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Going Digital With Your Industrial Marketing Strategy

10 Essential Elements for the Modern
Manufacturing Firm's Website



It's no secret the way B2B professionals across all industries market to their respective target buyers has dramatically shifted over the past decade – and the manufacturing industry is certainly no exception. Long gone are the days of simply relying on a combination of reseller channels and “traditional” marketing tactics (like print advertising and your yearly lineup of trade shows and events); and the trend that's swept the industrial sector by storm is: **manufacturing firms are going digital.** Very digital. And if you aren't convinced of that by now, here are a few statistics to chew on...

- Over half of engineers did NOT attend an in-person trade show in 2012.¹
- 79% of manufacturers utilized some form of paid print or offline promotion in 2015, but only 32% found this tactic effective. In contrast, digital search engine marketing ranked highest among paid marketing methods in terms of its efficacy, at a solid 61%.²
- 81% of B2B manufacturing firms report they are now utilizing content marketing as an integral piece of their overall marketing strategy.³

Moreover, we've seen first-hand that industrial firms can cut some serious costs by implementing a digitally-focused marketing strategy. In fact, one of our clients from the manufacturing industry has eliminated trade show costs all together – solely using inbound marketing as a means to generate leads and customers. But do all manufacturing firms need to do this to be successful? No, they don't. What IS important is that you don't end up becoming a *digital laggard*. You simply need to wise up your company website with the right elements. And we're here to help!

This eGuide will highlight the ten most important attributes that should be included on your manufacturing firm's website – and how they should be leveraged when effectively marketing to your customers and prospects. Read on to get the scoop!

1 - GlobalSpec's 2013 Digital Media Use in the Industrial Sector

2, 3 - Content Marketing Institute's B2B Manufacturing Content Marketing 2016: Benchmarks, Budgets and Trends – North America



1. Invest in a Clean Design

Scour the manufacturing SMB landscape and you'll find all kinds of sites that look like they're crawling out of the 1990s. Sure, plenty of fun things were popularized in the 90s – Super Mario, mix tapes, MAD LIBS – but *timeless* website designs didn't make the cut. And a quick way to self-sabotage your business success is to wait another three or four years before you implement a fresh look. In fact, according to InstantShift, 94% of internet users cite poor design as a reason they do not trust certain websites. Fail to adapt and you could easily be losing business to competitors who have already jumped on the remodeling bandwagon.

Unfortunately, a complete redesign is often expensive. But we say with conviction that it's best to bite the bullet and invest in a sharp, clean design – or at least a refresh of your home page, your navigation menu and attributes like fonts and colors. If interested, we've published a comprehensive [eBook on website redesign considerations](#) – but for manufacturers, the most important tips are:

- **Your design should be [responsive](#) – aka mobile friendly.** If your site's visual components cannot automatically be resized and rearranged to fit a variety of mobile devices, you'll be turning off a lot of potential customers. Google has revealed that over half of its searches in 2015 were conducted via mobile. And iAcquire reports that 40% of people will choose another result if a site is not responsive.
- **Do not incorporate a lot of “fluff” in your imagery or website copy.** You can still show off your company culture if that's a strong point for your business, but make sure your website text is authoritative and educational. Avoid writing that sounds like “ad copy” and your message will be more in tune with your audience.



2. Cultivate a Solutions Oriented Narrative

When compared to your everyday business-to-consumer transaction, sales cycles in a B2B market are far less emotionally influenced. Then consider a typical manufacturing company's sales process, and you'll find the purchasing decisions are exponentially *more logical*, and often require buy-in from a greater number of stakeholders, a longer approval process, and compliance with stricter regulations. With that said, manufacturing buyers are people, too. They aren't robots. And they still respond to informative and valuable content.

According to GlobalSpec's *2013 Digital Media Use in the Industrial Sector*, 56% of industrial professionals do not contact a vendor until they evaluate their options by comparing supplier website content. **Therefore, the best thing you can do as a marketer is to present solutions to issues buyers from this segment encounter on a regular basis.** How does your product solve a problem?

Start by creating Solutions oriented pages and feature direct links to these pages in your user navigation. Instead of touting your product's features, the angle you use in your marketing collateral should be aimed at helping the buyer (or end-user) answer the question "*what's in it for me?*" And this theme should trickle down into your company's blog posts, white papers, Calls-to-Action and other parts of your website. Features aren't what entice customers to buy. **People need to know how you're going to help them accomplish a goal.** So for an audience comprised of engineers, try emphasizing benefits like lowering design and production costs, saving time on increasingly tight deadlines and exceeding user expectations.



3. Show Off Your Product Catalog with Visuals

The importance of this checklist item cannot be understated. Visuals. Visuals. Visuals. Our brains are made to digest and process visual content more efficiently than text (60,000 times faster!) – and visuals are much more likely to influence the way we perceive not only a product, but the company selling that product. Including professional product shots accompanied by the facts is one way of bringing your business to life. However, although PDF downloads and digital brochures “get the job done”, they’re quickly falling out of style in the manufacturing business.

