



Driving growth

The role of strategic marketing in reaching new markets and unlocking sales

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Introduction

Achieving growth is difficult. Markets have become increasingly crowded which means buyers face more choices than ever before. Competition surfaces from several directions – overseas manufacturers with lower costs, start-ups with disruptive strategies, established players with substantial marketing budgets.

Simply having good products and excellent service may no longer be enough to drive growth. Moreover, the technical nature of industrial products means buyers need education as much as persuasion. And if potential customers can't find you when they're researching solutions – or worse, if they find your competitors instead – you can lose the opportunity before your sales team even knows it existed.

This is why strategic marketing has a critical role to play. Rather than being an afterthought or a series of disconnected activities, marketing activity should be delivered with a systematic and deliberate approach to becoming visible, building credibility and creating relationships with the customers who need what you offer.

The buying landscape has changed dramatically. Research from Gartner shows that B2B customers complete around 60% of their purchasing journey before ever contacting a supplier. They are researching solutions, evaluating alternatives and building shortlists – all without speaking to your sales team.

This white paper explores exactly how strategic marketing can support growth ambitions, analysing the challenges facing senior decision makers, and exploring how partnering with a dedicated, specialist agency can solve them – providing expertise, flexibility and sustainable results.



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The business growth challenge

Pressure to deliver growth exists across numerous roles in industrial businesses, and there are several underlying challenges that directors across departments are up against.

At the very top, managing directors need to deliver sustainable growth while maintaining healthy profit margins. New market opportunities exist – different sectors, new geographies, emerging applications for your products – but breaking into unfamiliar territory demands resources and expertise that may not exist in-house. There's also the persistent challenge of differentiation: how can a company stand out in competitive markets where there may be many similar solutions.

Sales directors know that qualified leads are the lifeblood of any successful operation. However, attracting and converting high-quality prospects isn't an easy task. Your team spends valuable time chasing leads that go nowhere, following up on poor-quality enquiries, or worse – sitting waiting for the phone to ring. The traditional reactive model of selling simply doesn't deliver the pipeline needed to hit ambitious targets.

Your marketing directors may also be facing similar challenges, including:

- Limited budgets that must deliver measurable ROI
- Competing priorities and the constant need to justify marketing spend
- Managing multiple suppliers – a web designer, one for digital, another for PR and a content creator
- Lack of time to focus on strategy when you're firefighting tactical issues
- Difficulty accessing specialist expertise, particularly in technical content or advanced digital marketing

These constraints can lead to fragmented marketing. A bit of social media here, a trade show there, maybe some PR activity when some budget is left over. The result is activity without momentum. You're busy and spending money, but not creating the sustained visibility and credibility that changes how customers perceive your brands and business.

At the same time, competitors which have invested in strategic marketing are making gains. They appear in search results, are being quoted in trade publications and getting their content shared. When buyers create shortlists, these competitors are on them.



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Why marketing matters for growth

When planned and executed properly, marketing becomes an engine for driving growth, both in terms of opening up new markets and increasing business with existing customers.

- Research from McKinsey shows that companies with advanced marketing and sales capabilities achieve revenue growth 30% greater than the average company within their sector.
- Companies that use data-driven performance marketing in their branding and demand generation efforts see marketing efficiency gains of up to 30%, and incremental top-line growth of up to 10%.
- In 2024, 58% of B2B marketers reported that content marketing played an active role in boosting sales and revenue – up from 42% in 2023.

Growing organically by tapping into your existing customer base is the most cost-effective way in which you can expand. Yet most businesses underutilise these relationships. They complete the project, send the invoice and move on – missing opportunities where those same customers might have other needs you could address.



This is where marketing proves its value. Thought leadership content showcases new capabilities. Case studies demonstrate applications your customers hadn't considered. Targeted campaigns re-engage accounts that have gone quiet.

The economics are compelling – winning additional business from existing customers costs a fraction of acquiring new ones. Indeed, research from Bain & Company shows that the cost of acquiring a new customer can be between five and 25 times higher than the cost of retaining an existing one. Further, it also reveals that improving customer retention by as little as 5% can ramp up profits by between 25-95%. And yet, this opportunity is all too often underexploited.

Market expansion into new sectors or geographies presents a different challenge altogether.

When you're starting from scratch, you have no track record in that space, no reputation, no relationships. Your sales team can make calls, but if nobody's heard of you, those conversations are an uphill struggle.

