

# Business Technology Marketing

# Benchmark Guide 2007-08

Practical Data for B-to-B Software,  
Hardware, & Services Marketers

Note: This is an authorized excerpt from the full 285-page Business Technology Marketing Benchmark Guide. To download the entire Guide, go to: <http://www.SherpaStore.com>

# Director's Note

Welcome to MarketingSherpa's Business Technology Marketing Benchmark Guide 2007-08!

As always, this fourth annual edition has been completely and comprehensively re-researched and rewritten. If you have an older edition around, stick it on the library shelf and start working from this new edition – numbers have changed (in some cases dramatically) in the past 12 months.

In addition to all the basic B-to-B marketing stats you would expect, including cost and response data for all major marketing tactics, we have included four major \*new\* studies in this Guide:

## **#1. MarketingSherpa Business Technology Marketer Benchmark Survey**

1,038 real-life B-to-B marketers from a range of technology firms answered our extensive survey (and some discussed their answers in follow-up calls) in April 2007. They revealed:

- Which tests and tactics get the best ROI ... and which get the worst
- What are the big, new challenges
- How they allocate budgets and measure results
- Response rates for email, search marketing and other online tactics
- Response rates for traditional marketing, from telemarketing to trade shows

Discover how your internal tactics and stats match up against “the norm.” You may be surprised.

## **#2. MarketingSherpa Business Technology Buyer Surveys**

4,658 real-life business technology buyers, decision makers, specifiers, approvers (i.e., everyone on that decision-making committee that your marketing has to appeal to) answered at least one of four separate surveys we fielded this year with partners, including Zoom Information, SurveySampling, KnowledgeStorm, Enquiro and Google.

We asked your prospects the questions every marketer wants to know, including: Where do they look for information about your services? How well do they respond to tactics such as cold calling? Do they view email on their PCs or BlackBerrys? What sorts of white papers and webinars are appealing?

Before deciding where to invest your next marketing dollar, first review this all-new research data about what moves the needle for your prospects.

## **#3. MarketingSherpa B-to-B Registration Page Eyetracking Study**

For years, we've known that fewer than 10% of visitors who click to your offer page for a white paper, webinar or online "education" library (featuring past white papers, Case Studies, tech specs, etc.) actually wind up registering to use these resources. The other 90% leave without a trace.

MarketingSherpa wondered what aspects of registration pages for white papers and webinars encourage more prospects to register? To find out, we conducted a series of eyetracking tests this spring, inviting more than 60 high-level business executives into a lab to view real-life Web pages.

Share our results, including colorful heatmaps, with your own design and copy team. Hopefully, they'll inspire you to improve your online registration rates.

## **#4. MarketingSherpa B-to-B Technology Firm Web Site 150 Audit, 2007**

How effective is your Web site? MarketingSherpa analysts audited 150 B-to-B technology Web sites this spring. Site selected ranged from the global biggies to small- and mid-size companies across four primary categories:

- Software
- Hardware
- Consulting
- Application Service Providers (ASPs)

We reviewed how well you use best practices in online marketing, plus best practices in emerging tactics such as podcasting. Want to see how you measure up and where you could improve? Keeping reading ...

All in all, this year's edition of the Business Technology Benchmark Guide features 198 charts, tables and heatmaps. It's substantially thicker than our last edition and we hope of even more practical value.

Our goal is to make your job easier. If you can't find a needed marketing stat here, please let us know. We will be sure to continue to widen our research efforts to see if we can add it next year.

In the meantime, best of luck with your next 12 months campaigns,



Anne Holland  
Content Director, MarketingSherpa Inc.

# New Research Highlights:

## **1,083 B-to-B Technology Marketers and 4,658 Technology Buyers' Responses to MarketingSherpa's Surveys**

Although business technology firms spend an average 3.8% of revenue on marketing (compared to more than 11% on the sales department), according to MarketingSherpa's 2007 data, the marketing department is now responsible for bringing in 60% of new business leads.

Generating those leads is increasingly complex. In the past, marketing sent direct postal mail, ran print ads, managed trade show booths and, perhaps, managed a cold-call campaign.

Now, in 2007, a typical B-to-B campaign also often includes: mainstream paid search ads, vertical search engine listings, blogs, podcasting, RSS feeds, search engine optimization, white paper syndication, email advertising, viral marketing and Web sites.

