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# Top Marketing Trends For 2021 and Beyond

After a tumultuous year filled with the pandemic, lockdowns, and Brexit worries; **2021 was expected to be the year to recover**. We may be continuing where we left off in some aspects with the lockdown, however **we have persevered and found ways to move forward**.

There is light at the end of the tunnel with the COVID vaccines and the long term outlook looks brighter. Companies and the marketing teams that support and help drive business forward need to **continue to focus on keeping relevant, staying connected to customers, and making new connections** while managing a whole host of challenges.

Marketers are a largely positive and driven breed who are used to being thrown a challenge and a deadline while also dealing with budget cuts! If we focus on the areas where we can add real value then we will continue to create engagement and interest from prospects and customers.

## Trends for 2021 and beyond

Whether our customers are B2B or B2C they are looking for brands they can trust to meet their needs and make their lives easier or happier. Making each connection a positive one and delivering on our promises will ensure that we build a stronger, more connected customer base.

## Connecting with customers

With face to face pretty much impossible in the foreseeable future,

businesses are having to find new ways to make online connections and some have already been successful in achieving this. **This means that digital marketing and social media will be key battle areas.** Those who succeed will be the ones that offer a unique experience and not one that simply tries to replicate their past face to face activities & events. For those taking events online understand that it is a completely different medium. Some tips for online events are as follows:

- Have a passionate and lively presenter
- Promote engagement before and after the event
- Use interactive features and allow the audience to get involved in as many different ways as possible
- Add fun features to live streaming

**Connect through meaningful conversations, it's the best way to engage customers and prospects.**

The successful will engage with online communities to begin a meaningful, and hopefully long term dialogue with them. Making connections with customers means taking the time to understand what is likely to be relevant

to them. Try putting yourself in the shoes of your audience, it's not about your brand, your company, your product – it's about them! Use emotion to inspire them to join the conversation, be passionate and enthusiastic. Invite your audience to be a part of the conversation after all it shouldn't be a monologue if you are trying to connect with them and get them involved. On all digital channels, it's really important to show rather than simply tell, use visual content to reinforce your messaging and content as well as to make it stand out. Be inspirational wherever possible.

We are in a crowded market and the demand for engagement will continue to grow. **Dare to think outside the box** and try something new and ask the question, "How can I add value to my customers and prospects?" Having digital expertise is important but reaching out and building a community is just as important.

As with all things, we need to adopt a strategy and then measure, measure, measure. Understanding what works and what does not is central to all marketing. Measure and adapt and

keep making tiny changes until your approach is working more effectively.

## Greater use of digital marketing and social media



Underpinning this activity is the increasing use of digital marketing and social media. Some sources estimate that they will spend 25% or more on digital in 2021. **Innovation is key** and those who fail to adapt to and exploit this key area of opportunity will be outpaced by competitors.

Understand your customer and target customer profiles and ensure you are relating and appealing to them through the most appropriate social media channels. **Make that connection and convert through a clear call to action.**

For many businesses, turning to digital might also include selling online or E-commerce. Shortly after the

Pandemic, E-commerce dramatically increased as discussed in one of our recent webinars. I expect this trend to continue and for new and developing online businesses to further define their offerings and expand their online presence with many others planning to do the same. There is no doubt that this is a competitive marketplace but those who make it easy for people to view, find and buy will be the winners!

### **Increasing personalisation**

In 2021 we'll all be looking for more creative ways to engage customers and prospects. Things to consider will be personalised outreach, impactful direct mail, interactive experiences, and educational content.

Don't forget that **marketing automation should not be confused with personalisation** which simply helps us to get our campaigns and content out to market more quickly and effectively. Using data to understand what is of interest/importance to our different segments of customers and prospects is the only way to create content that is truly personalised and relevant to each of them.

### **Embrace Live Streaming**

The power of live streaming can be demonstrated by the fact that over 100 million internet users will watch live video today. **Last year, there was an 80 per cent increase in audiences watching video live** globally on a computer or mobile device.

Given that live streaming is still in its infancy means the power of live streaming really isn't an area that should be overlooked or underestimated by marketers. It appeals to a world that continues to demand content 24/7. However, most marketers are yet to adopt live streaming or be aware of the sheer scale of consumer engagement it can unlock. It's understandable as it is easy to say to ourselves that "these new trends are more relevant to other sectors". In the case of live streaming, we might expect the media sector to adopt it and be quick to use it to engage its customers. **However, it is a mistake to underestimate the power of this medium.**

The appeal of live streaming lies in its ability to blend the old with the new but

it worth considering that even with a smaller audience, the statistics seem to suggest that those who sign up to live streaming are far more engaged than those who happen to find or fall upon content.