Interactive product catalogs and design worksheets that allow your customers to research and browse online are much more modern (and helpful!) **Users should be able to search your catalog based on a number of product options and specs – and your website should immediately and accurately deliver the search results that reflect exactly what they’re looking for.** What’s more, 84% of today’s industrial professionals use the internet to find the components, equipment and services they need, so your buyers expect this process to be as fluid as possible.



4. Provide a Streamlined Way to Submit Specs

Piggybacking on number three, if prospective customers are going to buy your product directly from your website, you need to have a simple, intuitive and organized way for them to submit technical specifications to your sales, engineering or production teams. Make sure all forms on your website are detailed but clear, and keep a safe amount of white space in between forms and other text on the same page in order to avoid confusion. Finally, do not require more steps in the specs submission process than necessary.

We recommend user experience testing as a way to measure how much time and effort it takes a person to get from one end of this interaction to the other. Do what you can to provide a clear navigational pathway throughout the user's visit to your site. Again, convenience for the buyer is key. If a prospect is able to see they can upload application details and files with a quick click of a button, they're much more likely to move forward with the purchase. When in doubt, provide very explicit instructions!



5. Offer Free Resources and Content

IHS Engineering 360 reports that 56% of engineers are already in their second or third stage of the buying cycle before they make contact with a vendor, so they rely on digital resources for the information they need. But what drives many B2B buyers in the purchasing direction is an element of *trust*... trust that your product is going to solve their problem(s), and trust in your expertise and topnotch customer service.

Now, what's one tried and true way of quickly building trust with interested prospects? **Giving away value before the sale.** Okay, you've undoubtedly heard the expression "*Why buy the cow when you can get the milk for free?*" at some point in your business career. Well, we're not recommending you start shipping free product samples to your entire contact database. But presenting your audience with the opportunity to download complimentary white papers, tip sheets, infographics, webinar recordings and eGuides (like this one, for instance!) is a great way to show prospects who aren't ready to buy yet that 1) you know what you're talking about, and 2) you really are able to recognize their pain points and subsequently help them!

Note that each resource or offer should be gated behind a form on a unique landing page. Once a visitor to your site has submitted their email to you in exchange for the free resource, they may become a potential lead! Depending on the questions you ask in the form to qualify the lead, you've learned a little bit more about him and you can use this information to market to him more effectively, providing additional insights and follow-up material he is likely to find valuable. 68% of B2B businesses [use landing pages](#) to generate new leads and nurture them down the pipeline for future sales conversions (Source: MarketingSherpa), so be sure to make use of lead gen LPs on your website!

Once again, the catch in the manufacturing biz is that your audience doesn't want to sift through any fluff. The language should be straightforward and should tell them exactly what they're going to get, the name of the offer shouldn't be too "gimmicky," and the content in the offer itself should contain practical advice and easy-to-apply tips. **It's key that the reader is able to go and implement your actionable suggestions right away** – as this speedy result ultimately contributes to a higher level of trust in your company.



6. Create and Maintain a Business Blog

There is just about every reason in the book for your manufacturing firm to blog. Even if you just start out publishing posts on a monthly basis, blogging has so many benefits that make it an absolute must-have marketing tool.

Chief among them? HubSpot reports that **B2B companies that blog receive 67% more leads than those that do not**. And if that's not enough to get you cracking on your next article, blogging also allows your company to:

- Demonstrate its expertise in a variety of areas.
- Overtly showcase personality (which is sometimes hard to come by when skimming content on manufacturing firm websites).
- Build trust with prospects by answering FAQs and providing How-to's.
- Delight current customers and partners.
- Become a go-to resource for current information about hot topics in your field.
- And even *occasionally* promote your product's features and updates.

Plus, blogging serves as a way to continually produce fresh site pages for Google and other search engines to crawl. This is important because search engines favor repeatedly updated sites when ranking them on results pages. Moreover, blog posts are easy to optimize for organic search, and with the right [keyword strategy](#) in place, you'll be more likely to be found by business buyers who are at the top of the sales funnel and conducting searches on topics related to your business and industry.

We recommend that your subject matter experts (who are probably a limitless fountain of knowledge, but may not have the writing skills or time to connect with readers on a regular basis) team up with a technical writer who will be able to successfully find the balance between technical know-how, readability and relatability. **GlobalSpec's Industrial Buy Cycle Survey revealed that 83% of buyers review up to three pieces of content before making a decision on an industrial purchase over \$1,000**, so having an experienced writer on hand who is able to consistently churn out high-quality content can make or break your website presence!



7. Incorporate Video Content

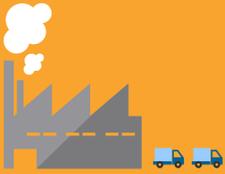
For a couple of years in a row, the Content Marketing Institute has found that manufacturing marketers cite video as their most frequently used content marketing tactic. The *B2B Manufacturing Content Marketing 2016: Benchmarks, Budgets and Trends* report shows us that a whopping 89% deploy video as part of their content strategy – and 70% of manufacturing marketers consider it to be effective (second only to in-person events).

