

The Principles Of

B2B Marketing Psychology

You've Never Heard of.

How to connect the dots between your B2B audiences' learning ambitions, corporate interests and personal desire for advancement in life - with your services and products.



Introduction

“ **When it comes to buying psychology, not a lot of agencies are taking it into consideration the way they should be, especially in the B2B space. So what are some of the essential B2B psychology principles you need to take your campaigns to the next level?**



B2B marketing - it's pretty straightforward, right? I mean, look around the internet - whether it's on Google or LinkedIn, you'll see most serious players in your industry are creating content based on tried and tested B2B marketing strategies and established B2B sales principles.

Yet, if everyone is using these same formulas, it begs the question: How effective can these methods really be in a sea of lookalikes? How can you take market share from your competitors if you are an identical but smaller version of them, talking about the same concepts and communicating with your audience in the same exact manner as them?

In other words, why would I, as a B2B prospect, go with you when I have just seen a similar ad, read a similar whitepaper, or spoken to a business rep that looks pretty much the same as you, just from a much bigger and more well known brand?

I know, what a way to start an article, right?

Well that's why we wrote this whitepaper. As co-founder of The Brains, I have been running B2B lead generation campaigns for six years now and was initially tormented by this question early on in my career. I continued to ask myself, how can I really help my clients stand out in an ocean of B2B activity?

Get Ready To Grow

My colleague and content strategist, Lisa, shared similar worries when she first began in marketing too. By the time we started working together, we both noticed the need for some set of new B2B marketing principles to help our clients stand out from the crowd. As more and more businesses started incorporating best-practice content strategy and investing in their content production, we decided to look into the realms of both B2C and B2B marketing psychology and knowledge on the human mindset in general, to look for inspiration.

The truth is, you can get yourself over the starting line by using the old tried and tested B2B principles, but you will never win the Olympics using those techniques. Why? Because everyone else has the exact same idea as you, just with a much bigger budget.

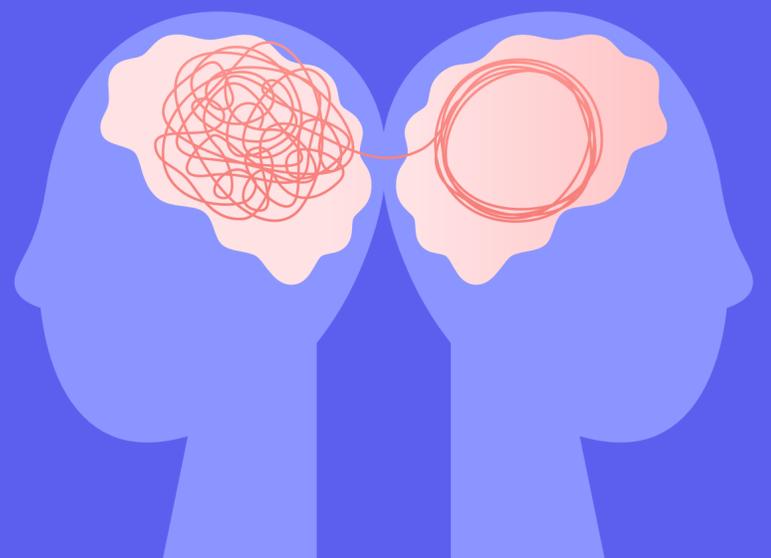
In this whitepaper, our mutual fascination and mastery of B2B psychology will leave you equipped with some advanced theories that will put you ahead of your competitors and their sea of lookalikes.

By the end of this booklet, you'll understand:

- ✓ The established content strategy principles that drive phenomenal results in B2B marketing
- ✓ The theory of Human Status and how it secretly drives all your B2B prospects
- ✓ The power of context
- ✓ How to frame your marketing assets as 'new opportunities'
- ✓ How to access our additional resources to get started

Sections

1. [The Best practice B2B psychology principles](#)
2. [The Brains advanced principles](#)



The Best Practice Principles

Before we dive into our own research, it's imperative to recap on what best-practice B2B psychology marketing principles currently look like in today's market. These are the set of activities that get your firm over the starting line, so it's important we know them well. We're going to lay things out over this section but if you want action points and detailed guides on how to implement these principles, hold tight, we provide links to detailed guides at the end of this booklet.

