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Quick Answer: Isn't Vertical Marketing Just an Industry-Specific Message?

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Initiatives: Messaging and Differentiation; Go-to-Market Strategy; Industry Product Planning and Strategy

Some think that vertical marketing is simply achieved with a tailored message — ignoring other opportunities for industry-specific refinement. Product marketers must extend beyond messaging to identify and develop industry specialization opportunities across the marketing and sales life cycle.

Quick Answer

How can vertical marketing be achieved with more than just an industry-specific message?

With each of your target vertical segments in mind, consider each industry's needs and priorities across the entire marketing life cycle:

- Tailor the message — For each industry, revisit positioning, differentiation and storytelling to sharpen the message.
- Tailor the marketing mix — For each industry, consider the nuance that needs to be accommodated in the content types, channels and outreach efforts.
- Tailor the buying experience — For each industry, consider the unique needs for key buyer personas, sales cycle milestones and timing, and the marketing required to support industry priorities and concerns.
- Tailor the owning experience — For each industry, consider the customer marketing required to support the customer success team and customer engagement programs.

More Detail

Deliver More Than Just a Tailored Message

A common conception is that vertical marketing is wholly about fine-tuning the message. But a comprehensive vertical marketing effort would be tailored based on unique buying cycles, vertical-specific personas on the buying team, content needs and how to cultivate that relationship over time.

A complete vertical marketing strategy includes (see Figure 1):

- Industry-specific messaging
- Industry-specific marketing tactics
- Industry-specific buying experience
- Industry-specific owning experience

Please note: Vertical marketing is one functional aspect of an overall vertical strategy. To learn more, see Gartner's Vertical Strategy Framework: Your Roadmap for Successful Industry Go-to-Market Strategies.

Figure 1: The Elements of a Complete Vertical Marketing Strategy

The Elements of a Complete Vertical Marketing Strategy



Source: Gartner
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Prework: Understand Your Target Vertical Segments

To understand the unique marketing and sales needs per industry, you should have detailed ideal customer profiles (ICPs) written for each segment. (See Tech Marketers: Improve Buyer Empathy and Traction With Detailed Market Segment Profiles.)

Second, map out the primary use cases or “value scenarios” that drive your buyers to consider your offering. (See Tool: Value Scenario Template.)

With each industry segment's detailed profile and value scenarios in mind, consider the marketing efforts included in this note. You will find you do not need to tailor everything – but you can use this note to identify what you do need to tailor. By considering all aspects of the marketing life cycle with your industry buyer in mind, you will identify the most important areas where you can invest in industry-specific marketing efforts – beyond just messaging.

Tailored Message by Vertical

Once a deep round of segmentation has been completed and more detail is added to your target market profile, it is vital to revisit the positioning framework, differentiation and storytelling around messaging.

With each target industry in mind, consider the following to improve the message:

- Determine if you need a targeted audience or a more formal segment.
- Add more detail to your industry segment profile.
- Revisit your positioning and differentiation (consider unique competitive landscapes per industry).
- Update your message.

Industry-specific research:

- Use Competitive Positioning to Win Deals in Retail
- How to Develop Your Positioning to Win Government Business
- Use Competitive Positioning to Win More Deals in Insurance
- Market Insight: How to Leverage Product Positioning to Increase Healthcare Technology Sales
- 10 Steps to Differentiate Your Insurance Solution Ecosystem

Tech marketing best-practice research:

- Help Your Buyers Realize the Value They Can't – or Won't – Measure to Drive Account Growth

Tailored Marketing Tactics by Vertical

The content that the various buyer personas consume, as well as the way they consume content and gather research, will also differ and need to be addressed.

With each target industry in mind, consider the following to improve the marketing tactics:

- Identify the most effective content types and channels per industry.
- Develop marketing content that highlights industry-specific product capabilities, delivery skills, business relevance and customer success.
- Align these with industry-specific buyer personas and buying journey dynamics.
- Identify and engage with industry-specific influencers.
- Craft an industry-specific event strategy.

Industry-specific research:

- Digital Marketing Survey 2021: Industry Insights on Multichannel Marketing Effectiveness
- Infographic: Account-Based Marketing Strategy for Financial Services TSPs

Tailored Buying Experience by Vertical

Adjustments may need to be made to account for differences in buying dynamics from vertical to vertical. The way buyers buy will be different. For each industry segment, consider the unique needs for key buyer personas, sales cycle milestones and timing, and the marketing required to support industry priorities and concerns.

With each target industry in mind, consider the following to improve the buying experience:

- Define buyer personas for key buying committee members, with particular focus on decision makers.
- Consider the unique business goals, constraints and definitions of success of industry line of business (LOB) stakeholders and decision makers.
- Consider the industry-specific nuances that technical stakeholders are facing.

- Collaborate with sales, and support internal industry experts in your sales ranks.
- Develop sales content that highlights industry-specific product capabilities, delivery skills, business relevance and customer success.
- Map out an industry-specific buying journey.
- Support industry-specific routes to market – business partners, channels, value-added resellers (VARs) and consultants.

Industry-specific research:

- Comparison of Line-of-Business Buyer Behavior by Industry
- Line-of-Business Survey: Banking and Investment Services Buyer Behavior
- Line-of-Business Survey: Utility Buyer Behavior
- What Healthcare Providers Want in 2021
- What Manufacturing Business Buyers Want From Product Leaders
- Retail Insight: Compelling Sales Content Is Critical to Winning Business in Retail

Tailored Owning Experience by Vertical

It's known that it is much less expensive to cross-sell/upsell to your base rather than to capture a net new buyer. This means cultivating relationships within a certain vertical will need to occur. There will not be a "one size fits all" customer success team approach.

With each target industry in mind, consider the following to improve the owning experience:

- Collaborate with customer success to deliver industry-specific customer marketing.
- Support customer engagement programs such as customer advisory boards (CABs).
- Support industry-specific partners – technology and implementation partners, consultants, and so forth.

Industry-specific research:

- Predicts 2022: Industry Success Will Demand Greater Composability and Collaboration Capabilities

Recommended by the Authors

Tech Marketers: Achieve Tailored Messaging Goals Using Target Audiences and Market Segments

Tech Marketers: Improve Buyer Empathy and Traction With Detailed Market Segment Profiles

Tech Marketers: Make Your Differentiators Clear as Mud

Tech Marketers: How to Differentiate Beyond Product Capabilities

Improve the Quality and Impact of Your Thought Leadership Interactions

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