To no surprise, **YouTube is leveraged by 89% of manufacturing marketers – the most commonly used social media platform in this industry, as well as the most highly rated in terms of effectiveness.** That said, YouTube is also the second largest search engine in the world – so video marketing is not to be taken lightly. Especially when you consider the impact [video has on business results...](#)

Stumped about what kind of video content your firm can produce? Here are a few ideas to get your wheels turning:

- Educational Q&A with an expert on your team
- Interview with an industry influencer
- How-to guide or explainer video (check out [Fiverr](#) for some inexpensive solutions)
- Product tutorials
- Inventory showcase

Or even some light-hearted videos on your team page can work! Don't be afraid to try something new. Originality often reaps greater engagement – as well as more time being spent on your website.



8. Explain Your Manufacturing Process

People are more likely to fill out forms and make purchases on your site if they feel they can trust you with their information. **Therefore, it's important to incorporate elements into your website that speak to your company's reliability, such as security badges and certifications – as well as a detailed privacy statement.** A study conducted by Actual Insights posted on eConsultancy reveals that 76% of consumers feel trust logos do, in fact, affect their sense of trust in a particular website (and 64% said unknown logos also affect that level of trust.)

Particularly if your industry or market is difficult to understand, it's best to provide a window into your company's manufacturing process with an explainer video or infographic detailing how you create your products and what kind of impact it has on your community. No doubt, members of the manufacturing audience appreciate when a firm actively embraces its sustainability strategy and looks for innovative materials or processes that leave little to no carbon footprint behind. A survey conducted by Cone Communications and Echo Global found that **9 out of every 10 consumers consider environmental impact when making a purchase** – and 78% of shoppers will flat out refuse to purchase from a company that is misleading about green practices. Furthermore, 76% of consumers say the best way to confirm a company's eco-friendly claims is to see a certification. So keep those badges coming in order to remain competitive!



9. Showcase Your Industry Portfolio

Another way of enhancing your credibility and attracting new prospects is by publishing case studies, customer success stories and client testimonials right on your website. According to CMI's 2013 content marketing report, 88% of B2B marketers cited case studies as the most effective form of content marketing!

A case study is the perfect piece of content to sway a prospect that's been sitting on the fence, not quite ready to make a purchase – or that is still considering buying from a competitor. **If you can provide concrete examples of problems you've helped solve for customers and/or stories where your company has met client needs similar to your prospect's own business needs, you'll be surprised at what a difference this can make.** When a CEO of a company with whom you partner goes out on a limb to voice their happiness on your behalf, this speaks volumes not only about your product or service, but about the way you do business.

And speaking of the way you do business... If you serve multiple types of businesses and organizations, it's also a great idea to create an *Industries Served* page for your website, elaborating on the solutions you provide to distinct niches ([take a gander at one of ours here](#)). Industry-specific expertise trumps a jack-of-all-trades company nearly every time.



10. Leverage an “Ask the Experts” Page

This last website element is really helpful, and yet for some reason, it’s often overlooked by B2B marketing strategists. By creating a landing page on which visitors can submit questions – whether they’re about your company policies, your products, a store location, or just something they want to hear you talk about on your blog – an “Ask the Experts” section on your site serves a dual purpose.

For one, it gives your company a chance to cater to busy customers who may just want to drop you a line as opposed to getting on the phone and calling up a service rep. **It also shows that your business is engaged with your audience** –and that you’d like them to participate in the content creation process with you. Moreover, it gives them another way to voice their concerns and needs; just make sure you follow up on every submission! One of our industrial manufacturing clients has a relatively new Ask the Expert form on their site that has garnered nearly 300 submissions! **More often than not, it’s the little things that have the biggest impact on lead generation and customer satisfaction.**

To our friends in manufacturing, we hope you found this resource chock full of helpful tips and advice that you can use to enhance your marketing efforts. Please feel free to send us feedback! We love hearing from our readers, and of course, if there is anything we can do to help you with your B2B marketing strategy, we’re all ears!

We’ll leave you with this parting bit of advice. If there is one thing you can take away from this eGuide, it’s this: **make the information the prospect is looking for on your website as easy to find as possible** – whatever that information may be. A buyer shouldn’t land on your home page and have to click through ten times to get what they came there for. The path they need to take should be clear and user-friendly, so always keep usability top of mind when creating new website pages, redesigning old ones, and updating your company’s messaging and marketing materials. Cheers, marketers!



About Us

Could your company benefit from some great marketing? Precision Marketing Group, LLC offers topnotch outsourced marketing services to B2B organizations, with a focus on inbound marketing that drives qualified leads. As a HubSpot Certified Platinum Partner, PMG has the capabilities to serve its clients with the absolute best in integrated marketing strategies and services that deliver real business results.

Of course, our team of experts enjoys providing B2B marketing strategy and execution to companies of many different sizes and types. Mixing it up keeps life interesting! However, we've found our sweet spot to be teaming up with privately held businesses with a complex sale – most often, companies in the manufacturing, technology and professional services industries.

Interested in receiving your own B2B inbound marketing assessment? Send us a message or call today! For more information, visit PrecisionMarketingGroup.com or contact us at **508.656.0291**.

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