B2B Marketing Trends for 2018
How to amplify your business marketing strategy this year
A recent survey by Smart Insights asked participants to select the ONE marketing activity that they thought would make the greatest impact in 2018 for their business.

After coming in the top three every year, it comes as no shock that content marketing was the most popular response, getting 20%\(^1\) of people’s votes.

And with a separate survey highlighting that 81% of businesses use video as a marketing tool, up from 63% in 2017 – it shows that video marketing is a growing trend, not only within content marketing, but in its own right!\(^2\)

The most surprising result from the Smart Insights survey was possibly second place: Big Data\(^1\). Showing that the insight derived from data and analytics is fast becoming an invaluable tool.

In this guide we’ll breakdown the trends predicted to be big within content, video and big data during 2018, as well as explaining how you can begin to incorporate these techniques into your own marketing strategy.
4 content marketing trends for 2018
Content marketing has been a growing trend on the digital horizon for a few years now and that growth is only going to continue into 2018, with 89% of B2B marketers and 86% of B2C marketers reporting they are using content marketing to increase leads and drive their brand forward.

However, digital marketing is a constantly shifting space and what worked last year, won’t necessarily work again this year. So what should you be focusing on in your content marketing strategy for 2018? In this post, we’re taking a look at four of the top trends predicted for the coming twelve months...
1  Changing content formats
Content marketing is no longer just about blogging! To stay ahead of the game (and to keep your audience interested), you need to build in a number of different formats for your content strategy.

Why?
As consumers we are flooded with content and so it’s vital to find ways to stand out and make your content noticed. Audiences now have a plethora of options when it comes to finding content and blogging is just one among many, such as:

- Email
- Podcasts
- Video (Produced)
- Video (Live)
- Webinars
- White papers
- Social media
- In-person events

How can I get started?
Take time to create a content marketing strategy which weaves in a variety of formats that suit your audience and your business.

Recruit specifically for the skills required for the formats you’ll be using. For example, if you choose to include video in your strategy, then hire someone with experience in video production and editing.

2  Voice search
Not only is the way we distribute content changing, but the way that people are finding and consuming it is too. In 2018, you will need to consider new consumption habits which are being brought about by ‘personal assistant’ tools such as Alexa and Siri.

Why?
It’s predicted that by 2020, as many as 50% of all searches will be voice searches⁴.

How can I get started?
When creating your content, do it with voice search in mind. Consider how your audience might search and the terms they might use (and how these will differ from standard, typed searches).

You will focus more on long-tail keywords and questions including words such as ‘how’, ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘where’, ‘when’, and ‘why’. 
3  Authenticity

More traditional forms of advertising are starting to wear thin on today’s consumers. They want connection, transparency and trust in their dealings with businesses.

Why?
As more and more businesses move online, the one missing element is that personal interaction gained from speaking to someone face to face. Ultimately, people trust and want to work with people and not corporations so today, more than ever, it’s important to find a way to be authentic online.

How can I get started?
Focus on ways that you can build trust with your audience. The first and most obvious way to do this is to be trustworthy. Assuming however that this is a given, here are a few other ways you can increase your credibility with your audience:

• **Personalisation** – showing your customers that you know and understand them

• **‘Behind the scenes’ content** – letting customers in and showing them your less perfect, less corporate side

• **Video** – more on this in the next section, but showing customers the ‘face’ of your business immediately makes you more authentic and easier to connect with

• **In-person events** – if video makes you more approachable, showing up in person does so even more!

4  Live video

Video has been gaining in popularity over the last few years and that growth has seen an exponential increase in the amount of video content being consumed. Live video in particular is a trend we expect to see much more of in 2018.

Why?
Live streaming has been around for a number of years on channels like YouTube. However, it really started to grow when Facebook launched Facebook Live back in 2016. According to statistics from Livestream, 80% of audiences would rather watch live video from a brand than read a blog, and 82% prefer live video to social posts.

How can I get started?
The great thing about live video is that you don’t need a lot of expensive equipment to get started. You can go live on Facebook with nothing but a mobile phone.

Planning is key. While you want your video to come across as relaxed and informal, you don’t want it to appear unprofessional and unprepared.

Consider using live streaming as a form of customer support. Cover frequently asked questions and give people the opportunity to get their queries answered.
4 video marketing trends for 2018
Video marketing has seen huge growth over the past few years and can no longer be ignored as a key part of your content marketing strategy. In fact, according to Cisco’s Visual Networking Index, by 2019, global consumer internet video traffic will account for 80% of all consumer Internet traffic.

So which trends should you be considering when planning your own video marketing campaigns?

“Business decision makers LOVE online video because it gives them the most amount of information in the shortest amount of time.”

Robert Weiss

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1  Live streaming
Thanks to tools such as Facebook Live and Zoom, live streaming has become increasingly accessible to even the smallest of businesses and more and more of them have already added live video to their content marketing tool box.

Why?
Simply put, audiences prefer it. According to statistics from Livestream, live video is more appealing to brand audiences, with 80% preferring to watch live video from a brand than read a blog, and 82% choosing live video over social posts8.

How can I get started?
There are a number of ways you can incorporate live streaming into your own content marketing, such as live interviews or Q&A’s. Some brands are using it well for training and education.

One of the best uses for live video is to create content that is ‘behind the scenes’ and helps to increase the authenticity of your business.

2  360 video
As technology continues to advance quicker than ever before, consumers are beginning to search for a more immersive experience. Virtual Reality is fast approaching, but in the meantime, 360 video is giving brands the opportunity to engage people at a deeper level.

Why?
Recent research by Google has shown that 360 video doesn’t achieve the same retention rate as standard video, with audiences clicking away faster. However, it far out-performs standard when it comes to engagement metrics such as views, click throughs, shares and subscribes9.