Marketing changes the dynamic. PR activity gets your name into relevant trade publications. Digital strategies get you in front of prospects that are actively looking for solutions. Messaging directly addresses customer- and industry-relevant issues. Do this groundwork properly, and your sales team enters conversations where people already have some awareness of who you are. Skip it, and they're making cold calls with no context.

Commercialising innovation throws up a distinct set of challenges. Your technical team may have developed something genuinely new – a better process, an improved material, a more efficient system. But if the market doesn't know it exists, you've created something in isolation.

In a competitive marketplace, a new product will almost never sell itself. In industrial sectors, buying decisions involve multiple key stakeholders that will each need to be convinced. Therefore, potential customers need to actively be educated about

the issue that your product or solution addresses, building their confidence and trust before they invest. Build awareness through multiple channels. Translate technical specifications – which engineers care about – into business benefits that matter to the people with budget authority. Here, content and marketing campaigns can play a vital role in boosting visibility and understanding.

Customers will always buy from companies they know and trust. What's changed is when and how they form those opinions. By the time a prospect contacts you, it's likely they will have done a good amount of homework. They may in turn already hold a view about whether you're credible, whether you understand their sector, and whether you're worth their time.

This is crucial to the value of marketing – not only can it build awareness, but it can also help in shaping those early and ever-more critical customer perceptions.



The 4CM impact

Doubling web sales in 10 months

“Following our acquisition, we wanted to improve the visibility of our products and services in search engines, and 4CM has helped us regain our authority in SERPs. We are proud our website is now listed at Position 0 for six keywords, and for one keyword, we’ve achieved an impressive seven positions on Page 1. Through this remarkable progress, we have increased quality traffic to our website and web shop, significantly contributing to our goal of almost doubling sales online.”

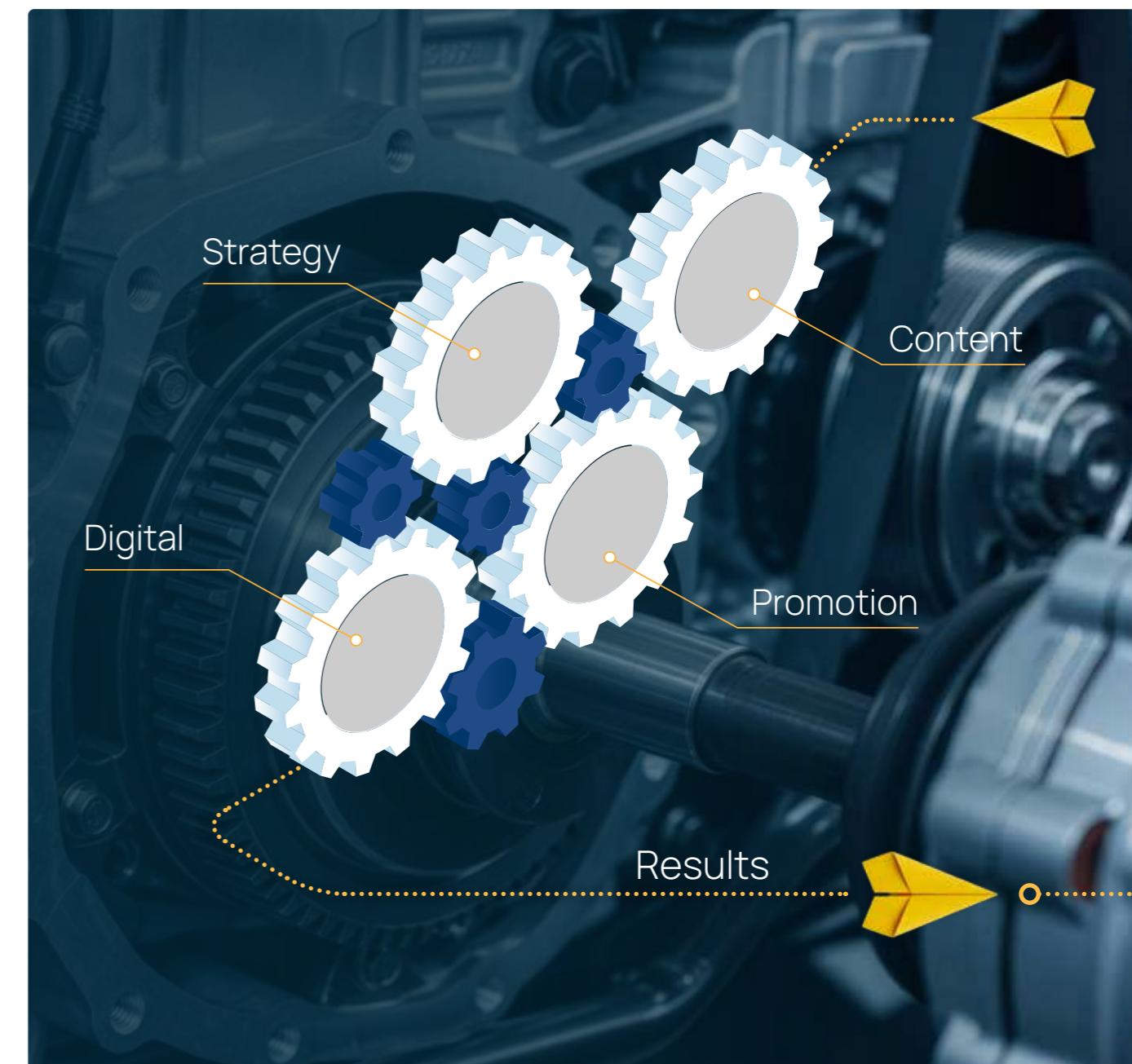
Lewis Barrett, Managing Director, Purite

