

A Magazine by The Imaginarium

# Unbundled

# A note from the editorial team

If marketing ever felt simple, it was probably sometime between Don Draper's last Old Fashioned and the birth of the banner ad—a quaint era when a catchy jingle and a smile might still do the trick.

These days? The modern B2B marketer is equal parts raconteur, data wrangler, amateur psychologist, and part-time firefighter. We're all spinning plates, with KPIs in one hand and Slack notifications in the other.

Right ho—let's make a bash of it.

This dashing edition of Unbundled ABM is our latest love letter to digital excellence. It's not just our take on today's digital challenges, mind you—we've also wrangled insights from our cleverest comrades across the B2B landscape. Think of it as a who's who of tactical tête-à-têtes, dished up with flair and a splash of something sparkling.

Inside, you'll find tales from the frontlines of the CMO's increasingly Herculean to-do list: musings on how to speak in something approximating human language, a deep dive into the art of earning trust in an age that trusts no one, and even a fresh take on why your next big brand move might belong on YouTube (yes, really).

All of these served up with our usual blend of irreverence, strategic rigor, and enormous admiration for the marketers keeping this whole circus upright.

So, silence the pings, pour a restorative, and tuck in. Marketing might be a beast—but it's never dull. And we're here for every second of it!

# The Impossible CMO

by Gayle Meyers

**There are few jobs in B2B more thankless than that of the Chief Marketing Officer. On paper, the role is the engine of growth. In practice, it's the seat where budgets vanish first, expectations expand fastest, and success is hardest to prove.**

## Growth demands more than demand

A bit of background. My time is split between working with private equity sponsors and assisting CEOs in the middle of a growth push. That usually means companies either moving from Series A to Series B or independents gearing up for an exit. In both cases, the challenge is the same—how do you build an organization that not only grows, but grows in a way that maximizes value when it's time to cash out?

My work is less about theory and more about building the roadmaps and alignment needed to actually get there. Throughout my career, I have been a CMO, CEO & Founder, CGO, Operating Partner, Managing Partner, Management Consultant, Investor, and Board Director. I've been in the trenches, but I can also provide the objectivity of the outside observer.

Every year, I take on seven to ten new companies, and the growth levers are always familiar: marketing, sales, packaging, pricing, go-to-market, strategy. My role isn't to tell C-suites what to do, but to guide them through the realities of acceleration—where to place bets, how to create alignment, and how to clear the barriers that keep organizations from hitting their next stage.

From what I can see, in those moments, the B2B CMO may have the toughest seat at the table.

## The hardest job in the room

For companies trying to break through their next stage of growth (and not just then), the CMO is usually asked to be a miracle worker—and just as quickly becomes the scapegoat. We know they're indispensable, but B2B is still really bad at connecting the dots between their work and concrete, added value. Sure, you're C-suite, but it's not glamorous.

Then there's the reality of what today's markets demand of a good CMO. Their remit stretches from brand to demand gen, product positioning to analyst relations. They need to be a corporate storyteller, a data scientist, a growth strategist, and a therapist for both sales and product teams. Few leaders have that entire toolkit, can straddle strategy and execution. Fewer still are given the resources to use it.

Budgets are cut from marketing first. Teams are reduced faster than in any other department. And the pressure to "show impact" is relentless. There's this popular idea that marketing should deliver 25% of all leads and prove it. Maybe you'll get there on a good day. Most of the time, it's a pipe dream, especially when touchpoints are messy and attribution is a constant fight.

When a company is in growth mode, marketing isn't just about filling the pipeline. It's about proving the company's value story to investors, expanding

into new categories, diversifying revenue streams, and building resilience so that a few large customers don't dictate the company's destiny. That means packaging, pricing, integrations, and narrative—hard, structural levers of value creation, not just campaigns and content.

And yet, many CMOs are still judged by short-term lead counts. The people tasked with unlocking a company's long-term story are often evaluated on metrics that barely scratch the surface of strategic impact. Or they don't know how to deliver the right metrics themselves.

I want to explore three ways to make life easier for CMOs.

## Alignment is the baseline

When I consult a firm, I won't champion one executive or department over another, but there's a baseline I can (and need to) create to allow everyone to perform and function, and that's an environment that certainly also benefits marketing.

The most common barrier to growth isn't external competition; it's internal misalignment. Immature companies often lack a clear, shared roadmap. Different divisions sprint in different directions, and priorities shift weekly.

Mature organizations—the ones that hit their growth milestones—look different. They have clear two-year roadmaps, alignment across executive teams, and accountability frameworks that prevent noise from drowning out signal. Many companies don't get there alone. An

outside perspective is needed because self-reflection is hard—at the organizational level as much as on the personal.

To add another layer of complexity, there's the issue of boards. A vanishingly slim percentage of board members come from commercial or marketing backgrounds. Instead, they're dominated by finance and audit expertise. CMOs walk into boardrooms where no one truly speaks their language, and where sales and financial performance get all the oxygen. Understandably, some don't even bother to attend in the first place.

