



# Attractivate

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## TAKE THE MARKETING ROAD LESS TRAVELED

Why today's B2B marketplace can demand honesty  
and what small and mid-sized business leaders  
can do to charge up their marketing efforts.

*From the Building the Brand From Within Series*

**BY KELLY STEWART, FOUNDER, ATTRACTIVATE**

# THE MARKETING ROAD LESS TRAVELED

There's always been hope for honesty in trade.

It's just that there wasn't a mechanism for enabling it, and so it fell to the buyer to beware. Snake oil salesmen, robber barons, and other business ne'er-do-wells succeeded then by being in control of what their audiences perceived as the truth. In an over-simplified nutshell, this was accomplished with carefully crafted marketing messages that projected a brand image that unfortunately, and sometimes to the detriment of others, was lacking in the whole truth. These bad actions helped to create an overall distrust of marketing that lingers today.

Add to that, as technical and geographical barriers have all but disappeared, today's decision-makers have more choice than ever before. Now they're faced with an overwhelming responsibility of having to determine how one of many companies is different from the others when they provide the same service. This is a feat made more difficult when competitors describe what they do and how they do it in eerily similar ways.

No doubt then that the brand – the mosaic of strengths, values, and behaviors that truly reflect an organization's reputation – has become increasingly more vital in helping decision-makers evaluate their options. These brand promises are important to clients, employees, and other people who have a stake in the company's success.

All of these people have an advantage today. Finding information about the brand is easier than ever before. It's changed the way we need to think about the relationships we want to develop through marketing to ease the burden of sales, improve recruiting, and create value for others.

It's helpful to take a little look back at the improvements in technology to understand why.

# A NEW HORSELESS CARRIAGE & NEW MARKETING AVENUES

When the information superhighway opened for business, B2B marketers had to forge new roads utilizing websites that were...well, a little clunky.<sup>1</sup> Essentially, the marketing work of the day was to transfer as much of the printed marketing material onto the website, resulting in many pages of static copy.

As this work progressed and business leaders became more comfortable with the medium, more websites (millions more) were developed. As a result,

prospective clients, employees, and others became more informed and aware of options they had that extended far beyond their local communities.

The screenshot shows the Yahoo! homepage with the following elements:

- Navigation Icons:** Finance, Mail, Check Email, What's New, My Personalize, Help.
- Services:** Launch (Music, Videos, Radio, Photos), free email@yaho.com, Yahoo! Photos (10-20% off photo gifts).
- Search:** Search bar with "advanced search" link.
- Games:** Yahoo! Games - Play online Literati, Diamond Mine, Pool, Chess, Spades, Hearts and more...
- Shop:** Auctions, Autos, Classifieds, Real Estate, Shopping, Travel, Yellow Pgs, Maps, Media, Finance, News, Sports, Weather.
- Connect:** Careers, Chat, GeoCities, Greetings, Groups/Clubs, Mail, Members, Messenger, Mobile, Personals, People Search, Photos.
- Personal:** Addr. Book, Briefcase, Calendar, My Yahoo!, PayDirect, Fun, Games, Horoscopes, Kids, Movies, Music, TV, more...
- Yahoo! Finance Tax Center:** Resources to do your taxes (Preparation & Filing, Federal Forms, Federal Rates, State Forms, Calculators, Calendar, Tips, Guide for Investors), Less than 2 weeks left, File Online Today, Powered by TurboTax® for the Web™.
- Arts & Humanities:** Literature, Photography...
- Business & Economy:** B2B, Finance, Shopping, Jobs...
- Computers & Internet:** Internet, WWW, Software, Games...
- Education:** College and University, K-12...
- Entertainment:** Picks, Movies, Humor, Music...
- Government:** Elections, Military, Law, Taxes...
- News & Media:** Full Coverage, Newspapers, TV...
- Recreation & Sports:** Sports, Travel, Autos, Outdoors...
- Reference:** Libraries, Dictionaries, Quotations...
- Regional:** Countries, Regions, US States...
- Science:** Animals, Astronomy, Engineering...
- Social Science:** Archaeology, Economics, Languages...
- In the News:** Israel proposes exiling Arafat, Muslim nations meet, fail to agree on 'terrorism' definition at conference, Historian: U.S. lied about Cuban Angola role in order to intervene, Trial to begin for Kennedy cousin accused of 1975 Moxley murder, Maryland wins NCAA Hoops title, more...
- Marketplace:** Spring Fare Sale - save up to 35% on air travel, Gateway Desktop, 1.2GHz processor, 20GB hard drive, 15" color monitor - only \$599, Free tote bag with any Lucky Brand purchase at Nordstrom, New from Stephen King - Everything's Eventual - download ebook, buy hardcover.
- Broadcast Events:** Exclusive Trailers - Tom Cruise in Minority Report, Mel Gibson in Signs, Sheri Crow - artist of the month.