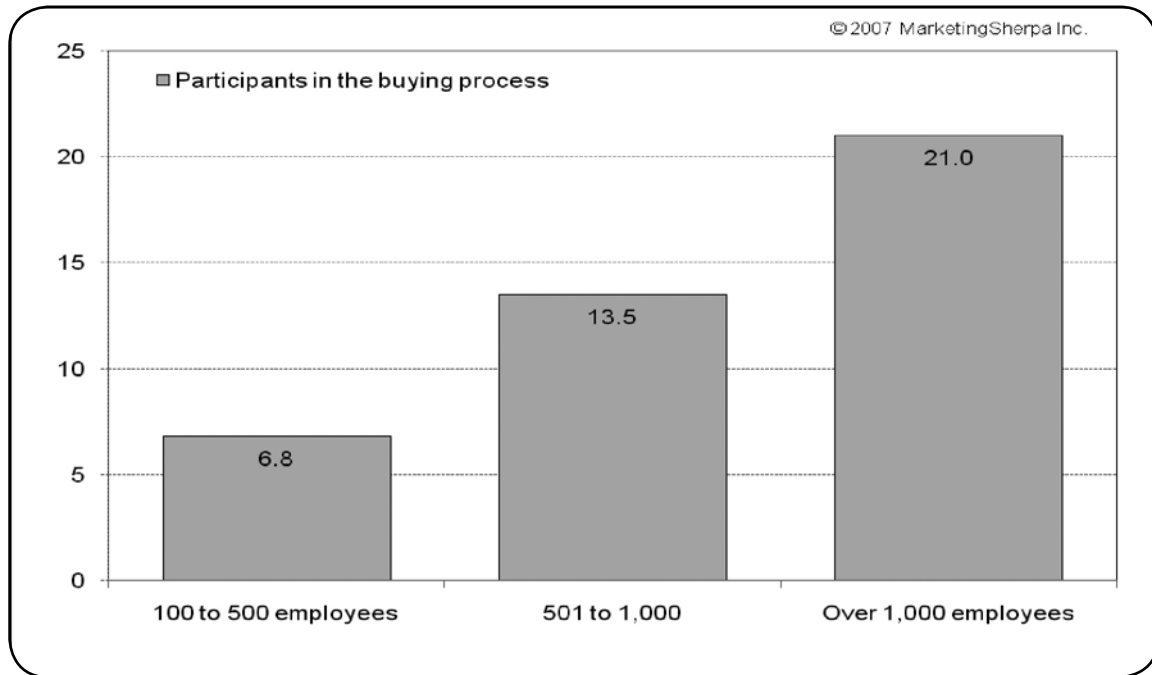
Plus, it's no longer good enough just to bring in a bunch of leads. Over the past seven years, marketing's role has expanded to encompass every activity touching the prospect until they're ready to fall like a ripe plum into sales' outstretched hands ... namely:

- Lead qualification, including telemarketing, scoring and database enhancement
- Prospect education, ranging from white papers, webinars and road shows/seminars
- Lead nurturing, especially via extensive ongoing email communication
- "Proof," including video testimonials, case studies and ROI calculators

And, of course, then you have to measure it all over increasingly long sales cycles.

Interestingly, when we asked technology marketers what their biggest challenge was this year, it wasn't any of the above. Nope, the real problem for 2007 is the ever-growing committee:

**Chart #1. Number of Participants in the Technology Buying Process – Purchases Over \$25,000**



Source: MarketingSherpa, Business Technology Buyers Survey, March 2007

Methodology: The survey was created by MarketingSherpa and fielded to SurveySampling's Business to Business Panel on March 20, 2007. The survey was closed on March 21 with 478 responses.