Diversity matters here. Without it, it's a constant fight for recognition, as any woman board member can tell you.

## Connecting the dots

Truthfully, it's a real struggle for CMOs to prove metrics inside their organizations and consistently be able to justify investment.

That's why automation needs to be a priority, not only for the marketing team. It's really sales where your CEOs, CFOs, and board are going to be looking. You need to have funnel metrics, be able to clearly see what's happening at every touch point, and know the average impact of every move you make.

Pay attention to companies like Octane 11 or Keen Decision Systems for measurement. Showcase your campaign ROI and find a way to compare campaigns against each other. Learn to go beyond your digital footprint. Can you take your measurement offline? Can you cover all of the different components of what B2B marketing is? Public events, private events, content syndication, call centers, PR, BDRs, etc.?

Big question: Is your measurement across everything you do good enough to be predictive, rather than just prescriptive?

Measurement is key to growth, but more concretely, it's key for CMOs who want to be heard and who want to unlock budgets. The above is the

holy grail, but the good news is that you're not the only one working on the attribution problem.

## Keep moving with the times

It's telling that many companies are experimenting with alternative titles: Chief Customer Officer, Chief Experience Officer, Chief Client Officer. These roles acknowledge what many CMOs know also—growth isn't about ads or campaigns; it's about how the entire company shows up to the customer.

But changing the title doesn't change the underlying challenge. The job still demands someone who knows when to scale up and scale down, shift priorities quickly, and stay on par with sometimes unpredictable change: COVID, the rise of AI, the collapse and rebirth of events, the social-first buying behavior of Gen Z B2B decision-makers. In short, someone who can do the seemingly impossible.

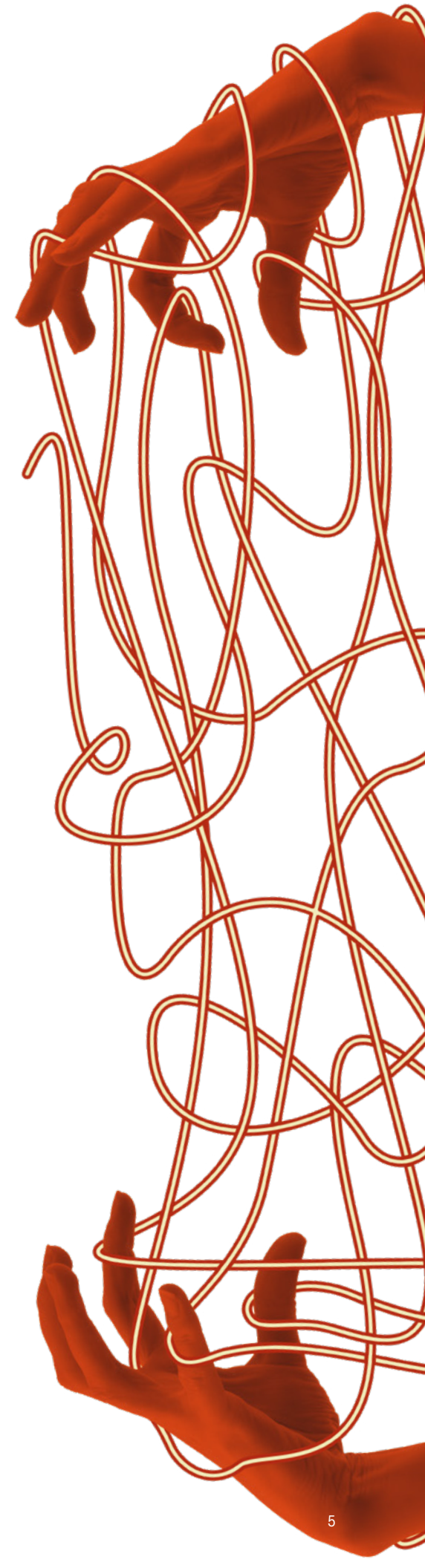
And yet, really great CMOs can move with those times with ease, have the resources to do so, and know how to deploy them. As markets and technology accelerate, that makes these leaders very rare and so very, very expensive.

In light of this, good leaders know when to bring in external partners. Agencies and managed services are resurging for a reason, and B2B is well-advised to leverage them. Most CMOs will need them to keep pace with shifting platforms, fragmented data, and the sheer cost of experimentation.

## And still, we're here

If the role is so punishing, why take it? Maybe it's that the industry is evolving, we're on track to figure out perfect automation and perfect attribution soon, and the B2B CMO will get their moment of limelight. More likely, it's simply because you're passionate about it.

And that's a good thing. You're the impossible CMO. You're here to tell a story.





# ABM Table Stakes: You Have To Know Their Language

by Ross Whittaker,  
InterSystems

**ABM has been celebrated for years as a golden bridge between marketing and sales. But if you strip away the acronyms, tech stacks, and dashboards, ABM really comes down to something deceptively simple: speaking your customer's language. Not your version of it. Theirs.**

While this may sound obvious, in practice it's one of the hardest (and maybe most overlooked) disciplines in B2B marketing—possibly because teams don't take it literally enough.