How can I get started?
First and foremost, you’ll need the right equipment. Make sure you have a camera and editing software that supports 360-degree video.

You’ll also need to consider your subjects carefully. The key to 360 video is giving your audience as much opportunity for interaction as possible.
3 Video integration into customer journey
The majority of video marketing content is used at the top end of the sales funnel. It’s a tool to attract new customers. As businesses start to see the huge benefits of video, they are beginning to incorporate them more into the entire customer journey.

Why?
It makes sense that if videos perform well at the top of the funnel, they will perform equally well as customers move through the sales process – and the statistics show this is so. Adding a video to marketing emails can boost click-through rates by 200-300% and embedding them on to your landing pages can increase conversions by up to 80%.

How can I get started?
Testing will be key to successfully integrating video into your own customer journey. Try adding video to different points and see where you get better results.

Continuity is a vital part of the sales process so make sure that your videos are in line with your brand.

4 Projection mapping
This term is less well-known than the other trends that we’ve discussed. However, it’s likely that you have seen it in action. Projection mapping is the process by which a 2D video is projected onto a 3D surface such as the side of a building.

Why?
There’s nothing like turning a static object into an animated surface to grab attention and create some drama! If you’re looking to create a big impact and a campaign that will really stick in people’s minds, then projection mapping could be a great way to go.

How can I get started?
Projection mapping takes a considerable amount of planning and specialised equipment. You will need to allow for time and budget to pull this one off.

This technique works well for big launches and outdoor events.
4 big data trends for 2018
It’s clear that marketers and business owners fully recognise the growing need to create a data strategy and incorporate this into their marketing. Let’s take a look at 4 big data trends that we expect to see in the coming year.

“Customer expectations have evolved as well – they expect us to know who they are and what they need”

Joan Dal Bianco, Senior VP, TD Bank
1 Personalisation

There is nothing new about using personalisation in marketing. However, the level at which businesses are now able to create a personalised experience is something which is constantly developing, and which will continue to be a big focus in 2018.

Why?
A recent study by Adobe asked marketers to state one marketing capability that would be most important in the future and one third of them answered with ‘personalisation’.

How can I get started?
Simply put, the key to personalisation is to know your customers and to use that information to improve their experience with your brand. With this in mind, a good place to start is to ensure that the data you hold is correct and up to date.

Services such as Experian B2B Prospector allow you to build marketing lists from the very latest data and ensure that personalisation is engaging rather than awkward.

2 Proximity marketing

Big data allows businesses to ‘market smarter’ and this year we expect to see more use of techniques such as proximity marketing, where mobile tracking is used to push notifications to consumers based on their location and interests.

Why?
According to research firm TechNavio, the global enterprise location-based service (LBS) and advertising market is projected to reach 7.6 Billion USD by 2020, at a compound annual growth rate of 30.22%.

How can I get started?
Notifications can be a powerful marketing tool, but they can also be a big turn-off to potential customers if used wrong. As with any outbound marketing campaign, make sure you have permission to contact users before sending them notifications and make sure the content you send is highly relevant.
3 Single customer view
As we move into 2018, customer data is becoming available from more and more sources such as social and paid media. In order to reap the full benefits of all this data, marketers need to find a method to bring it all together in a meaningful way.

Why?
Creating a single customer view is still proving a challenge to businesses, with Experian statistics showing that 89% of brands are struggling to achieve this. This presents a real opportunity to get ahead.

How can I get started?
A robust data strategy is key to achieving a single customer view. You must firstly understand the data that you need, the data you already have and how you are going to use it.

4 Data security
The more data that businesses are storing and using, the more important keeping that data secure becomes. 2018 will also see the Data Protection Act (DPA) replaced with the EU’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and so data security is likely to be front of mind for most businesses.

Why?
Data is an incredibly powerful tool from a customer relationship perspective. It allows businesses to build real trust and intimacy. Loss of customers’ data is equally powerful in its negative impact for brands and once consumer trust is lost, it is difficult to re-gain.

How can I get started?
Our guide to GDPR will give you some excellent tips on getting started with your own data strategy.
In summary
Don’t forget these key points when it comes to your marketing strategy this year...

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content marketing</th>
<th>Video marketing</th>
<th>Big Data</th>
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<tr>
<td>Try different content formats – variety is key</td>
<td>Make the most of the technology you have – live streaming is accessible to almost everyone</td>
<td>Ensure your personalisation is engaging...not awkward</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take new technology into consideration, such as voice search</td>
<td>Is it worth investing in equipment to produce different content, such as 360 video?</td>
<td>Proximity marketing (notifications) can be a powerful tool – provided you gain permissions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Be transparent. Build trust with consumers by being authentic</td>
<td>Don’t forget the statistics...adding a video to marketing emails can boost click-through rates by 200-300%</td>
<td>Work towards a single customer view to really reap the benefits of data</td>
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<tr>
<td>Keep on top of the latest trends, live video is still growing in popularity</td>
<td>Think outside the box, projection mapping can be great for big launches or outdoor events</td>
<td>Above all else, make data security your number one priority</td>
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Create a brighter future for your business with Experian B2B Prospector.

Whether you’re looking to build a new marketing list, enhance your existing customer database or make sure your message is seen by the right audience, Experian B2B Prospector can help.

With over 5.3 million UK business records and segmentation available by geography, business type, turnover plus much more, Experian B2B Prospector can help make sure your marketing data is up to date, cleansed and aligned to your best prospects.

Contact a member of the team today on 0870 012 1111 or visit www.experian.co.uk/b2bprospector to find out more.
*Guide to GDPR can be found at: https://www.experian.co.uk/business-express/hub/white-papers/experian-guide-gdpr/

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