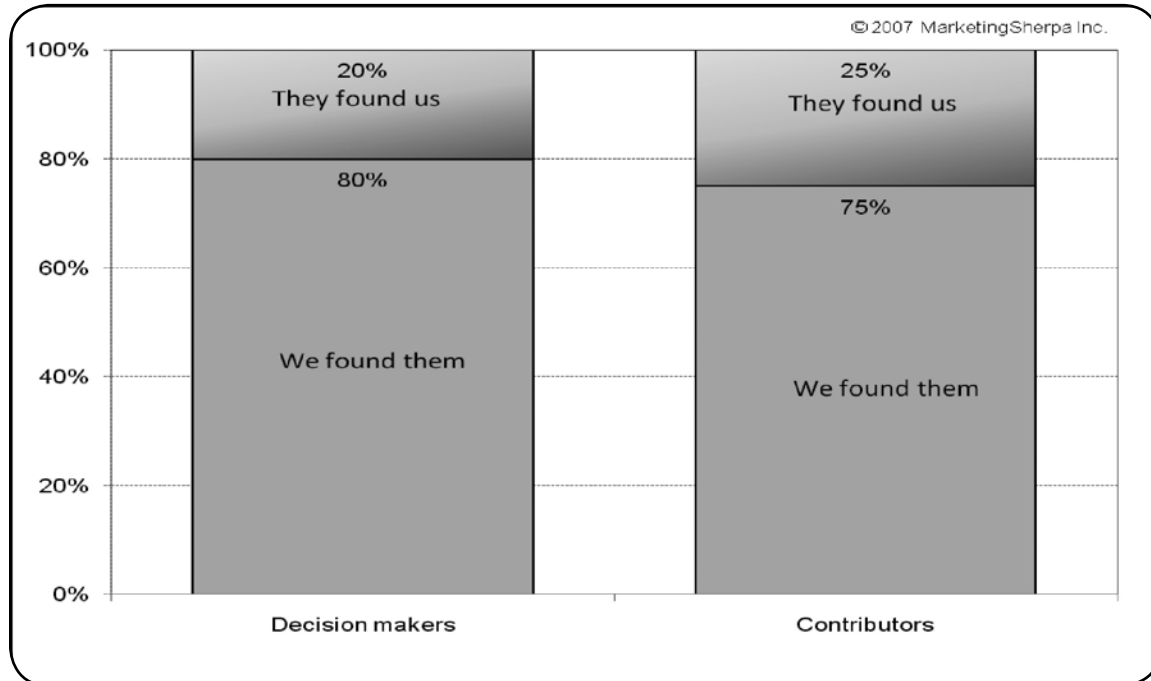
Whether it's increasing office politics or burned fingers from technology decisions in the dot-com bubble heyday, business technology prospects are bulking up on committee members. Gone are the days when you could rely on a small group of IT evangelists or a single heavyweight, such as a CIO, to handle a decision on their own.

If the above chart were for six- or seven-figure technology purchases, it would be understandable. But it's not. It's the typical number of decision makers for a five-figure purchase. In the technology world, \$25,000 isn't a terribly big account. In fact, for many vendors it's not big enough to "waste" field sales' energy on. Supposedly, you can land the account with a combination of marketing and inside sales.

Our suggestion? Given the shift to mega-committees, marketing will have to

expand their prospecting databases and outreach activities on a per-account basis. Plus, per-account viral marketing and evangelism campaigns, beyond mere email forwarding, may become the next hot marketing strategy.

### Chart #2. Did the Technology Customer Find the Vendor or Vice-Versa?



Source: MarketingSherpa, Business Technology Buyers Survey, March 2007

Methodology: The survey was created by MarketingSherpa and fielded to SurveySampling's Business to Business Panel on March 20, 2007. The survey was closed on March 21 with 478 responses.