Take financial services. Here, "interconnectivity" is the hot buzzword to know, while in healthcare, the same concept is called "interoperability." Same idea, different language. What about acronyms? For example, if you don't know that "CMO" stands for Chief Medical Officer (can you even believe that an "M" could stand for something besides "marketing"?), you're already dead in the water. And in pharma, "NDA" doesn't mean a confidentiality agreement; it means New Drug Application. I found that out when a customer spoke of a 100,000-page NDA. One wrong assumption like that and your message goes from insightful to embarrassing in a single slide.

This is where ABM earns its keep. Done right, it forces marketing and sales to align not just on accounts, but on vocabulary. A common persona matrix becomes your cheat sheet: who are

the real decision-makers, what do they care about, and, critically, how do they describe their world? Because CIOs, developers, and clinical informaticists don't just want different solutions—they want those solutions explained in their own dialect.

That's not a marketing flourish, but how you get taken seriously. If you're talking about "efficiency" when the client says "time to outcome," you sound like an outsider. If you're touting "data integration" when they keep calling it "system connectivity," you're broadcasting that you haven't done your homework.

In a committee-driven buying process, that's fatal. We know that decisions aren't made by one lone executive; they're made by concentric circles of stakeholders. Each of them is listening for something different. Technical leads want the specs. Line of business owners want ROI yesterday. Security officers want reassurance that they won't be blamed when things go wrong. If you aren't tailoring your messaging across that ecosystem, someone will veto you.

It takes work, and there are no shortcuts, at least not today. Mind you, AI certainly can help surface terminology, buying signals, and even cultural cues from LinkedIn. But there's no "translate to industry-speak" button that just fixes your campaigns across all of your channels, products, and market segments.

Even if there was, the reality is that, also within an industry, no two companies are alike. Cultures, processes, and priorities vary. That's why ABM is worth its weight in gold, because it makes your deliverables deeply personal to the account.

My advice: listen, research, test, and refine. Go to events. Read how stakeholders describe themselves. Mirror their words, not your own. As marketers, we always need to follow how they see the world, versus how we want to.

This is also why alignment with sales is so crucial. Sales hears in real-time which titles respond, which keywords resonate, and which ones fall flat. If that feedback doesn't loop back to marketing, you're just broadcasting more white noise.

At its best, ABM isn't a campaign. It's fluency. It's learning that in one industry, a VP isn't really a VP, and in another, every VP has a completely different mandate. It's sending the right message to the right person, in words they would use themselves.

So if you're wondering where to start with ABM, forget the tech stack for a second. Forget the dashboards. Start with language. Know theirs. Use theirs. Because if you can't talk like them, you'll never sell to them.

# Lo-Fi LinkedIn Videos are the New Shortcut to Authentic B2B

by Tiiso McGinty,  
The Imaginarium

**Lately, I've been thinking a lot about employee thought leadership videos. Why? Because it's probably the biggest missed opportunity for most B2B marketing teams today.**

Let me set the stakes: video employee thought leadership feels like one of the most high-impact, efficient tactics to pursue in B2B right now.

It's essentially a dual approach. Get someone on your team—an expert in a specific area, whether from product or marketing—and have them film themselves talking about a relevant subject. Then they post it from their own social, in this case, let's assume LinkedIn, because we're talking B2B. After that, you promote it as a thought leader ad to your target accounts.

Simple, right? Yet it's shockingly high-impact.

There are two reasons for this. One, platforms want native content; stuff that feels organic and doesn't feel like an ad. Algorithms prioritize that. Two, with AI generating tons of written content, video feels more authentic. It's harder to fake, so it feels more differentiated and real to the user.

What's great is that we still use AI behind the scenes to ideate talking points and structure, but it still comes off as much more genuine. So there's that layer of power; it's AI-powered but feels deeply human.

And in numbers? It blows performance benchmarks for regular LinkedIn videos clean out of the water. Think 10% engagement rate vs. 1%.

## Playing to the strengths of the format

What's interesting about this approach is that it just about works at any scale, and I've seen it perform particularly well when the videos become a series. With one of our clients, it started with videos from the CMO—then the CEO picked it up and started doing weekly videos as part of the same theme. That consistency paid dividends.

A big part of the value here is making the content feel like a real post, not an ad. But that also means that if your last video was three or four weeks ago, it doesn't feel fresh. Having someone in the habit of posting—with different angles and points of view—is crucial.

In the campaign I just mentioned, the CEO was highlighting customer stories, which is a great use of the format.

Another approach is pulling snippets from anchor content and encouraging people to check out the full version. That's how I've seen it work best: as a series tied to broader campaign goals.

What doesn't perform as well? I recall a video that was very produced—studio shoot, polished editing, guy in a suit—and simply didn't land. It certainly still

hit above LinkedIn benchmarks (again, these videos always do), but it didn't pop.

In contrast, videos shot on an iPhone, propped up on a stack of books, sometimes with imperfect audio, feel more authentic. As a result, they gain more traction. One of our clients' execs, for example, would just walk around, selfie camera on, and film herself talking. Those walking videos performed better than the ones where she was sitting in her office with books in the background.