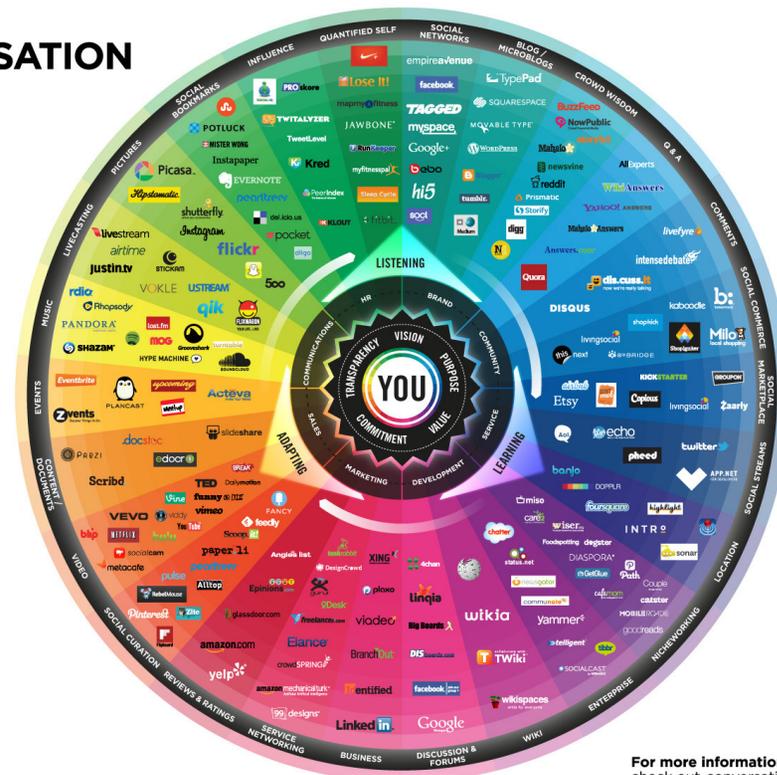
By 2004, technology, hardware, and wireless communication was better and less expensive, opening new avenues that **connected** people online. By 2006, *Time Magazine*<sup>2</sup> had named the Person of the Year as “You” – “the selected masses of users who were participating in content creation.”

At the same time and within three years, LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter all launched. These platforms allowed people to network online and share their user-generated content.<sup>3</sup> And today, we know the “Conversation Prism”<sup>4</sup> is a robust ecosystem of tools and sites that provide people with many opportunities to get referrals from trusted professionals for what works *and* what doesn’t.