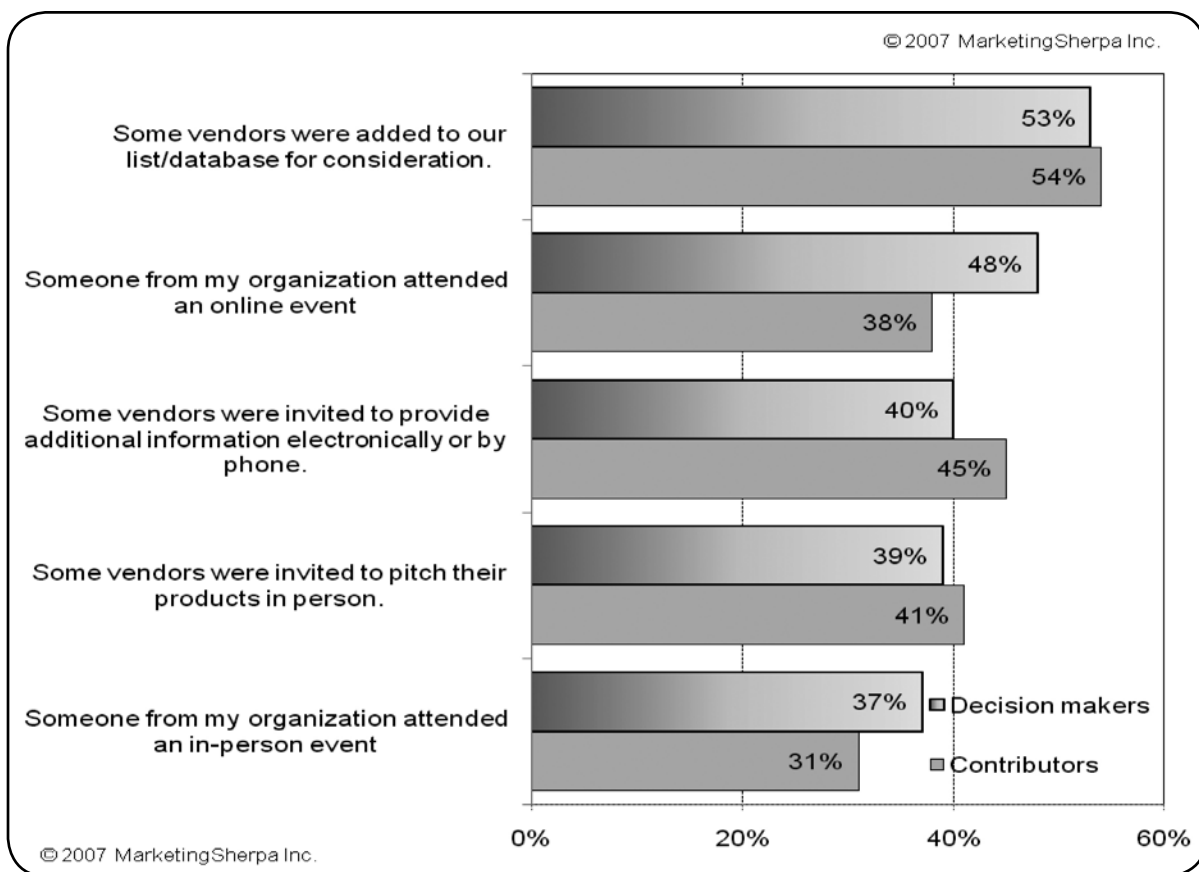
How do prospects view your campaigns? This year, MarketingSherpa asked hundreds of business executives how they chose a new vendor or technology and what information sources they relied on during the decision-making process.

As you can see from the chart above, prospects are under the impression that they drive both the demand-making and discovery processes. So, what's a marketer to do when your CEO orders you to generate more demand? The key increasingly lies not in blasting out your message via a marketing megaphone but rather in placing yourself where you can and will be found when prospects are looking.

It's the hunter concept turned sideways. Instead of hunting down new prospects, you are the prey they are hunting. That means the following marketing tactics become more critical to your mix:

- White paper syndication on third-party sites prospects use when researching
- Search engine optimization so prospects find your site
- Paid search marketing for the same
- Public relations (including speeches, blogs, awards and technical articles) so your brand appears wherever prospects are looking and reading
- Consistent brand awareness advertising so they're aware of you when they begin making that short list (low-level ads year-round will work better for prospects' schedules than one annual media blitz on your schedule)
- Current client satisfaction campaigns so you're sure that when peers and colleagues ask for vendor ideas they'll refer you in a heartbeat

**Chart #3. Prospects' Reactions to Technology Vendor Cold Calls**



Source: MarketingSherpa, Business Technology Buyers Survey, March 2007

Methodology: The survey was created by MarketingSherpa and fielded to SurveySampling's Business to Business Panel on March 20, 2007. The survey was closed on March 21 with 478 responses.

Telemarketing may not be hip, cool or 2.0 enough to merit much media attention in 2007, but it's a whopping part of many marketers' budgets. We wondered: can cold calling (as opposed to lead qualification call campaigns) still work?

Again, we went straight to the source – business prospects who say they received calls in the past year. We asked them what happened as a result of the call. The answers are surprisingly positive.

Obviously, this success is predicated by:

- List quality: Did your team understand that true job function is more critical than title? Did you select targets based on their propensity for possible vendor change, such as an announced tech initiative?
- Telemarketer quality: Were they limited to a script or did they have the training to use the script as a launching pad? Did they sound professional or were they a former B-to-C call center churning out “touches”?
- Offer quality: Did the caller have compelling news or an offer to share or were they just “calling to see if you got the letter we sent you.”
- Goal: Are you calling to extend your pool of decision-maker names in the organization or just getting one name per company?

