

# 10 Tips for Marketing in “The New Normal”

**O**ut with the old, and in with the new: In recent years, we’ve seen a major shift in the way buyers are researching their purchase decisions—and the way they want companies to communicate with them. In the new age of “silent surfers,” potential buyers prefer to move through 50 percent to 90 percent of the sales cycle on their own. How can marketers encourage the low-friction relationship today’s prospects prefer yet still gather the critical data they need to nurture prospects with relevant, one-to-one dialogue? Here are 10 tips for thriving in the “new normal” landscape:

**1 Build up your content archive:** Position yourself as the expert in your area by producing quality blogs, white papers, Webinars, videos and more that educate and help solve problems common to your industry rather than overtly promoting your products and services. Since many prospects will be arriving at this content via Google & Co., remember to optimize it for search engines, using keywords (long and short-tail) that appeal to your target audience.

**2 Monitor social media and engage prospects there:** Remember the days when prospects went directly from search engines to your corporate website? This might still happen, but it’s just as likely that when prospects looking for information perform a search, the first three results that pop up are a third-party blog post, a social network conversation and an educational YouTube video. So while you need to make sure your corporate website is loaded with fabulous content, you also need to drop “social bait” in places

where people who might not typically interact with you are having conversations about related products and services. For example, you might pop into a LinkedIn conversation, share some educational content from your blog entry, and then include a link to a related Webinar on your site.

**3 Use Web tracking to capture behaviors:** Even as you’re giving prospects the room to “silently surf,” you should be starting the process of gathering data about them. How can you do this if they’re still anonymous? Today’s Web tracking technology enables you to connect new prospects to actions they took on your site before filling out a form—but only if you’ve turned on Web tracking. When the time comes and they’ve “raised their hand” and indicated they’re interested in hearing from you, you can use these “silent” behaviors to send more relevant content. For example, if you know a prospect visited certain product pages on your site before downloading a white paper, your first email to that buyer can contain information related to these products.





**4 Give away some content for free:** It sounds counterintuitive—you’ve dedicated valuable resources to developing excellent content, so why would you share it without getting anything in return? But giving away your content establishes a relationship and enables silent surfers to learn more about who you are and what you do without providing identification—and it also increases message reach by making it easier for people to share your content. Many companies already offer some form of free content with blog posts, but don’t stop there—include some downloadable assets that don’t require filling out a form as well.

**5 Capture data with progressive profiling:** Is your download form the equivalent of a menacing bouncer, requiring eight to 12 pieces of information and discouraging visitors from entering the premises? Remember that the more data you ask for, the less likely the prospect is to give it to you. So instead of take the bouncer approach, make like a welcoming concierge and use progressive profiling to ask a few questions each time a contact fills out a form, gradually collecting data as you build the relationship. Make sure to prepopulate any progressive Web form fields with information you’ve already gathered, and ask the most important questions—the ones you’ll need to deliver relevant content—first.

**6 Offer social login:** Another way to help decrease form desertion—and also help build a bridge between social networks and your marketing initiatives—is to offer a social sign-in option that gives site visitors the opportunity to use their social identities (e.g. LinkedIn or Twitter) to download a piece of content. This makes the first interaction more simple and pleasant than if you required them to fill out a lengthy, convoluted form. Statistics show that 66 percent of people prefer having a social sign-in option<sup>1</sup>, making it a savvy way to increase conversions, strengthen the social perception of your brand and promote the idea that you’re easy to do business with.

**7 Make every offer a campaign:** If you want to really see how your offers are translating to revenue, it’s time to make every content item a campaign in your CRM system. Sound unwieldy? In reality, creating a campaign in Salesforce is basically as simple as giving it a name, with the whole process taking just a few minutes. And it’s certainly preferable to the “lead source stuffing” approach many B2B marketers take when they place long, unruly codes on offers and are then left trying to decipher how a piece of content impacted a prospect a year down the line when they win a deal.

Not only is this type of coding cumbersome, it can lead to flawed reporting results when prospects don’t follow the intended route from source to offer to conversion. Having a corresponding campaign in your CRM system for every offer, on the other hand, will both enable you to more accurately assess how a person came into contact with your company—no matter how circuitous of a route they took to get there—and give you more reporting flexibility down the line.

**8 Separately track lead source, lead offer and influence:** Don’t make the common reporting mistake of confusing these three categories, which can prevent you from seeing the true marketing path prospects are taking, lead to poor resource allotment, and create internal squabbling over what team members (e.g. the PPC specialist, the SEO guru or the white paper author) are driving revenue. Here’s how you should be tracking each:

- **Lead source:** How did the prospect initially find you? Google, Twitter, a third-party ad or something else?
- **Lead offer:** What inspired the lead to fill out your form and give you his or her information? These might include white papers, Webinars, demos and much more.
- **Influence:** What did you do during your relationship with the prospect that helped convince them to buy?

Why is it important to track all of these? Because in the new age of marketing, buyers often don’t interact with your sources and offers exactly as intended. With the right Web tracking system in place, you’ll be able to keep tabs on all these elements and help determine where you should put money in the future to attract people, which offers seem to get the most people in the door, and which content is most effective at nurturing them through the buying cycle.

**9 Measure how many leads are coming from social:** If you’re like most marketers, you haven’t been tracking the number of prospects that Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and other social networks are bringing in. But with social becoming an increasingly important part of the buying cycle, the time is now to start harnessing the power of marketing automation to help you gather this information. The key? Using URL parameters to dynamically set the source value in the hidden field on your Web form.



For example, when you Tweet about an offer, code each tweet by adding language to the end of the URL (e.g. “source=Twitter”) that enables your marketing automation platform to tie each click to eventual revenue. For example, your URL for a corporate Tweet might look like this: <http://www.companyA.com/offerA.html?source=Twitter>. Taking this simple step will give you much greater insights into how social is impacting the sales funnel.

## 10 Use dynamic content, PURLs and triggered emails to deliver more relevant content:

Today’s savvy buyers are more likely to tune out generic messaging. So, once you’ve started gathering your high-quality data through tactics such as Web tracking, social login and progressive profiling, put this information into action by delivering content that’s customized to match each prospect’s interests, behaviors and position in the buying cycle. Examples might include:

- **Dynamic content:** Automatically replace entire sections of your messages based on each recipient’s

unique interests, e.g. sending an email with offers based on the Web pages the recipient has visited in the past.

- **Personalized URLs:** When a prospect arrives at a landing page, include content that’s customized for that particular person, e.g. a white paper that aligns with the prospect’s stated interests or a 30-day service trial for a prospect who’s later in the buying cycle.
- **Triggered emails and programs:** Route prospects down different messaging tracks based on actions (a Webinar attendee gets a post-event survey, for example) or non-actions (a non-attendee gets a follow-up message with an offer to download the presentation).

*For more marketing tips and tactics for succeeding in “The New Normal,” visit [Silverpop’s resources page](#).*

*1-Blue Research/Janrain, Consumer Research, Dec. ‘10*

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