Personalisation

It's a buzzword in marketing, that's for sure. Yet, what business doesn't want their ads to be personalised nowadays? The concept of personalisation in marketing goes back a long way and is probably the best jumping off point. Over the years we have been able to see ads get more and more personalised as Google, Facebook and LinkedIn learn more about you and what you like to read or buy.

Digital advertising has catalysed our need to make ads personalised, simply through its rapid development and capabilities. Brands are now able to send you increasingly tailored content and advertising. Personalisation is aligning content to your audience, based on their persona. For instance, a 'sporty' persona may see more ads for sports gear or events and a 'mother' persona might get ads for baby clothes or books.

As a B2B business however, personalisation is different. Your personas usually don't just target by broad demographics or interest-based criteria. Personalisation in B2B advertising revolves a lot more around job sectors, company sizes, and job titles. Without this, how do we know what their professional needs might be?

This is why most B2B businesses find it harder to generate leads from Facebook or Instagram. They prefer to use Google Ads or LinkedIn as their main advertising channels, because the data on these channels are far more aligned to B2B audiences.

For example, once you find your niche business audience on LinkedIn, you may find that it's only several tens of thousands of companies, yet you serve a multitude of different job titles, companies or industries.



However, being able to target people by job title, company or industry is not enough, because job titles can have different responsibilities, depending on the industry or the size of the company. Doing your homework here is where it makes all the difference.

For instance, a HR software company may sell directly to the founder if the company has less than fifty employees, but in larger companies, this responsibility is more likely to sit with the HR manager and/or Finance Director.

It can become very layered, because as the size of the organisation increases, so do the amount of entry points that you want to be targeting. Along with this, you should also be thinking about the needs of your persona so that you not only can target them logically but also emotionally.

Figuring all of this out is the first key step to creating a more personalised experience on your website, in your ads, and in your sales process. An easier way to do this is to create persona cards that your entire sales and marketing teams agree on. Here's an example:



Daniel Bailey
40 years
Department Head
at large corporation
London,

DEPARTMENT HEAD DAN

Dan represents Department Heads at large and small corporate institutions dealing with significant change, from a new CEO or department head to preparing for sale or a new round of investment.

 LIKES	 DISLIKES
Feeling in control Being a catalyst for positive change Seeing his team succeed Seeing revenue targets being hit Seeing employees learn and grow	Being concerned about business performance Seeing revenue go down Targets not being met Poor performance of employees

GOALS

- Ensure continued performance of employees in his department
- Smash targets set by board and show his value to the company
- Iron out any issues with middle management leadership within his department

MarketingInsiderGroup found that 93% of companies that exceeded their revenue goals for the year were using Marketing Personas.

Remember that by segmenting your audience into discrete personas, you can create more personalised content at each point in the marketing and sales journey, making the user experience as relevant as possible.

The Buyer's Journey

Now we start to look more at how your prospects might be thinking. Like all of us, there are various steps that a consumer goes through in order to reach the purchase stage. You should always consider how to align your content to the stage that they're in, as each stage involves different thought processes, and demands varying needs. For example, someone downloading an eBook on LinkedIn is not as primed for a sales conversation as someone who has downloaded an eBook on LinkedIn, clicked on various links via your weekly email updates, and set up a call with your sales team. If you target a persona who is not in the right stage of the funnel for your targeting, you might as well be writing 'hey, don't go with us, we don't understand you or your needs' in your ads.



Which is why the Buyer's Journey is a key sales and marketing concept. Your content should be relevant not only to the persona's individual attributes but also to what stage they are in of the Buyer's Journey. The further down the funnel the prospect is, the more your content should be aimed at helping the prospect make a buying decision and choosing you over your competitors.