See detailed charts further in this Business Technology Benchmark Guide for more data on telemarketing costs and response rates, as well as the same for other “traditional” B-to-B tactics, such as trade shows and direct postal mail.

This May, we conducted a new eyetracking study asking real-life business executives to view real-life Web pages. The goal: to determine how you can design key pages, such as white paper offer and webinar registration pages, to get better results.

## Eyetracking Heatmap. Typical Webinar Promotion & Registration Landing Page

The screenshot shows a website for VoIP News with a registration form for a webinar. The heatmap overlay indicates that users are most likely to click on the 'Sign up Today!' button and the registration form fields. The form includes fields for First Name, Last Name, Job Title, Company Name, Email Address, Phone, and Zip Code. A 'Register' button is located at the bottom of the form. The website header includes the VoIP News logo and navigation links. The main content area features a webinar announcement for 'Comparison and Benefits of Hosted VoIP Services for the Small Business (SMB)' on Thursday, March 29, 2007. The featured speaker is Dave Immettun, Sr. Director of Sales for 8x8, Inc. The footer contains various resource centers and contact information.

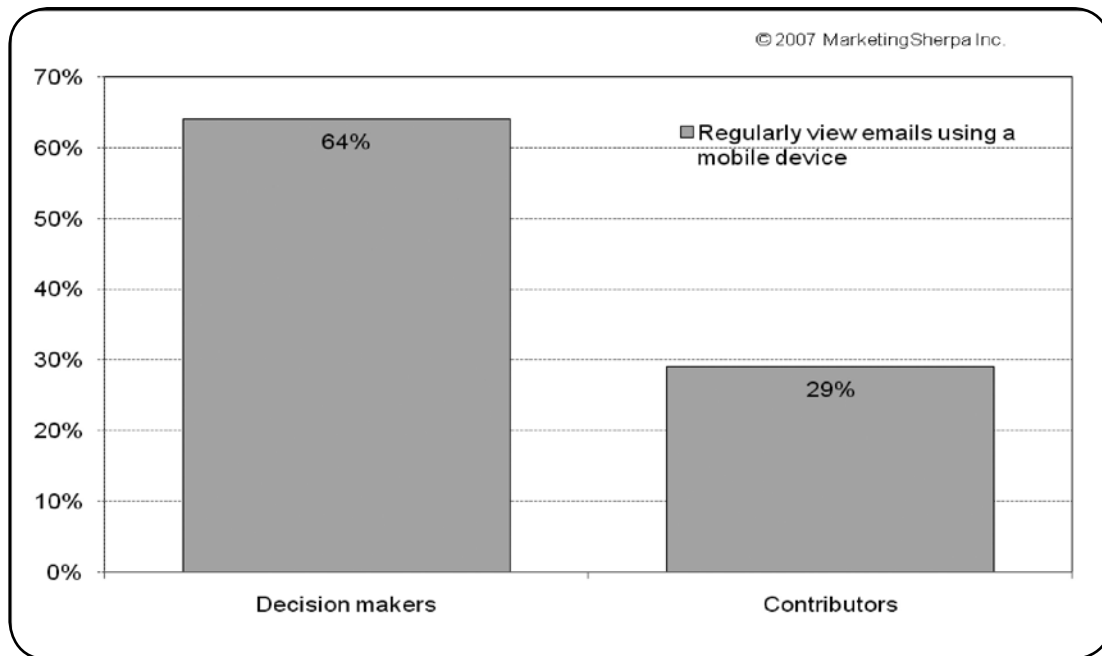
**Note: Images may have been cropped to fit the print page.**

Source: MarketingSherpa with Enquiro, Business to Business Eyetracking Study, May 2007

Above is a sample of the nine useful heatmaps included in the Benchmark Guide. Key lessons you may want to share with your Web designer and online copywriter include:

