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There are many learnings that can be transferred from B2C ecommerce best practice to the B2B environment; however, there are many factors that make developing a successful online content strategy in the B2B ecommerce environment distinctly different and inherently much more challenging. At the heart of this complexity are the very products that B2B companies are selling and the low propensity for these products to lend themselves to an online transactional environment.

B2B ecommerce demands that businesses think very differently about how they use content management processes to drive customer acquisition, optimise the lead time on sales as well as maximise the structure and shape of their product offering.

This chapter looks at how to establish best practice for managing effective content. It will inform of tried and tested planning and management processes for distribution of web content and product information as well as catalogue and customer success management. It will also identify the limitations and challenges for each approach.

4.1 B2B market variations and inherent complexities

The B2B market supports a broad range of ecommerce models that demand varying levels of sophistication in terms of how products are taken to market, how content is communicated to customers as well as how this information is routed to key internal functions such as sales and marketing.

At one end of the spectrum is the traditional B2B environment which describes direct transactions between businesses, however there is also B2B2B and B2B2C ecommerce which involves the selling of products to other businesses, which in turn sell those products to either another business within the supply chain or direct to consumers.

At this end of the spectrum many businesses fail to deploy a cohesive operation and evidence inefficient and sub-standard business marketing practices. This is not limited to a specific channel or web content output and is in fact applicable across the digital marketing board, affecting both consumer engagement and brand prosperity. Complexities are attributed but not limited to:

- Management of various types of content and content platforms.
- Location and frequency of content deployment to the target audience.
- The deployment of extensive product catalogues.
- Pricing in the online environment.
- Integration of multiple supply chains and relationship management.

With these inherent complexities in mind, how can the B2B market space leverage the most relevant experiences of B2C sector? How can best practice content management and consumer engagement techniques be applied within the variance of the B2B market? What common variables are applicable to all B2B marketers in order to operate successful content management? And how does this influence decisions on product information and merchandising in the context of maximising the customer engagement life cycle?

4.2 Cross-channel content management

A successful content strategy is dependent on answering the following key questions:

- How do I drive effective and targeted traffic to my website?
- How do I target my customer base across multiple channels and devices?
- How do I ensure that I deliver a consistent proposition yet offer relevant products and services?
- Which of my customers are likely to be high value, and where are the true growth opportunities?
- Where is the headroom in my current customer base?