See? More real.

## Part of your ABM toolset

The danger is falling for the misconception that this tactic is meant for brand refreshes or product releases, or other big "moments" for your business (an assumption I come across a lot in the industry). Sure, it works really well for those contexts, but it doesn't have to be tied to them.

For example, use employee videos to highlight customer stories—or with the recent LinkedIn updates, promote a video from people outside your company (with consent). For instance, a customer could film a case study clip, and your company can then promote that post.

Start thinking of this video format the same way you think about single-image or GIF ads. Whatever the campaign goal is (awareness, conversion, edu-

cation), you mold the creative and the messaging accordingly. It's not just for "big" moments.

In terms of the funnel stage, that means you should think of these videos as just another ad unit. If the call to action is conversion-based, it works lower in the funnel. If it's about awareness, it works top-of-funnel.

Across the board, it's great for trust-building. And in B2B, where the majority of your customers aren't in-market at any given time, trust is the long game. Even if your ask is short-term, you're building relationships for the future.

That being said, to make it count as an ABM tactic, you still want to adhere to the basics: Always use a data-driven, targeted approach. That's why LinkedIn is so well-suited for this tactic. Get hyper-specific with your targeting: company names, job functions, seniority levels.

You also still want to follow standard LinkedIn practices. And it's easy. The editing is minimal—captions, a logo overlay, maybe an outro, 4:5 ratio. As I said, you get to the point where more production can start to hurt performance. Just make sure you've got your distinctive brand assets in there somewhere, logo or colors, whatever it is. I bet you could pull off the rest with CapCut.

## Teamwork makes the dream work

Note that you should absolutely involve people across the organization and at different levels of seniority.

Executive thought leadership is valuable, for sure. But I've also run videos with a Director of Partnerships, which outperformed those of the CEO. In most cases, the outcome depends more on the speaker's topic and the audience than on reach or status. Think message-audience fit, not just title or visibility.

There's also the internal benefit. When you elevate internal voices, people feel valued. It boosts morale. Employee stories make people feel like recognized experts.

Plus, there's organic lift. Employees share the video with their networks, which often include potential customers. Added reach and visibility, just like that.

## How to get started

Just as with any ABM campaign, think of your approach in four buckets: strategy, creative & content, activation, and measurement.

1. **Strategy:** Figure out who you want to reach. Use CRM data, intent signals, or sales feedback. Define the accounts and personas. Make sure

the message matches their interests and pain points.

2. **Creative & Content:** Choose a team member who can speak authentically. Bullet out 3–5 talking points. Don't script it—keep it natural. These videos are meant to feel conversational. Aim for 45 seconds to 2 minutes.

Do give basic filming instructions—check the background, check the lighting, test the sound. The good news is, most people have filmed a selfie video before! They'll do just great.

3. **Activation:** Post the video from the speaker's LinkedIn, then promote it to your key accounts and personas. You can also test running multiple versions to see what resonates.

4. **Measurement:** Track performance with UTMs. Measure engagement rate—if you're getting 10%, that's outstanding. On LinkedIn, 1–1.5% is the norm, so anything above that is already great. Track downstream actions like site visits and conversions too.

Now, go, go, go!

Lights, camera, action. Get to filming!

And if you want a partner to help you bring your brand stories to life, reach out to The Imaginarium today.

# Marketing in the Age of the Jaded and the Gullible

by Patrick Reynolds,  
Solutions by Text

Let me remind everyone that we live in a strange, exhausting time. On one side, you have the gullible: those business leaders who feel it's their job to be the first to buy the latest and greatest shiny thing and then wax poetic about their tools and how they've "AI'd everything" via QR code. On the other, you have the jaded: those whose feet are still firmly rooted "above the line" and patiently wait for the imminent collapse of all things "application"—fads after all.

Between those two extremes lies a messy middle that feels increasingly narrow. Joke's on us, as that's the tightrope marketers are asked to walk: getting real messages through to buyers who are either allergic to belief or intoxicated by it.

## The crisis of credibility

Marketers didn't invent the credibility crisis, but we have certainly fed it. And when everyone around us is over-claiming (from politicians to pharmaceuticals), why would buyers assume your software pitch is any different?

At any given moment in B2B, half the market is already waiting for the next best thing, while the other half is still waiting for "real" offerings. Almost understandably, for many, the default assumption has become cynicism. Prospects read a white paper and think,

"Sure, but who paid for this?" They see a case study and assume the testimonial was bought. They watch a demo video and suspect it was stitched together with smoke and mirrors.

It's the starting line we inherit every time we write a campaign brief. Countless buyers come to us with their wariness meter set to eleven.

## 2D vs. 3D

The good news is that real-world experience still cuts through the noise. People soften when they encounter authenticity in three dimensions, rather than stereotypes. Think of a police officer who takes your stolen-car report and treats you like a human, not a case number, and a moment of empathy rewires your assumptions.

