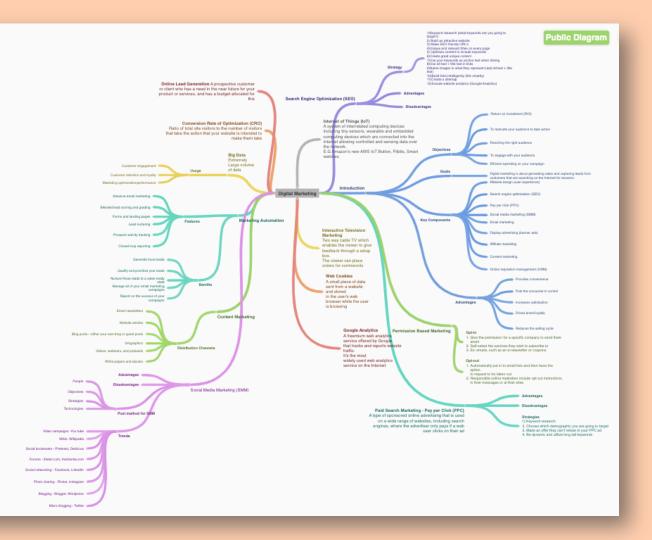
Email marketing is usually divided into 2 categories – **drip email** campaigns and email **newsletters**.

Drip emails are a set of marketing emails that are sent out automatically on a schedule e.g. 1 email as soon as someone signs up, another after 4 days, another on the following weekend. Drip emails can also be triggered by user actions e.g. when a purchase is made.

Email newsletters are a great way of regular information sharing with customers, employees, and leads. You can use **Sendgrid** or **SendInBlue**.

- 4. **Free courses** can be of great value to your customers especially if your product / service is complex and requires expertise to use. You can also throw in free / paid certificates to motivate learners. **Moodle** is one of the best learning management systems you could use for designing and delivering your courses.
- Infographics (information + graphics) are a nice and easy way to explain how your product / services work. Canva is a great tool for creating infographics. Also, check out Coggle for creating mind maps & flow charts.





Coggle is a great tool for creating mind maps & flow charts.

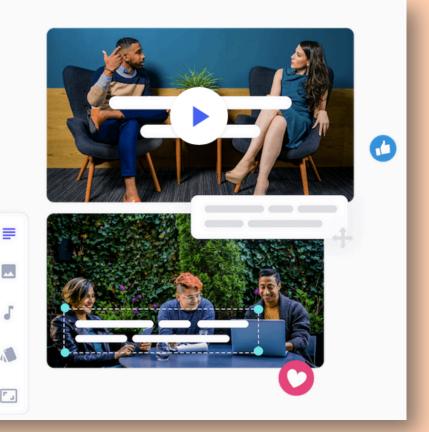
- 6. **Landing pages** are UNIQUE pages that you create to market something. Why is it called a landing page? Well, the name is actually pretty literal. People usually land on that page after clicking on one of your ads or posts or articles.
- 7. Videos are one of the most important digital marketing assets. You can make explainer / how-to videos as well as long-form videos that showcase how your product/service solves user problems. Some useful video makers are Animoto, Powtoon, Videoscribe and Lumen5.



The easiest video maker for social media marketing

Lumen5 creates impactful, engaging videos from your existing content — so you can make video a regular part of your marketing strategy.

Sign up free



Lumen5 uses AI to storyboard your ideas, fit your content to a layout, and find music and visuals that enhance your message.



8. **Webinars** are undeniably the most powerful digital marketing tools in the COVID era. They also involve the maximum friction as viewers are required to spend quite some time at a fixed schedule. You can use **Facebook Live, Youtube Live, Google Meet, Webex, Zoom**.

Remember to make your content as shareable as possible.

ShareThis has an excellent free service for share buttons, follow buttons, and reaction buttons.



When it comes to distributing your digital marketing assets, the dissemination platforms are **social media**, **search engines**, and **email**.

When it comes to search engines, **Google** is not the only one. You should also consider how **Bing** and **DuckDuckGo** are indexing your content.

Depending on your business, you must use some or all of these regularly:

LinkedIn is excellent for lead generation and showcasing products and services. Other than paid advertising, there are 6 powerful LinkedIn solutions you can leverage – Pages, Groups, Newsletters, Employee feeds, Employee profiles, and Events.