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Choosing the right marketing mix

Effective marketing requires a mix of different cogs working together in one effective, overarching machine. Strategy gives you direction. Your digital presence ensures people can find you. Content demonstrates your expertise. And promotional activity builds awareness. When combined and supporting each other properly, results are much more likely to trend in the right direction.

Let's look at these components in more detail...



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Choosing the right marketing mix

Strategy development

Successful marketing starts with a logical strategy – one that is clear on the target audience, how they can be reached, what sets the business apart from competitors, and what the key short- and long-term goals are:

- Is the aim to establish presence in new markets?
- Do you want more business from current customers?
- Are you launching something new?

The approach changes depending on the goal. From there, you need to define target audiences with precision – not just job titles, but the challenges they face, the information they consume and the factors that influence their decisions.

Positioning matters enormously in industrial markets where products can appear similar. What makes your business the obvious choice – technical capability, application expertise, service levels, innovation?



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Choosing the right marketing mix

Website development and optimisation

Your website functions as an always-available salesperson. For many prospects, it provides their first real impression of your business. A poor website – one that's difficult to find, slow to load, confusing to navigate or thin on useful content – can actively damage credibility.

High-performing websites in industrial sectors tend to have certain things in common:

- Prospects can find them through search engines.
- The pages load quickly regardless of the device being used.
- Navigation is intuitive enough so that visitors can easily find what they need.
- The content resonates with the different stages of the buyer journey.
- There are clear ways to make contact and discover more information.

Website optimisation is a constant undertaking. Search algorithms get updated, competitors change their approach, and your business evolves. To keep up to speed, websites need ongoing refinement to improve search rankings – this involves adding or updating content, tweaking user experience based on visitor behaviour data, and keeping technical performance up to scratch.

Indeed, many industrial businesses don't realise quite how much their website influences buying decisions. Prospects often use it to assess whether you're credible before engaging with sales representatives.

Get the website right, and doors will open.



Content creation and thought leadership

Content distinguishes leaders from followers in technical markets. When products appear similar and pricing is competitive, the businesses that demonstrate superior knowledge and understanding gain an advantage.

Effective content serves multiple purposes. The main goal is positioning your business as credible and knowledgeable. Content that achieves this pulls in prospects who are researching solutions, helps buyers grasp problems they hadn't fully understood, and shows them approaches they might have missed. Your sales team also benefits from materials that are actually useful in conversations.

What separates effective content from marketing waffle is whether it genuinely helps people. White papers digging into industry challenges work well. Case studies show how actual customers tackled specific problems, while technical articles let you share what you know without reservation. Videos



SEO and social advertising for lead generation

Search engine optimisation (SEO) and targeted advertising ensure visibility at the moments that matter – when prospects are actively looking for solutions.

SEO is both technical and content driven. The technical side involves site speed, mobile optimisation, proper URL structure and the many factors search engines like Google use to evaluate websites. The content side is about creating material that targets the terms and phrases your prospects search for, while providing value that earns links from other credible sites.

Effective SEO takes time. You're competing against established competitors who may have years of accumulated authority. However, consistent work over time does produce results – better rankings for important search terms, more organic traffic from the

right kind of prospects, and eventually more enquiries from people who are actively searching for what you do.

Social advertising (mainly LinkedIn for B2B) works differently – it lets you target precisely. You can narrow down to decision-makers in particular industries, companies of certain sizes, people with specific job titles. This paid visibility accelerates results while SEO builds longer-term organic presence.