The same principle applies in B2B. If you tell a prospect, "We don't solve that problem. You'll need someone else," they don't write you off; they lean in because you just proved you're not another vendor blasting exaggerated promises. Look at that! You're a partner who knows your lane and stays in it.

With a little bit of effort, we can shift from cartoon cutouts to messy, human characters, businesses, and brands. To borrow from music: the Eagles are technically flawless but boring. Audiences prefer edges, quirks, even disso-

nance. Perfection signals inauthenticity, and inauthenticity does not sell.

Consumer brands figured this out years ago, embracing personality, weird-

ness, and imperfection. But in B2B, the stakes are higher. It's not about buying a hamburger; it's about buying the franchise. One wrong move risks millions, not \$7.99.

B2B is terrified of risk. Which means every word in a campaign is filtered through brand, compliance, legal, and committee consensus. By the time it emerges, the message has been sanded smooth. The result is sanitized, promises the world, and convinces no one, or isn't interesting enough to read in the first place.

## ABM as the escape hatch

ABM offers us a lifeline. It narrows the aperture, instead of shouting one-size-fits-all promises into the void. Enter candor, specificity, and relevance.

Instead of "We drive efficiency," try this on for size:

"I know your role, and I know your risks. Your real competitor isn't another vendor, it's inertia. The status quo feels safer than putting your neck out for a new partner. So here's what we can realistically deliver. Not miracles—but this specific outcome, proven by your peers. We can start small and slow and ramp over time as results come in."

That's a message someone can believe. It acknowledges doubt and meets it head-on with a certain amount of humility. And it's personal.

Now, words alone won't convince the jaded. You need proof. Small, tangible results replacing glossy decks. Shelve your seven-figure transformation pitch and start with the five-figure pilot that proves your value in weeks instead of years.

It's the business version of "put your hand in the wound." Don't just tell me it works, let me feel it. If it delivers, we'll expand. If it doesn't, no harm, no foul. Realism and risk reduction win deals and build trust for more. It's not being cynical, it's sane premise checking.

Which brings me back to imperfection. Modern buyers pick believable over flawless. That means you can drop the veneer of brand-sanitized messaging. It means that you can admit what you don't do, on top of what you do. It means you can use language that sounds like a person rather than a committee.

## Three ingredients for cutting through

If you're trying to reach an audience split between the jaded and the gullible, here's the recipe. Combined, these ingredients earn attention, even if they don't guarantee belief, and that's still half the battle:

- 1. Personalization.** Narrow your focus. Show that you understand their industry, their roles, their anxieties, and their goals. Speak their language and avoid your internal jargon.
- 2. Proof.** Replace sweeping claims with specific outcomes. Use pilots, case

studies, and analogies with peers. Give them something they can touch, instead of just something they can imagine.

- 3. Imperfection.** Embrace edges. Allow for flaws. Show that your message wasn't assembled by ten lawyers and a brand committee, and signal reality.

## The AI wildcard

Before I sign off, greetings to the elephant in the room. No conversation about credibility can ignore AI, just like no conversation about anything right now can ignore AI. Here's my take:

In the short term, AI makes marketers incredibly powerful. We can scale personalization, generate insights faster, and stretch creative output to previously impossible levels. The risk is, of course, that AI churns out more unbelievable claims and superficial whateverers and that buyers retreat further into cynicism; but, thankfully, you and I are better than that. No, we'll kill it.

And AI will make CMO superheroes of us all. That is, until the day HAL refuses to open the pod bay doors and we drift off into the night. But why dwell on that with me?

## Hop onto the tightrope

Will my tactics (now yours) magically heal the divide between the gullible and the jaded? Will they heal the world? Probably not. But marketers don't need to solve society's trust crisis; we just need to navigate it. And, as far as you are concerned, your job isn't to make everyone believe but to create enough credibility for the right people to engage.

Borrowing from David Ogilvy's wisdom a long time ago: stop treating audiences like idiots to be duped or cynics to be tricked. You're a buyer too. Remember what it's like when you're at the receiving end of endless advertising and why you became jaded—or started to believe everything.



# Brand Voice Matters: What B2B Can Steal from B2C

by Mimi Hammer,  
The Imaginarium



Let's start with a hard truth.

The way many B2B brands talk to their audience is the marketing equivalent of elevator music—in-offensive, indistinct, and easily ignored. Meanwhile, B2C brands are out here dropping mics, telling jokes, and building cult followings.

And it's not because they're selling sneakers instead of software. It's because they understand something B2B often forgets: your brand voice isn't a garnish, it's a growth lever.

So, how can B2B marketers start treating voice like the revenue-driving asset it is? Let's steal a few moves from the B2C playbook.

## 1. Own a Point of View

B2C brands win hearts by standing for something. Think Liquid Death's irreverence, Patagonia's activism, or Duolingo's unhinged TikTok owl. Whether it's funny, fierce, or weird, they commit.

In B2B, taking a stand often gets watered down to generic values like "innovation" or "customer-centricity." But buyers don't trust empty adjectives, they trust conviction.

**Tactical tip:** If your tagline or LinkedIn "About" page could work for 10 of your competitors, you need to audit your voice. Sharpen your POV until someone could disagree with it.