- The first word in every headline and paragraph has vastly more impact and influence over response rates than any other word in the headline, sentence or paragraph. Look at each first word – is it the most powerful you can possibly use for the critical position?
- Replicating important words – such as the topic of the webinar and keywords for your marketplace (in this case, VoIP and Internet Phone) – in multiple positions over the page can improve response. Don't assume that prospects carefully read everything on the page from start to finish. Assume their eyes flickered about and they only spotted perhaps 25% of the information. Make sure highly relevant keywords are present no matter where that eye flickers.
- Two-column formatting, where both the informational copy and the registration form are above the fold, can help response rates. Definitely test it. However, we would strongly advise against two columns of textual copy. This print-design layout rarely does well in online eyetracking tests.
- We'd also advise against a third column, such as a vertical navigation bar or additional, unrelated offers above the fold. Landing pages with fewer click options, fewer path decisions, nearly always get far higher response rates. Note how this Web designer placed alternate navigation options well below the fold where they would not distract from the registration offer at hand.
- Bullet points work. Bullet points often blow paragraph-style copy (with nearly the exact same words) out of the water. But you already knew that.
- Add immediate calls to action, such as a large “Sign up Today!” and a bold “Register Now” even when you might think the action is self evident. Being politely pushy can pay off.

#### Chart #4. Business Technology Buyers (Especially Decision Makers) View Mobile Email



Source: MarketingSherpa, Business Technology Buyers Survey, March 2007

Methodology: The survey was created by MarketingSherpa and fielded to SurveySampling's Business to Business Panel on March 20, 2007. The survey was closed on March 21 with 478 responses.

Did you notice the sample landing page above used a best practice in email name collection? Instead of just asking for an email address and assuming implied permission to mail (the idea of “we gave them valuable content so they owe us permission automatically” is hugely outdated in this age of filters and email reputation management), the form had a separate email permission checkbox.

Once you get that permission and have added a prospect's name to your list, you have one more hurdle that many B-to-B marketers forget about: mobile delivery.

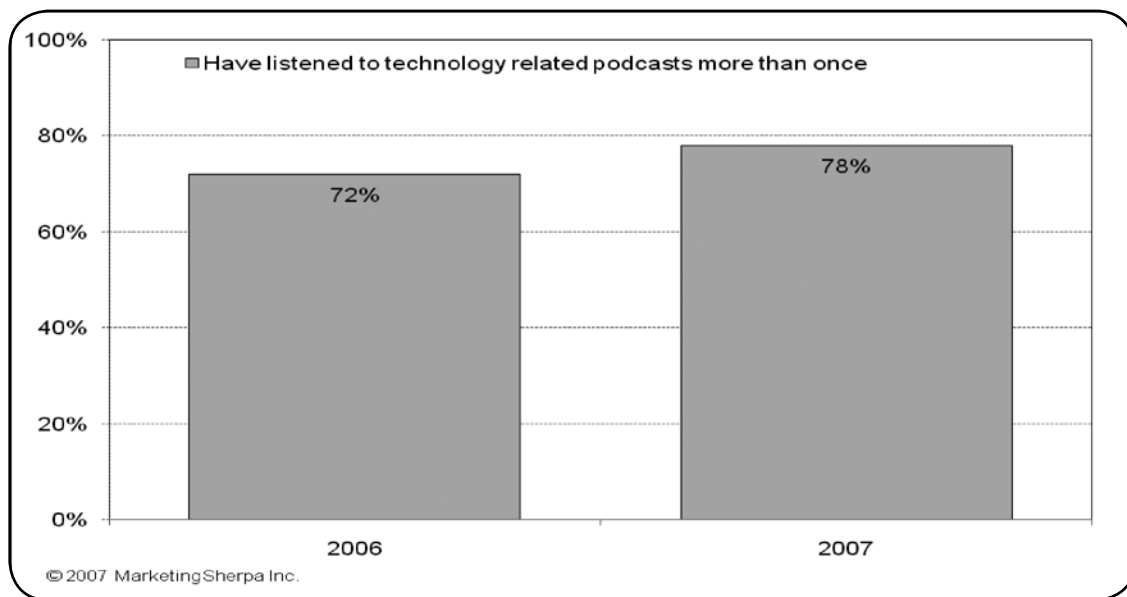
According to MarketingSherpa research from 2006, 91.4% of B-to-B marketers didn't think mobile marketing applied to them or they weren't planning to do anything about it in 2007. Well, guess what? You may not be considering mobile, but your prospects are using it ... in droves.

The horrible truth is that key decision makers are viewing your email on their mobile devices, such as BlackBerrys. And chances are your email looks pretty

horrible. Go see for yourself. Then call your email design department into an emergency meeting. Don't forget to ask your Web design department to attend, too. Prospects increasingly click through on articles, white paper offers, webinar offers, etc., via mobile devices. It's likely that your glossy high-tech brand Web site is suffering when viewed on a mobile device.

