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2024

Marketing Trends Report

B2B marketers: Get your subject matter experts (SMEs) invested in marketing.

Every B2B marketer works with subject matter experts (SMEs), but how deep are your relationships with your SMEs?

This past year, it's hit home for our team that, as a services and solutions firm, our experts are essentially our products. So, we've taken the typical steps to increase their thought leadership: coaching and ghostwriting for LinkedIn, panel-centric webinars, and submitting abstracts for speaking spots. On paper, these tactics are enough to build a SME's brand and benefit the business as a whole.

However, I think the real magic happens when you dive deep with your SMEs and treat them like honorary marketing team members. We've gotten better content while getting our SMEs more invested in our work with these tactics:

Give your experts an outlet: Instead of just asking for a specific quote for a one-off blog, ask your SMEs about their views on the topic at hand. Turn those perspectives into opinion pieces to get more bold and engaging content while helping your SME find their unique voice and positioning. I've angled thought-leadership work to show how it benefits an expert's career trajectory just as much as my pipeline, so everyone wins.

Treat SMEs as a target audience: Many of my SMEs are data-oriented people so I show the value of their contributions to marketing by sharing select metrics ("select" because I want to show impact without overwhelming them). I've also noted their preferences and communication styles which have let me work more effectively with each expert. Some SMEs prefer calls to emails and some like hosting events while others would rather fact-check a whitepaper. Engage as intentionally with SMEs as you do with prospects to work faster while building trust.

Offer your expertise: Marketers' relationships with experts often feel like a one-way street: we ask for their input before moving on without looking back. Once, I was lucky to be asked by a data pro, "What's the best way to communicate a process change to my team?" I was able to outline a strategy on the spot and, even though we were always on good terms, this SME became noticeably more responsive to me after that. As a marketer, don't forget you're also an expert. Offer up your knowledge whenever you can to both create that two-way street and turn a SME into an internal fan of your work.

The core issue I've found in B2B is that many people don't understand what marketing is or what it can do for the business. So by being more intentional, more open, and more reciprocating, our team has put out better work while fostering a pro-marketing culture in our organization as a whole. I hope other marketers in this position find these tactics helpful!



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