## 2. Message for Emotion

B2C marketers know the purchase journey starts with a feeling. B2B buyers may be shopping for their business, but they're still human. And while the stakes are different, the decision-making process is just as emotional.

Whether it's trust, relief, confidence, or control, your brand voice should help your buyers feel something. Because explanation alone doesn't drive action.

**Tactical tip:** Show, don't tell. Instead of listing features or explaining what your product does, create a felt experience with moments, scenarios, and phrasing that brings business outcomes to life.

## 3. Say It Like a Human

No one has ever been inspired by "leveraging strategic synergies to optimize ROI." B2C marketers know that simplicity and clarity always win. Because of this, they speak like people, not pitch decks.

This is even more critical in B2B, where buyers are busy, skeptical, and inundated with noise. A strong, plainspoken voice cuts through.

**Tactical tip:** Try the "pub test." If you wouldn't say it to a friend over drinks, rewrite it. Better yet, run your copy through a text-to-speech reader. If it sounds robotic or convoluted, simplify it.

## 4. Be Consistent

Great B2C brands build trust by sounding like themselves everywhere, from billboards to CTA buttons. That's what cements you in the buyers' minds and gives your brand staying power.

Too many B2B brands treat voice as a "when we have time" exercise, resulting in a landing page that's punchy, a webinar invite that's stiff, and a customer support chatbot that sounds like it's time-traveled from 2008.

**Tactical tip:** In addition to developing a style guide, build (and enforce) a voice system. Define your voice principles and pair them with concrete examples for different channels and formats.

## 5. Know How to Adapt

Yes, your brand voice should be consistent. But consistency isn't code for copy-paste or mindless repetition. Strong brands know how to adapt their voice to fit the moment, without losing their core identity.

In short, great voice systems don't just define how you sound. They show how that sound shows up in different channels and contexts, and make adaptability your secret weapon.

**Tactical tip:** When building your voice system, implement voice "guardrails," not rigid rules or prescriptive language. It's not about watering voice down. It's about making it work harder.

## 6. Plan Early

To be both consistent and adaptable, brand voice needs to be baked in early. In B2B, it's often sprinkled on at the end. That's backwards.

Brand voice should guide everything you do, from your product touchpoints and GTM strategy to your ad copy and sales enablement. It will shape your market perception and attract better-fit customers, but only if you give it a seat at the table.

**Tactical tip:** Include conversations about your brand voice in campaign and product kickoffs. Use these insights to inform not just what you are going to say, but how you will say it and why.

### Final Thoughts: Boring Doesn't Close Deals

B2B brands are too smart, and the stakes are too high, to let voice blend into the background. The good news? The bar is low. And the upside is huge. Steal shamelessly from B2C. Then adapt fearlessly for B2B.

Because when you sound like everyone else, buyers tune out. But when you sound like you, they lean in.

# Dear CMO, It's Time for You to Start Advertising on YouTube

by John Ruvolo,  
Nomology



**YouTube is the largest video platform in the world. Two billion users. More streaming time than Netflix. Thirty-five billion dollars in ad revenue and growing. If you want to be where the eyeballs are—and where they're still going—this is the place. So why don't marketers learn how to use it?**

## How YouTube changed the rulebook

The migration from linear to cable, from digital to social, and now to creator-driven video distribution is a massive shift. YouTube has been at the center of it from the beginning.

We started with shaky, home-style videos. Today, anyone has the tools to make broadcast-grade content, and creators have audiences that rival or surpass traditional media.

But YouTube hasn't lost the authenticity that made creator-driven content attractive in the first place. Its combination of professionalism and authenticity is what keeps people coming back. And wherever people are watching, advertisers need to be.

The old debate about whether YouTube counts as "premium" content feels outdated. Attention is what makes something premium, and YouTube has it in spades. Your buyers are there, but you're not reaching out to them.

YouTube also offers some uniquely tangible insights for marketers, especially where its skippable ads are concerned. Letting users opt out was a risky bet at the time, but it paid off, and not just for the platform. Advertisers know when someone chooses to watch their work. That engagement signal is powerful, and it's something most other platforms can't replicate.

I could go on, but it hardly matters because too many marketers still hesitate. Some say YouTube doesn't fit their playbook, especially on the B2B and ABM side, and prefer to stick with familiar channels that do. Others do use YouTube, but they rely too much on Google's off-the-shelf ad products, or they employ limited tactics. Both groups are missing out on growth, period.

## Two hurdles to overcome

Let's look at the latter situation first. Google has arguably done a great job of building intuitive, AI-driven tools into DV360 and Google Ads. Push the button, let the algorithm work, and you'll see some performance. However, it is very important to remember that those tools are always going to serve two masters: advertisers and Google's own monetization.

Specialists and independent partners aren't carrying Google's conflicts of interest. They can focus entirely on performance, building proprietary layers on top of YouTube's infrastructure to find the right audiences, optimize creative, and deliver outcomes. In short, no trade-offs.