Luckily, this project may be one of the easiest you ever had to pitch for budget to the CEO. Chances are, he or she is viewing the world via their own mobile device, too.

### Chart #5. Podcasting Arrives as Mainstream Technology Information Source



Source: MarketingSherpa, Business Technology Buyers Survey, March 2007 and KnowledgeStorm, Emerging Media Series, July 2006

Methodology: The survey was created by MarketingSherpa and fielded to SurveySampling's Business to Business Panel on March 20, 2007. The survey was closed on March 21 with 478 responses. The KnowledgeStorm study asked 3,900 B-to-B technology buyers about their media habits.

Last year, only 2.7% of businesses executives we surveyed said a podcast influenced a technology purchase decision. To be fair, the question that produced the chart above simply asked whether they had ever listened to technology-related audio content. Still, it's a remarkable increase in the 24 months that we've been following podcasting. Marketing via podcast was more hype than practical reality.

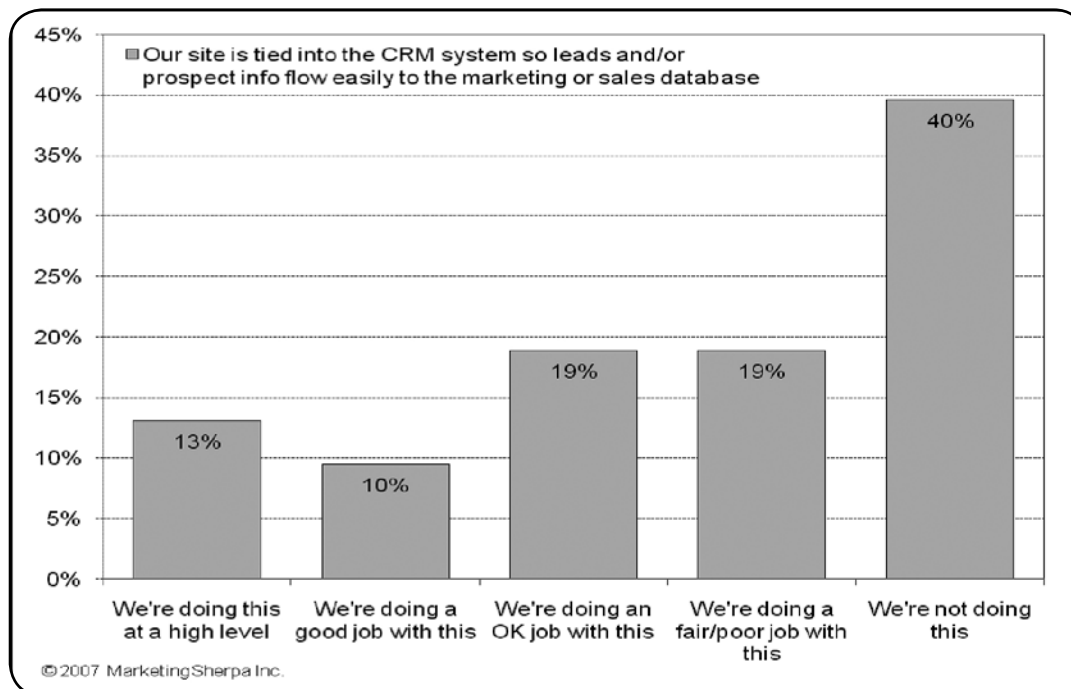
Worth noting – only 12% of online consumers have ever downloaded a podcast. So, this is where general consumer habits and technology decision

maker habits don't match. Your particular niche or vertical marketplace may not match the average consumer or the average tech buyer shown above. So, before you invest in launching a podcast – or expanding your current efforts – do a research study of your own to see if podcasts are big in your target market.

Best research? Ask prospects directly. Run a survey. Worst research? Launch a sample one-off podcast. According to multiple MarketingSherpa Case Studies, a routine podcast that is broadcast on a regular basis will have far more measurable impact than a one-off. Simply put –a one-off podcast is like a one-off email newsletter. You can't get the job done with a single issue, nor should you expect to measure success from it alone.

The good news: podcasts are extremely low cost to produce, especially compared to search marketing, telemarketing, direct postal mail, trade shows, etc. The bad news: like a high-value email newsletter or white paper, content creation can be labor and time intensive. Just when you thought your marketing department's time couldn't be stretched any further.