Prospects at the top of the funnel, in contrast, need more educational content and trust building to get them into the right mindset and perception of your company. Tailoring the content in your ad can help you dramatically increase your success online. [ITSMA](#) found that 80% of B2B respondents said they were more likely to consider industry specific solutions over generic solutions. Not only that, but they were also willing to pay a higher price. If you aren't already personalising content and ads to specific segments, then this is an easy win for you. If you are already doing this, then don't forget just how important it is to continue to do so.

Authority

As a B2B business, authority is an important factor. You need to communicate to your prospect that your company and the people that work for it are authorities in your space. There are no ways to fake this; to be an authority, well, you need to be an authority. Let me show you how you can leverage your expertise in your space to build up your authority perception.

Creating great content is imperative when it comes to building authority. Taking the time to make sure that your team is writing original articles, creating original videos or putting together original stories that really represent your brand will show potential prospects that you have expertise in your domain.

They psychologically tell your consumer:

Yes, this is a brand of quality, and I trust them.



Social proof can also be a very powerful psychological tool. Many of the ‘influencers’ we find online got to where they are by posing in pictures with other celebrities, just as many music artists out there started to build a successful career for themselves by collaborating with other famous people within the industry. This is authority by proximity, and it can make a huge difference to your brand.

Ask yourself: Is there a way you can get the founders of your business in the same circles as the most authoritative voices in your space? We worked with a client on authority proximity by getting them on webinars with the state and federal regulators of their industry. We then displayed that content to their prospects as a webinar. Their being at the same table as the regulator made everyone they were selling to immediately prick up their ears. Even without the regulator specifically endorsing their technology, they nevertheless reaped the benefits of authority simply by being in the same room as them.

Awards and big social media followings and brand consistency also make for good trust signals. You can also align your landing pages with customer testimonials from high profile businesses, and display logos of recognisable clients or publications you’ve been featured in.

All these elements work very well at demonstrating your prowess, so consider beefing up your content with these trust signals wherever possible.



2

The Advanced Principles of B2B Marketing Psychology

Now, everything we've seen above is the general norm when it comes to B2B marketing psychology. But we believe that there's much more to consider here. The tendency of B2B marketers is to ignore the fact that our prospects are more than just human incarnations of their firms. They are deeply influenced by psychology, bias, and a desire to improve their own life, not just that of their firm.

To quote Rory Sutherland, a behavioural economist at Ogilvy, **'You don't become rational the moment you put on a suit'**. Yet how many of us actually stop to think about consumers in B2B marketing as anything less than a corporate representative with a specific job title?

We face pressure from the finance department to back all our decisions through logical thinking and mathematics. Marketing has therefore become a rational science through the need to seem objective and therefore justify its existence.

The natural tendency of most people in business is to pursue incremental, objective improvements, rather than pursuing less certain, but potentially game-changing improvements in perception.

It is to that end that we present to you a few game-changing concepts that we invite you to incorporate and promote within your organisation. That is, if you want to move from being a run-of-the-mill firm, to a firm that knows how to communicate with its audience as effectively as humanly possible. Over the past three years we have been trialling these concepts in various contexts and with different B2B clients to great effect. This is the first time we are putting this down on paper.