Facebook is good for lead generation through Facebook Communities, Groups, and Events. It's also useful for creating brand awareness through Facebook Business Pages. You can also engage and connect with leads through Facebook Messenger.

Youtube is not just a video hosting and sharing platform. Its also the world's second-largest search engine (after Google). B2B marketers can use it for vlogs (Video Blogs), product demo videos, and brand building. You can additionally use Instagram's IGTV and Vimeo for sharing video content.

Quora is a popular question-and-answer platform. By regularly
answering relevant questions and participating in conversations you
can position yourself / your company as a thought leader.

Twitter is a micro-blogging platform that can be used for establishing thought leadership, building brand awareness, and social selling.

Action Points

Depending on the volume of content you post on social media, you could use Microsoft **Excel**, Google **Sheets**, or **HootSuite** for social media post scheduling.

Also download and use the **Email Marketing Checklist** from: https://www.meragr.in/docs/Email-Marketing-Checklist.pdf

At the top of the funnel, marketers should measure engagement from digital marketing campaigns and look at how certain actions, such as downloading a resource, connect to a prospect's buying intent.

MarketingProfs



This shouldn't be something to talk about. But you will be surprised how many businesses make it difficult for potential customers to contact them!

You MUST make it extremely easy for customers and leads to contact you via:

- phone (a toll-free number if feasible)
- instant messaging (Whatsapp, Facebook Messenger, Viber, Telegram),
- email, and
- · social media

If you sell physical products, put **meraQR codes** on them so that a customer can scan it and connect in 1-click.





When is the best time to contact a potential customer? When he is engaging with your content. So try reaching out as soon as possible (within 60 seconds is best) when someone "reacts" to a social media post or otherwise engages with your content. That's why social media platforms send you real-time notifications.

Example: Facebook will show notifications like this: "Pooja and 3 other people liked your video. Help them see future posts by inviting them to like your page". Make sure you "invite" these people as soon as possible.

Example: When someone who is not a "connection" reacts to your post, immediately send them a connection request. Personalizing the connection request with a message like "Glad you liked my post. Let's connect." will ensure an almost 100% acceptance rate.

One of the advantages of an all-digital world is that we can measure engagement, understand intent, and predict actions.

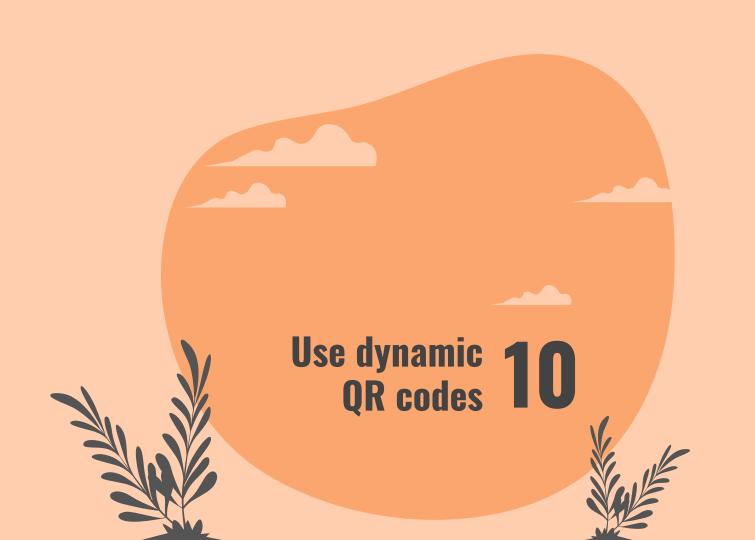
Think about what triggers and interactions indicate a qualified lead within the context of the digital age—and for your own organization.

MarketingProfs

Moment marketing is when you capitalize on having "just the right message at just the right moment". It involves hooking onto a current event or a trending story and creating content that ties your brand to the event / story. While moment marketing appears to be spontaneous, it can be planned in advance.

The best example of moment marketing are the Amul butter ads.

Although moment marketing is primarily done in the B2C sector, it can be used in the B2B sector also.



One of the most important marketing platforms is your product's packaging.