## THE CONVERSATION PRISM

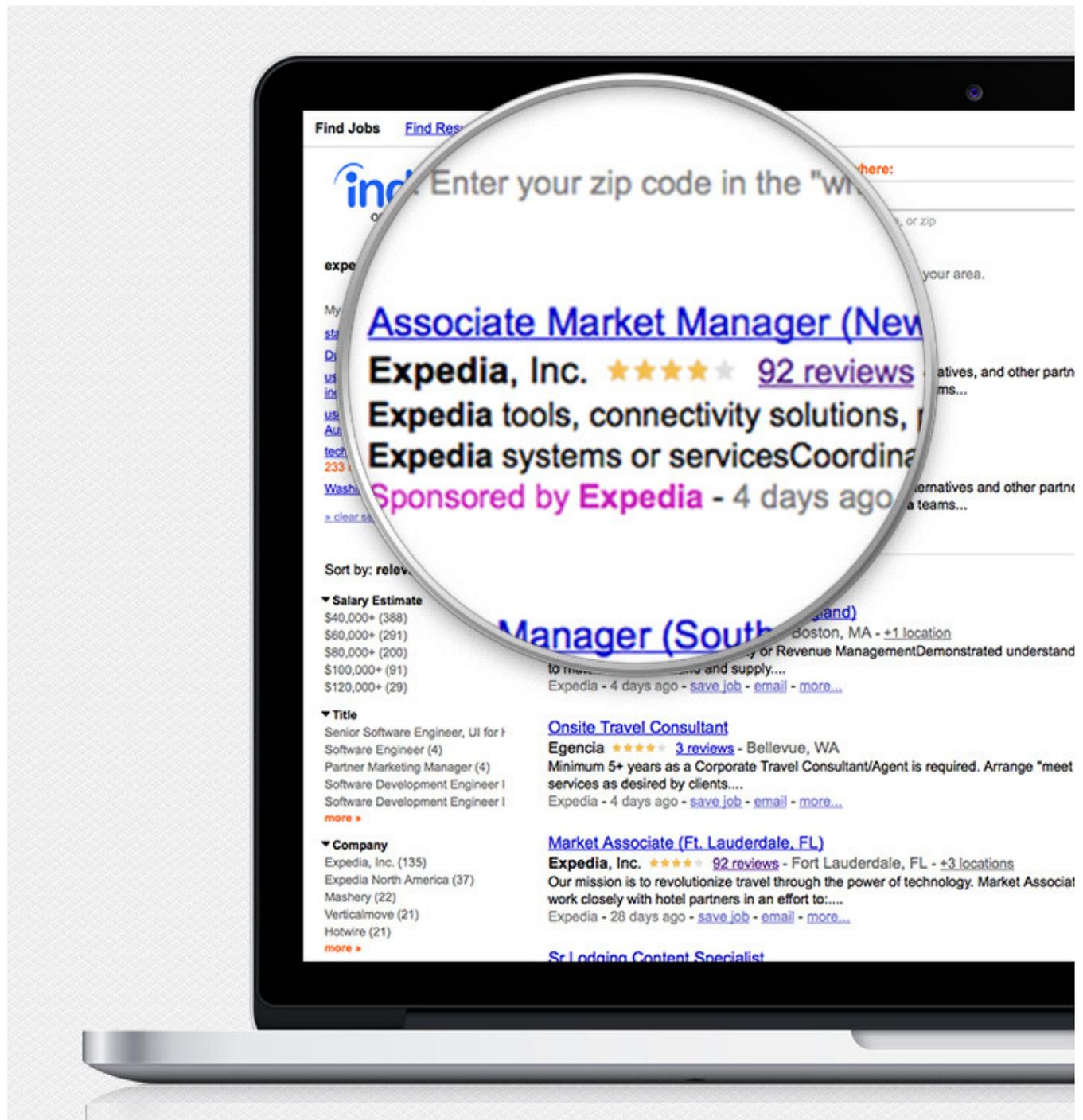
Brought to you by  
Brian Solis & JESS3



For more information  
check out [conversationprism.com](http://conversationprism.com)

Likewise, ratings and review sites such as Yelp, Google My Business, and others provide the perfect platform for people to learn who's ranting or raving about a company and its services or products. Even Indeed.com<sup>5</sup> – a popular job posting site – provides insight into an organization through employee reviews and ratings.

The undeniable fact is that if it's happening anywhere at any time, it can and will be shared. This makes the marketplace increasingly **transparent** today.



# A HYBRID OF (WO)MAN & MACHINE

Looking ahead, and thanks to artificial intelligence, machines and software we're already using everyday (think personal digital assistants) are becoming smarter while, yes, learning to *behave* like people.<sup>6</sup> Fear and hype aside, the Web is becoming more human-centered.

The B2B marketing opportunity, especially for those providing intangible services, is in considering the decision-maker's entire experience from initial encounter to advocate in as much real time as possible.

This involves engaging them from discovery through consideration, evaluation, and selection. It means being where people are searching at exactly the time they are ready, willing, and able to work with you.

Currently AI-driven solutions are helping companies with larger budgets provide 24/7 marketing on a large scale, and maybe those solutions will be scaled for small and mid-sized businesses in the near future.

## MARKETING WITH THE TOP DOWN

In the meantime, it seems the marketplace will likely continue to become more **informed**, more **connected**, and more **transparent**. Improvements in technology will continue to impact the marketing relationship between *your* organization and *your* future client or employee. The B2B marketing opportunity, then, is in adapting to these norms.

People have access to the content you publish on your website and post through your social media. They also have access to news about your organization, regardless of when it was published (the internet never forgets), listings in online directories, and content created by your current and former clients and also employees – whether that's on their personal

social media profiles or via review sites. LinkedIn's company pages offer up analytics on total employee growth, headcount growth by function, and new hires, providing people you want to reach and relate to with additional insights about your brand.

When this content is positive and in harmony online and offline, it helps to alleviate the perception of risk in working with your organization and *that* accelerates decision-making.