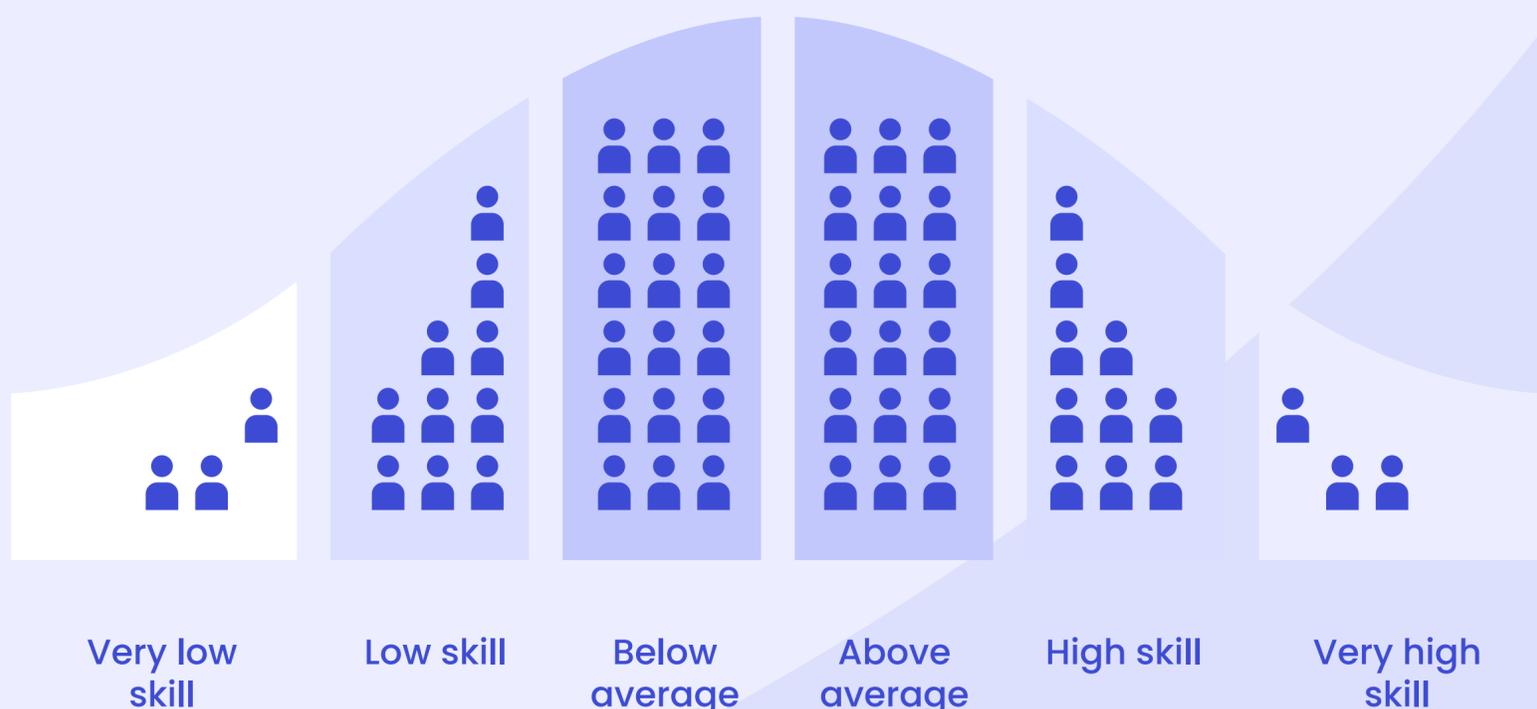
Human Status

The first original psychological insight we're going to present to you involves the science of human status optimisation. We haven't come across a single B2B business that has incorporated the theory of human status into their advertising other than our clients and so it represents a great opportunity for you.

It's an area we've researched for the last two years and deployed on several client campaigns, witnessing astounding results. We took this theoretical framework from an excellent book called 'Expert secrets' by Russel Brunson. Russell has helped thousands of online and information product businesses deploy this theory to stunning effect. While he has focussed on B2C sales, the results are simply too impressive to ignore. Having unpacked his theories we've adapted them to fit the B2B mould, so let's break it down together.

The Competence Hierarchy

All human beings, whether we like to admit it or not, are governed by hierarchies. Whenever human beings decide to take on a task, be it painting, swimming, foraging, sculpting, architecture, farming, genetic research etc, we naturally sort ourselves into hierarchies of competence. That is to say - most people perform the task moderately well, and a small percentage are either totally hopeless or incredibly successful.