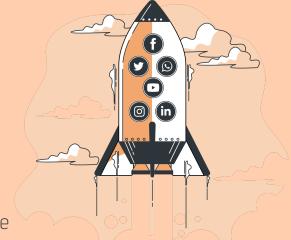
By printing / pasting meraQR codes on your products and their packaging, you get 8 benefits:

- Increased direct sales A happy customer simply scans the meraQR code and buys more of your product... or related products... at a special discount.
- New revenue streams You can also sell third party
 products through the meraQR code on your packaging.
 Google Ads enables websites to earn from third-party ads.
 meraQR enables manufacturers to do the same. That's a
 brand new revenue stream.



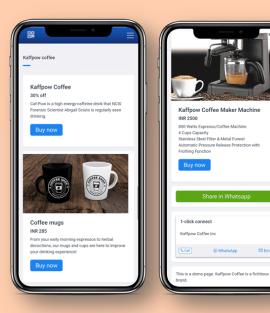
- **Lead generation -** Generate leads of potential partners, distributors, retailers & consumers.
- . **Affiliate / Referral marketing -** Every customer is an influencer with a network of connections, fans, friends, and colleagues. Incentivize your customers to refer your products with 1-click.
- Digital marketing Your meraQR offers are automatically submitted to search engines with digital marketing & search engine optimization taken care of. This way even more people can discover your awesome products.





- Loyalty program Creating & managing loyalty programs is a breeze with meraQR. Use loyalty programs to convert one-time buyers into lifelong customers.
- . **Improved packaging design -** Is your packaging cluttered with too much information? Shift the info to the meraQR code.
- **Customer delight -** Delight your customers with 1-click support.





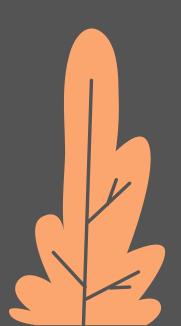
⊠ Email

meraQR enables brands to monetize their packaging

The real value in a QR code is not in the QR code itself.

It's in what happens when you scan it.

Rohas Nagpal





Artificial intelligence is "any task performed by a programme or machine that, if humans carried out the same activity, we would say that humans had to apply intelligence to complete the task."

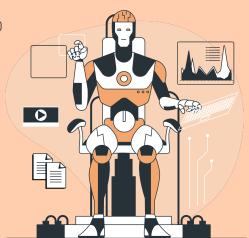
Marvin Minsky & John McCarthy

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the broader concept where machines plan, learn, reason, solve problems, perceive and even exhibit social intelligence & creativity.

Machine Learning (ML) is an application of Al where data is given to machines and they are allowed to learn for themselves.

Neural Networks are computers that classify information like humans do and are used for recognizing and classifying images.

Natural Language Processing aims to "read, decipher, understand, and make sense of the human languages".



Marketers can use Al to:

- Create marketing content articles, posts, videos.
- Detect new trends from real-time social media conversations.
- Drive sales through speech recognition systems like Alexa, Google Assistant, Google Maps, Shazam, Siri etc.
- Forecast sales by analyzing data of past deals, emails, meetings and other interactions.
- Improve campaign performance by quickly analyzing massive amounts of data.



- Improve the returns of digital ads.
- Offer demand and supply based dynamic pricing like airlines, hotels and ride sharing apps.
- Resolve customer queries and complaints, in natural language, using chatbots.
- Understand what customers want and when





Precision marketing focuses on retaining, cross-selling and upselling existing customers. It is much more expensive to find a new customer than it is to sell to an existing one. And that is why precision marketing is so important.

There is a flip side to precision marketing. The more loyal existing customers become, the more they expect their needs and desires to be met.

Loyalty programs and enhanced customer service are the most effective methods of precision marketing.





- Audience identification: Hubspot's Make My Persona Tool | Audiense.
- . **Content idea generation:** Blog Ideas Generator | BuzzSumo
- Discoverability: Google Search Console | Google rich results
- . **Email marketing:** Sendgrid | SendlnBlue.
- . Monetization of packaging: meraQR
- . **Referral / affiliate marketing:** meraQR



- **SEO & Website optimization:** Hubspot Website Grader | MozLink Explorer | Geekflare Website Audit for Best Practices, Performance, and SEO | Full-page screenshot service | Geekflare Broken Link Testing Tool
- Sharing: Open Graph Meta Tags | ShareThis | Bitly | Metatags.io
- Video creation: Animoto, Powtoon, Videoscribe. Lumen5
- . **Web analytics:** Statcounter | Google Analytics
- . **Webinars**: Facebook Live | Youtube Live | Google Meet | Webex | Zoom





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