But for B2B marketers, there's a broader hesitation to try YouTube in the first place. Our ABM playbooks are built around surgical targeting: customer files, granular segments, matching, and retargeting. On the open web, those tactics work. On YouTube, not always. It's a walled garden. Some of the tools you're used to just aren't available. That's the hard truth. The mistake is assuming that means YouTube isn't worth it.

Everyone you want to reach is already on YouTube. You just need to adapt. That means using lookalike modeling, experimenting with new creative formats, and being open to discovering audiences you didn't know were there. If you don't know how to do it, there are specialists out there who do.

Because here's the thing: your future customers won't always look like your current customers. YouTube is the best place to find out who else is responding to your message. You should treat it not just as a reach channel, but as a learning channel.

Maybe more importantly, just because YouTube might not match the ABM performance from your other channels, why should you leave all the untapped growth there on the table?

## The CTV comparison

A lot of attention is directed at CTV right now. There's opportunity there, sure. But there's also fragmentation, messy plumbing, and heavy reliance on probabilistic models tied to IP addresses. If privacy legislation clamps down on that, much of the signal CTV depends on could disappear.

Meanwhile, YouTube already owns a larger share of streaming time than anyone else. Thirteen percent of all streaming in North America goes to YouTube—more than Netflix—and that doesn't even include YouTube TV, their cable offering. And unlike Netflix, the majority of YouTube's audience is ad-supported. If you want reach, scale, and signal, YouTube is the leader, not an option.

## How to get started

If you're a marketer who hasn't touched YouTube yet, where should you begin? The answer is simple: start with a pilot, but don't go in half-heartedly. Budget equals data, and data equals insight. Tossing a couple of thousand dollars at YouTube won't tell you anything. You need enough spend—think \$50,000 a month—to generate data you can actually learn from.

That learning is the real prize. Different ad formats can all be tested at scale: six seconds, 15 seconds, 30 seconds, long-form. The insights you pull here can sharpen your approach across every other channel, from search to display to CTV.

And you don't have to do it alone. Specialists like Nomology are built to help you enter this new playing field.

## In conclusion

YouTube isn't the future of video. It's the now. The growth is already here. The audience is already here. The ad revenue is already in the tens of billions. It should be higher.

The marketers who learn to put YouTube to work now, those who adapt their playbooks, who treat it as both a reach channel and a research lab, are going to reap huge rewards. The ones who keep treating it as optional or a set-it-and-forget-it add-on will keep losing out.

And for agencies, YouTube is an untapped offering. Too many either push clients back into Google's automated systems or avoid the platform altogether. That leaves a gap—and gaps are opportunities. Here's your chance to seriously stand out.

If your north star is growth, YouTube belongs in your mix. Don't wait for the industry to catch up. The eyeballs are already there.

# The ABM Solutions Playbook: Making Platforms Work

by Molly Skinner,  
The Imaginarium

## To ABM platform or not to ABM platform? That is the question.

Let me start out by saying that I'm a big fan of the 6senses and Demandbases of the world. They can deliver astounding results, have tons of features, and have made ABM what it is today. That being said, while they are the perfect fit for a lot of businesses, they aren't the perfect fit for all businesses.

Are traditional ABM platforms for you? Or would an unbundled ABM system be more your style? Let's find out together—and hot tip: Don't just think of this as a yes/no checklist. Below are some powerful examples of how to make ABM platforms work for you, should you choose to get one.

## Time and Bandwidth

First off, implementing a full ABM platform is time-intensive, needing a lot of initial setup: tech integrations (CRM, MAP, Ad platforms, intent providers, analytics, etc.), foundational elements (intent keywords, taxonomy, reporting, alerts), team enablement, sales enablement, and more.

Onboarding can happen as quickly as a few months or can take upwards of a year, depending on how fast your org can move. Then, you need to integrate

within your daily workflow across all revenue-generating teams and enforce usage. Getting the alignment across teams can be a whole other ordeal.

**Do this:** Create a stakeholder map of who you feel will own each section of the platform. All revenue-generating teams are usually involved—Sales, Marketing, Customer Success, Operations, and more. Think through whether these members have the bandwidth to handle a months-long initial onboarding and routine quarterly maintenance afterwards.

For certain team members like admins, it can be dozens of additional hours per week for months. If you're strapped for time or resources, an unbundled ABM point solution may be an easier initial lift to start seeing immediate results.

## Knowledge Gaps

The big platforms have steep learning curves. Even if you are familiar with one, you won't necessarily understand the mechanics of another. There's an overwhelming amount of (super helpful) content, education, and trainings to take in, and it can be hard to know where to start. Ideally, you have someone to help sherpa you through applying the ABM platform against your business, or you'll be left guessing with

the input you can gather from your ABM platform CSM.

**Do this:** Seriously consider if you even have the time to complete the basic trainings and certifications on an ABM platform. It's generally a 10 – 15+ hour commitment, but those often get pushed to the side. How will you source ideas to solve complex problems like showing ROI on your tool 1 – 2 years in?