## THE DECISION-MAKER IS IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT

Where the notion of buyer beware implied a singular experience, at this moment in time, your stakeholders can leverage literally a world wide web of people to help them evaluate their options. This is shaping their expectations and changing what people want today.

Savvy decision-makers have the luxury of considering more than what your company does when considering where to spend their budget or invest their time, such as:

- Wanting to work with brands that resonate with them on a broader and higher level; wanting to understand *why* your organization exists. When they feel that connection, they feel more confident in their decision to work with or for your organization. It's that type of gut feeling that often tips the decision-making scale.

- Turning their attention to brands that are impact-minded. No longer considered a "nice to have" or an isolated event, people are interested in knowing how your company gives back. It's important to demonstrate how your company is achieving a higher purpose, supporting people, caring for society and the planet, and yes, being profitable because good things can happen when profit is reinvested.
- Understanding how you can help them succeed (think thriving, not just surviving). Gallup advises that "the more relevant the improvement, the more successful the partnership between the customer and the B2B company becomes, because the relationship shifts from one of price to one of advice." The same could be say of all business relationships you have.

These new expectations do not only apply to large, global corporations. The same is expected of small and mid-sized businesses; businesses that boost and support vibrant state, regional, and local communities and economies.

A business like yours.



## TRUST FUELS RELATIONSHIPS, AND AUTHENTICITY IS VITAL TO TRUST

In an **informed**, **connected**, and **transparent** market that demands honesty, it's time to tend to or tune up your brand so you can become more authentic in your marketing messages. Being specific and genuine about your organization will help you attract, captivate, and motivate all of the people essential to your success.

## Here are four ways you can build your brand from within:

- **Make an effort to truly understand what others want and value in your organization.**  
Talk to your clients, even the prospects who didn't become your clients, to learn in their words what outcomes they truly desire, why they were looking for a service like yours. Segment these individuals into groups so you can deliver relevant and novel content that captivates them.
- **Invest in learning about the strengths of the individuals in your organization.** Formalized assessments can help in uncovering and naming those strengths, which helps to give your brand a distinct language and to affirm what makes your organization different from the competition.
- **Determine ways in which you can link your core values to your business practices to the expectations others have for your company.** Every experience a person has from the initial encounter throughout all interactions with the company should accurately and positively reinforce your brand reputation.
- **Develop a specific and genuine voice for your brand that really reflects its personality.** Use it in everything you publish, print, and post. Use it to share your unique perspective on how you help clients overcome challenges they have today and how you help them prepare for what's coming down the road. Use it to get people excited about joining your team, investing in your company, or otherwise helping to make your company better.

Not so coincidentally, when you rev up your marketing engine with a focus on your brand, your sales cycle may improve, clients may stay with you longer, attracting new talent can become easier – and other desirable outcomes that you cannot achieve with a bump and run approach to marketing.

Authenticity in B2B marketing stands up to scrutiny; it inspires confidence; it inspires trust. When done well, it sets expectations for a working relationship that is based on mutual success.

**...AND THAT'S A ROAD WORTH TRAVELING.**



## ABOUT KELLY STEWART

### FOUNDER, ATTRACTIVATE



I provide B2B marketing expertise, strategy, and implementation guidance to business owners and leaders. I chose driving as the backdrop for this topic, in part because I'm still sentimental about my first used car, a 1976 red Chevy Malibu with a throaty V8 and plenty of room for six people. It's also because I bring the exhilarating sense of freedom that driving offers to exploring marketing strategies. If you'd like to try a new route to success, learn how we can work together via Attractivate's **on-demand marketing services**. Or invite me to **speak** to your team and spark some new ideas in your organization.

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## DATA & IMAGE SOURCES

- 1 Yahoo Website Image Source: [http://sixrevisions.com/web\\_design/the-evolution-of-web-design](http://sixrevisions.com/web_design/the-evolution-of-web-design)
- 2 *Time Magazine* Image Source: <http://content.time.com/time/covers/0,16641,20061225,00.html>
- 3 Source: <http://www.infoplease.com/science/computers/social-media-timeline.html>
- 4 Conversation Prism Source: <https://conversationprism.com/>
- 5 Indeed.com Image Source: <http://blog.indeed.com/2014/01/29/indeed-surpasses-4-million-employer-reviews/>
- 6 Source: <http://beebom.com/examples-of-artificial-intelligence/>
- 7 Source: <http://www.socialmediatoday.com/content/buyer-30-aka-what-social-tells-you-about-buyers>
- 8 Source: <http://www.gallup.com/businessjournal/165389/b2bs-win-building-relationships-not-selling-price.aspx>



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