Intuitively this makes sense. After all, most people are average height, and a few are short, and a few are very tall. Think of that same distribution applied to any skill. Humans that make it to the top of any hierarchy are afforded high status and those at the bottom, low status. Luckily, there aren't just single domains of interest, there is no 'one hierarchy,' we are all positioned in thousands of hierarchies aligned to our short and long-term interests, competencies or requirements. Being a poor performer in say, artistic domains, doesn't mean you won't be amazing in sports or technical domains and vice versa. Indeed, finding out which domains of interest you are competent in is a key part of growing and becoming successful.

The same applies to the business environment where various job roles and industry skills also work as competence hierarchies, with (generally speaking) the most competent people rising to the top over time, being rewarded with increased salaries, and stronger titles to reflect their contribution to the firm.

The Desire For Status Increase

Your job is one of the most important aspects of your life. People spend the majority of their lives at their desks, and as B2B marketing teams we need to realise that, just like us, they are all craving the same thing: Movement up the hierarchy and access to higher status.

As a result, every action we take at work is underscored by the following subconscious calculation: Will doing X move me up the hierarchy or potentially down? What do I stand to gain and what do I stand to lose?

People are always asking themselves:

Will reading this article make me better at my job? Will using this company help me generate more revenue? Will firing this person cut costs and make the business more profitable? Will suggesting this course of action internally make me look valuable to my boss? Will I get that promotion if this works?

This internal dialogue we all engage in is critical to understanding how you can weaponise this desire for Status Increase to your benefit as a B2B supplier. If you can make your content align to the status considerations of your prospects, then they will be more motivated to act. Whether it's convincing them to download an ebook, attend a webinar or sign off on a proposal, if you can tie back each commercial objective to the prospect's desire to increase their own position in the business hierarchy, as well as what is good for the business, then you're on to a winner. So what does that look like in practice?

When creating B2B content for prospects, you should always take into consideration Status Increase that will be applicable to the persona. You don't eliminate the benefits of the overall business when you do this, you make sure you have both. This blend is the ideal product that you want to be selling in your B2B content. So for example, the Status Increase for your specific persona could be making more money, or having more job security, or being considered a genius by management. At the Brains, one of the ways we do this is by working on our content titles. Whenever we create an Ebook or Webinar, the aim is to tap into the desire for Status Increase. For instance, take the two examples side by side:

Traditional Content Title:



**How Satellite Imaging
can Help
Infrastructure Owners
Manage Their Assets**

Status Increase Content Title:



**How this Dam Operator
Reduced Failure Events By
400% Using Simple Satellite
Imaging Technology**

Can you see how the second option makes it more relevant to Status Increase? For example, a general manager responsible for the smooth operation of a hydroelectric dam would look at the two side-by-side and pick the second, purely because the title mentions someone who has the same job as them and is finding a way to succeed at a difficult problem they face every day. Solving this problem helps the prospect maintain job security and perhaps even an increase in salary. Don't think of a B2B audience as purely an esoteric audience with only corporate interests; every one of us is acutely sensitive to our position in a hierarchy and always looking for tips, strategies, products or services that can help not only our firms but ourselves to climb the ladder. We look for stories of people similar to us that started in the same position and arrived at the top of the pack. Your job is to be the bridge between where they are and the high status version of themselves in the future.

The Importance of Context

There's another key element that's being constantly missed out when it comes to B2B marketing psychology, and that's context. As Richard Shotton explains in his book, *The Choice Factory*, we tend to overestimate the importance of personality, and underestimate the importance of context.

There are multiple experiments conducted by psychologists over the years to demonstrate how context has a huge impact on human reaction. Let's take for example a stranger you see on the street passing a homeless man and ignoring him. We may think to ourselves: What a horrible person. I would never do such a thing! Yet we don't know the specific context of the situation. What if that stranger was blind, and had not seen the homeless man? Or what if that man had previously walked past him the previous day and been harassed by the homeless man?

Context makes a huge amount of difference to how people react to things, and this needs to always be considered when it comes to your B2B marketing too. Traditional B2B marketing focuses on the company's values and top line targeting of their audiences. Our advanced principles look at the company's values and top line targeting, but also contextualising our audience.