Live streaming can be a fantastic way to connect with your target audiences and give marketers an opportunity to get creative with their content. All social media platforms are committed to promoting their live capabilities so it looks like it is here to stay and could offer your brand the chance to differentiate itself.

## Brand Values

Putting the customer at the centre of every decision has to be the focus and will help to drive your brand forwards. This is only achieved through total alignment between sales, marketing, and customer teams. In addition, brands need to demonstrate today's values, **the importance of delivering on promises and value for money.** The importance of mental health and wellness as well as sustainability and environmental issues. While many brands often pay lip service to these

key areas they are gaining a larger share of the voice and are becoming more important to the majority of us customers.

Mental health and wellness have been promoted widely and they are no longer taboo subjects. Focussing on them with team members and demonstrating awareness and a caring attitude is no longer "a nice to have", it's something that customers really care about. In the same way, the plight of our planet has long been a topic of conversation and many companies have a sustainability policy.

Demonstrating a deep knowledge and what it means day-to-day in terms of how your business operates will help you to stand out and show that you are doing more than ticking a box.

## Building/buying local

Another impact of the Pandemic appears to be a shift to buy local – this trend probably started with the increasing popularity of organic products but has definitely built more traction recently. With the various supply issues during the Pandemic and now with Brexit, **the "home-grown" message is a powerful one.**

Demonstrating local expertise, local products and home-grown is likely to be a winning message but pricing will be key.

I know a number of companies who go out of their way to source parts locally down to copper wire, and it really helps the local community. It also speeds up the supply chain for that business because there is no shipping involved and they can safely say that their products are manufactured in the UK from parts wholly sourced in the UK. In a time when so much isn't manufactured here that has to be a powerful message for a brand to promote.

### **Adaptability/flexibility**

There has never been a more important time to be ready to adapt and change your business offering or the way you go to business. **Those who adapted in the early days of the Pandemic have been very successful.** A contact of mine has worked in the global exhibition business since he started work and found there was no work in April 2020. Within a few weeks, he had reinvented his business. He had the materials, the expertise and the people

and he now manufactures and installs weather-proof outdoor shelters. He's not the only one but it is a great example of taking action instead of waiting for things to change.

Businesses who had invested in technology were able to adapt more easily when the pandemic hit and could continue with business as usual within a short space of time. Others struggled and are still struggling as it was hardly the time to invest in new technology or was it? **Faced with the challenge many of us stepped up to the plate to do things differently**, to take our offering online, to look at engaging our customers and prospects in a different way and we are going to have to do more of this over the next few years. What began with a global crisis is going to continue to drive change across the global marketplace.

### **Focus on people**

In 2021, it's all about people, people, people. Marketing has always been about people. We are an internal service team/department who deliver to other people internally and then communicate and target people inviting them to become a customer. In the

last year, the pace of change for marketers has accelerated, but one thing will remain constant: **marketers who focus on people – on customer experience – will be the ones who will keep pace with change.**

Focus your team on improving personalisation, advancing your customer journey, and creating a unique and engaging online experience that captures and connects with your customers and prospects.



## Conclusion

2021 has started much as 2020 finished, however, we have a lot to look forward to. As marketers we are often expected to rise to the challenge, to pull the “rabbit out of the hat” and this often challenges us to be the very best we

can, to look at new and improved ways of doing things.

The Covid Pandemic has given us the opportunity to take a look at doing things in a different way and to use a range of new channels to engage and connect with our customers and those who dare to think outside the box and do things a little bit differently are likely to be successful.

**Listening, adapting and delivering on our promises with outstanding customer service are all so important.**

They’ve always been important but in a different world, brands could get away with failing to deliver on occasion. In the crowded digital marketplace there is so much choice that we are all going to need to be smarter, better and more customer-focused in the future.

## Get in contact with us

The team at Maglabs work with marketers to achieve their goals. If you would like to discuss any of the ideas raised in this thought piece and you need ideas or support in adapting your approach to marketing to achieve more engagement then get in contact with me: [justine.gonshaw@maglabs.net](mailto:justine.gonshaw@maglabs.net)