The combination is powerful. Prospects searching for solutions find you through organic search results. Those who aren't actively searching but fit your target profile see your content through paid social.

Both approaches help to drive traffic to your website.



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Choosing the right marketing mix

Digital PR and media relations for brand awareness

Editorial coverage carries authority that advertising cannot buy. When trade publications, industry websites or respected commentators feature your business, they provide implicit third-party validation that can influence how prospects perceive you.

PR serves several functions in industrial markets. Done right, it can:

- Build awareness by putting your name in front of audiences who may not know you exist.
- Establish credibility by associating you with authoritative publications.
- Educate prospective customers by explaining your solutions and perspectives.
- Shift perceptions over the longer term through consistent visibility in the channels your target audience follows.

This requires understanding what editors and journalists are looking for. A steady stream of product announcements will get you nowhere. Case studies showing innovative applications, technical articles demonstrating expertise, comment on industry trends and challenges – these are more likely to earn coverage.

Here, the cumulative effect matters more than individual placements. One article in a trade publication might reach some prospects. Consistent presence over months and years positions you as an established, credible voice in your sector. When buyers create shortlists, this familiarity and authority matters.



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The case for a full-service partner

Leveraging a combination of in-house resources and external suppliers, while it may work for some, can lead to a piecemeal marketing function that is held back by inefficiencies.

Working with separate agencies for digital marketing, PR, content creation and design is difficult. From a practical perspective, this involves briefing multiple suppliers and managing several different relationships. Each supplier optimises for their narrow specialism rather than your broader business objectives, which makes it challenging to deliver consistent messaging across campaigns.

A full-service agency can address these issues directly. Having a single, accountable partner that manages your marketing can provide consistency in marketing efforts, messaging and outputs. An experienced agency will also track performance, identify potential issues and provide unified insights – rather than fragmented, siloed reports from disparate providers. There are also efficiency gains to be made when it comes to briefings, invoicing and communications.

Flexibility is another crucial advantage, not least because businesses' marketing needs fluctuate. Launch a new product and you will need intensive support. Hit a quiet period and requirements may reduce. A full-service agency can scale up or down as your needs and budgets evolve, delivering a level of elasticity which is very difficult to achieve with employed staff or rigid agency contracts.

Cost is another important consideration. Effective industrial marketing campaigns require skills in strategy, technical copywriting, web development, SEO, graphic design, video production, social media management, PR and analytics. Building such a comprehensive in-house team can be prohibitively expensive for industrial businesses. A full-service marketing partner, on the other hand, provides immediate access to specialists across all of these disciplines without the upfront investment in human capital.

The 4CM impact

One campaign, £50k of business value

“The team at 4CM is enormously proactive helping our marketing team build awareness and grow leads in new and existing B2B markets. We have worked with the team for the past two years, collaborating on strategy for both inbound marketing and ABM campaigns where they have provided fresh ideas, insight and creativity, as well as outstanding quality content.”

Donna Smith, Marketing & Communications Manager UK & Nordic, tesa UK

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Why 4CM?

Making sure you choose the right full-service marketing partner can be the difference between driving growth and standing still.

4CM houses specific expertise in marketing for manufacturing, engineering and logistics enterprises. We've built our business specifically around industrial sectors and invested heavily in understanding the markets our clients operate within, the customers they serve and the challenges they face.

Our team includes qualified marketers with commercial experience and senior PR consultants who have spent their careers immersed in technical markets.



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Conclusion

Driving growth in industrial businesses takes more than good products and a capable sales team. It also requires a strategic, joined-up approach to all marketing activities – the kind that builds awareness, establishes credibility and generates quality leads.

There are familiar challenges being faced. Managing directors may be looking to enter new markets without the internal resources to do it effectively, while sales directors may be concerned about pipeline quality and lead generation.

A full-service industrial marketing partner can help address these types of challenges. One team that understands your sector, coordinates all activity, scales with your needs and delivers integrated campaigns that drive results.

That's what 4CM does. We work exclusively with industrial enterprises. Whether it's entering new markets, commercialising new products or improving the quality and volume of leads, we've helped businesses like yours do exactly that.

Your current marketing approach may or may not already be working well – either way, if you're curious about what a specialist industrial marketing partner could do for your business, let's talk. No pressure, no hard sell – just an honest conversation about your challenges and whether we're the right fit.





4CM Limited

Challenge House Sherwood Drive Bletchley Milton Keynes MK3 6DP

T: +44 (0)1908 533253

E: info@4cm.co.uk

W: 4cm.co.uk