Mood Context

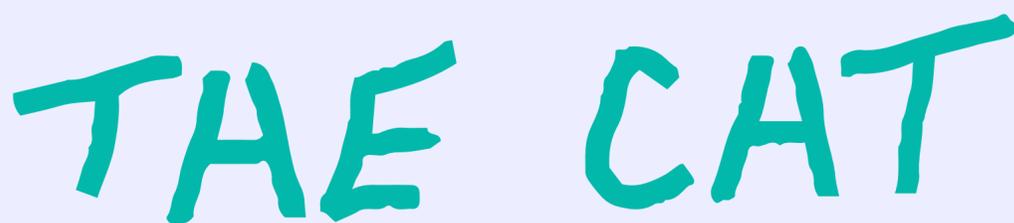
Fred Bonner, Professor of Media and Advertising Research at the University of Amsterdam conducted an experiment. He asked 1,287 participants to flick through a magazine and say which ads they remembered. The results were divided by the individuals' moods, and found that those who were relaxed remembered **56% of ads**. Similarly, those whose day had gone 'super' noticed **46% of ads**.



So should you be targeting personas when they're more likely to be happy? Yes. Is it ever possible to know that for sure? Of course not. However, there are specific things that you can take into consideration. For example, what time of year your persona is likely to be their most stressed, right down to the time of day they are most likely to be relaxed. Only 36% of ads were remembered by those who were stressed.

Oftentimes we find that targeting prospects for educational type ads are best run on the weekend. Founders and decision makers you sell to are always in work mode and are typically highly stressed at work making difficult decisions during the week. The weekend affords a chance for them to catch up on messages on LinkedIn or in their email inbox. A relaxing read in the sun and some light upskilling are in order for many corporate professionals over the weekend. While most B2B advertisers will be vying for the sliver of down time your prospects have during the week, a well timed email or ad linking to educational or nurturing content at 11 o'clock on Saturday can see far better results, especially if the title jumps out at them as something that could help them increase their personal status rapidly.

Media Context



TAE CAT

When you look at the above image, you likely read the words 'THE CAT'. What you likely don't see is that the 'H' in 'the' and the 'A' in 'CAT' are identical. What happened is that our mind has seen 'THE CAT' written down so much that it's used to reading it, making that assumption for you. This is the sheer power of context. If someone hasn't ever read 'THE CAT' they are far more likely to stop, think and spot the identical letters. So now knowing that visual illusions give us assumptions and take out the thinking part of the process, we know that context needs to be applied in every ad that we create in order to be effective. As Richard Shotton says, 'As context influences what our eyes see, so it determines what our minds think'.

Knowing that we are all influenced by contextual cues, having the right persona isn't enough to get your message across to an audience. You need to think about the right platforms to target them on and whether they are platforms that the individual will deem trustable. For example, LinkedIn might be seen by some as 'the most professional digital platform in existence' whereas another persona might be more linked to Facebook. Just because LinkedIn is known for B2B marketing because of its job and sector capabilities, doesn't mean it's the right platform for every persona. We have to think carefully about how the platforms your personas will deem trustable to link with your brand. Whether they will read the words 'THE CAT' without even thinking twice.

New opportunity framing

Another key part of online persuasion that we've been particularly interested in is 'new opportunity framing.' Human beings are by nature status driven beings, as we've seen above.

One really quick way of demonstrating that your lead magnet, content or offer will increase personal status fast for the prospect is to frame your content or sales offer as a 'new opportunity'.

Most B2B companies operate in congested markets. i.e. Accountancy firms fundamentally have nothing to differentiate themselves from other accountancy firms. We know exactly what it will say on their website and the buzzwords they will use.



Most of those buzzwords and the framing of their business revolves around their offerings being positioned as 'improvement offers'. They approach the market with a service or product that will improve a business function of their clients.

They do not fundamentally pitch themselves as transformative in any way, they simply sell to you an idea that focuses on improvement. While this may be valuable for many companies, the framing of the service is an improvement of something that already exists which can be hard to make a prospect truly motivated to take an action.