#### Chart #6. Technology Marketers Evaluate Their Sites' Use of CRM



Source: MarketingSherpa, Business Technology Marketing Survey, April 2007

Methodology: MarketingSherpa's 4th annual survey was fielded to select MarketingSherpa lists on March 23 and closed on April 2 with 1,038 completed responses. Follow-up interviews were conducted by telephone with selected survey respondents.

Ouch. Do names from your online registration forms stream smoothly into your CRM system so they can be acted on swiftly and efficiently? According to new MarketingSherpa data, 59% of business technology marketers say, “No.”

Some leads may get lost along the way (we all know what it’s like to fill out an online form and then never hear a peep from the company involved). Others are slowed down so that by the time anyone acts on them, they’ve drifted from hot to lukewarm to chilly cold.

In a year when 80% of decision makers research and reach out to technology vendors, rather than waiting to be contacted, sloppy inbound lead handling is unforgivable. Plus, in a year when marketing costs are rising – especially for search advertising – slow lead response is a massive resource waste.

This is even more critical for technology marketers with shorter sales cycles and those marketing to SOHOs (small office/home office.) Prospects ready to buy soon and ultra-busy small business owners will not give you a second chance while you fumble with their information. Your direct competitor’s Web site was probably featured in the same search engine results or online tech magazine. It’s only one click away. If they respond more promptly than you do, guess who gets the sale?

That said, we recognize that getting a new and improved CRM system working smoothly, especially when you’re coping with legacy systems and/or cobbled-together forms generators and Excel lists, is a one-to-three-year process for many technology firms. The larger you are, the tougher it can be because of politics and multiple legacy systems.

All the more reason to get started right away. Plus, in the meantime, we’ve met plenty of marketers who used “down-and-dirty” tactics (sometimes described as “chewing gum, bits of string and intern power”) to oil the wheels, speeding leads from Web form to CRM systems more quickly.

In summary, much of what we learned from MarketingSherpa research this year is fairly practical. No matter how complex -- or not -- your marketing technology is, or how large or small your budget is, you can take specific actions to improve results.

You may reallocate budget partially from one tactic to another, such as testing podcasting for the first time. You may test a tweak to your email design to get more viral hand-off within large vendor-selection committees or more readership on a mobile device. You may cobble together a solution to get inbound leads qualified and over to the sales department more quickly.

Or, you may want to use the charts to “prove” your case to your CEO or client so you can get the approvals you need to make marketing campaigns more effective.

No matter what, we’re sure you’ll find many, many practical uses for this new data. Our best wishes for your B-to-B marketing campaigns!

May your results continue to improve on an ever-lifting arc ■

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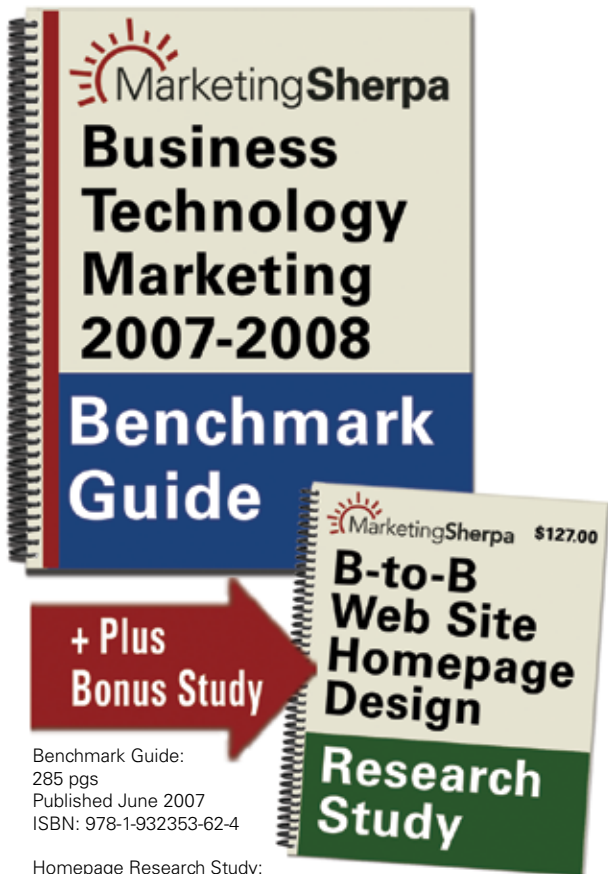
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