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This is all linked to the concept of status; people crave positive transformation. They crave acceleration up the status hierarchy. Improvement offers simply don't communicate this, they seem like hard work, and this can be a problem.



Again, borrowing from the observations of Russell Brunson, he studies the courses sold by 'online business gurus' and the strategies they use to sell high ticket services or courses. What he found was that the Gurus that did phenomenally well (millions of dollars a year), almost always offered outlandish or transformative results using a 'secret' or 'new method'. They never pitched improvement offers.

Take for example diet plans. If you have struggled to lose weight your whole life you are more likely to go for a course that shows you how to do 'intermittent fasting' or the 'keto diet', because buying a course that will tell you to eat more vegetables and have a balanced diet keeping under calories isn't exciting, it's basically just an improvement offer.

You already know you should eat better and roughly what that food should be, but you aren't excited by a course that is going to structure this for you when there is another course that shows you a new technique that has helped celebrities shed pounds before movies using the new fad diet. Could this be the secret you've been waiting for? The magic formula they all tried to hide for you, now finally accessible to you?

Russell figured out that the best selling products and courses were always framed as new opportunities and so as B2B marketers and salespeople, we want to borrow from this observation and fit it into a B2B context.



Do however be careful with this research. Provide your audience with a 'secret' or 'new opportunity, but only if it's legitimate. You need to find that genuine secret or new opportunity for this to work. As a B2B business with a limited audience it is not appropriate or possible to shield yourself from the negative reputational damage you would incur pitching business transformation without a service or product that can consistently achieve this.

Let's have a look at the below title examples:

**How this Dam
Operator
reduced Dam
failure events by
400% using
simple satellite
imaging
technology**

**How this Dam
Operator
reduced Dam
failure events by
400% using
Secret Military
Grade satellite
technology**

The second title communicates to the prospect that the content is something new. It's a simple few word changes and also true, but it makes all of the subconscious difference to the prospect. Re-framing your content to fit your persona helps you to reach the next level with your content, which is where you want to go next and that's why you're reading this whitepaper.

Conclusion

Our aim with this Ebook was to introduce you to a new world of potential, to inspire you to see content marketing and B2B advertising through a different lens. Now your creativity will have to take over and apply some or all of these psychology principles to your marketing mix.

1

The First Step

is to clearly define your customer personas so you can inhabit the mind of your audience in as much detail as possible.

2

The Second Step

is to create a buyer's journey so you know what content should go to which persona depending on their stage in your marketing funnel. People at the top of the funnel will need different information to those nearing the bottom.

Do these and you're already up to current best practice.

3

The Third Step

is to infuse your marketing collateral with messaging that appeals to the prospect's personal desires to increase their status. Each persona will be different but you should make it clear that your content or services link directly to their betterment, not just their firm's.

4

The Fourth Step

is to switch up your ad and sponsored content timings to account for the mood and context of your prospects.

5

The Fifth Step

is to work some magic on your content titles and ad copy such that your service and content is framed as revolutionary as opposed to simply improvement.

Follow these steps and your content will stand out in the sea of content out there on the internet, land with your audience and help you drive more inbound leads.

Additional Resources

We have nearly 100 educational resources dedicated to Lead Generation and Marketing Automation available [here](#). You can also book a FREE initial consultation with myself and the Lead Experts I work with at The Brains, by filling in [this form](#). Learning any new skill takes time, but I hope I've helped you cut through the noise and see where you should focus your efforts to ensure the best possible results.

If you want some additional information on Customer Personas and how to set these up for your company then see our [Guide to Persona Marketing](#)

If you want to see how the Buyer's Journey concept is used in practice and how you can institute this approach at your business then see our [Guide to Funnel Marketing](#)

The advanced concepts are taken and adapted from '**Expert Secrets**' by Russel Brunson and the '**The Choice Factory**' by Richard Shotton, we highly recommend you read both these books.



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