If you don't have a hefty number of hands-on-keyboard ABM platform experience, you'll pick up the ins and outs of an unbundled ABM solution much faster, meaning faster time-to-value. However, this could mean trade-offs like full orchestration or multiple platforms.

## Testing the Waters

How many times have you been asked to prove the value of something before trying it out? As a marketer, I have been more times than I can count. If you need to prove this whole 'ABM thing' is worth its weight, consider a smaller-scale pilot—whether using a full ABM platform or an unbundled solution.

If you go this route, you'll want something you can implement against just one team or one line of business (LOB) to gather your initial data before either



rolling out org-wide or implementing an entire ABM platform. Bonus: You can even take your learnings with you to the platform to make the most of your investment there.

**Do this:** Think through what LOB/product you feel would have the most success with ABM and the LOB/product you feel has the most traction to gain from ABM. Sketch out your sample ABM plan of attack. How could you pilot this out over one to two quarters, and how would you show if it's successful? Try that, and then you can even use those learnings to share in your ABM Platform RFPs/evaluations to pick their brains on how they can further amplify that success!

## Not the Right Type of Business

Your business may not be the best for an ABM approach, period. You may be going after small accounts, small buying committees, or your 1st party data may be too messy. Don't be oversold into a full ABM platform if it does not match up to what you are trying to achieve. It can be a really shiny toy to look at (and for good reason), but it won't move mountains for every business.

**Do this:** I love a good list. Write down every reason you feel your business is a great fit for ABM. Then the opposite—why do you feel it might not be a fit? Again, use this list in your evaluation with vendors to gather their thoughts. Ask to talk to customers with similar issues and see how they've managed success.

## Cost Prohibitive

The biggest hurdle last... these ABM platforms can be expensive. Are they worth it? Absolutely, if implemented and executed on correctly. Are they still often six-figures or more? Yep. Not all businesses have the funds to cover this. Even if they do, the funds are often hard to get approved, having to go through a rather large internal buying committee that requires an act of God to get everyone to check the box on. Going back to earlier points, once you justify an ABM approach and have solid data to back yourself up, it'll be much easier to get this approval.

**Do this:** Talk with each department to ensure they are aligned. If the CRO, CMO, and CEO aren't aligned, it will be hard to make the entire ABM movement a success. Map out how each department is going to evolve to this new mentality and what metric(s) each department will focus on that all feed into each other. For instance, maybe look at Marketing Influence vs MQL; then, see in your own data how this shift is leading to an increase in pipeline, regardless of lead volume!

## Tales of Failure and Success

It's so easy to make or break your ABM platform investment. When our editor asked for examples from my personal experience, these two directly came to mind:

**Success:** There are SO MANY features in these ABM platforms that it can be

hard to know what to use, not use, or even what to ask for. Like did you know that you can enable a Keyword Playground in some 6sense instances? I once worked with a customer who did this for keywords that they didn't want to influence their predictive model, yet wanted sellers to see certain intent keywords to personalize their outreach based on their prospect's personal interests... like Star Wars and Star Trek. Hear me out, it actually vibed with their tech brand!

**Failure:** I once worked with a customer who complained their accounts were overly noisy and all showed the same intent. Upon further review 98% of their 1.5M account TAM was showing intent for vague brands and keywords like 'Adobe'. Well, Adobe has 93 products, so they needed to narrow it down further... did they care about Adobe... Analytics? PDF Reader? Marketo? I have seen similar situations countless times, and it always holds that something so easy to fix can be an instant turnoff to users (i.e., sales) if not executed properly from the start.

## And Finally, for Those Who Are Already in It

If you've made a recent (or not-so-recent) investment in a full ABM platform—congrats! That's wildly exciting. The number one question we typically hear during that engagement is "how do I prove the ROI on this?" It's not an easy task, and it requires additional work to make sure your setup is tracking properly in CRM, that all teams are using it how it's intended, and that you've shifted the way you GTM fundamentally.

We can help with this! We want you to make the most of this hefty investment—this could honestly be a whole other article in itself.

If you are looking to integrate an ABM approach using the Unbundled ABM Growth System or if you need a partner to help you evaluate what platform or solution is right for you and don't know where to start, reach out!

# Bringing B2B Best Practices to Government Marketing

by Tara Pritchett,  
SAIC



**A year ago, I transitioned from the commercial B2B world to join Fortune 500 mission integrator SAIC on a journey to make ABM a reality in a brand-new marketing function. I started from scratch, and you can too.**

**If you're in that same place—ready to build an ABM program where none existed—this article is your guide.**

## Build a (flexible) foundation

I was fortunate to come into an organization whose leadership was supportive of ABM and willing to invest in the foundation building when it came to people, process, and tools. That support made it possible to build momentum quickly.

But leadership buy-in isn't enough to drive results—you need buy-in at the account level. Those are the people who are at the front lines with the customer. And that takes time. Do all you can to get smart on the business needs and adapt to where they are. Early

flexibility builds trust and helps you get quick wins.

Picking the right accounts is critical. Focus on those with growth opportunities and where marketing can influence outcomes. Look for accounts where there are opportunities to expand work both by deepening engagement with current customers you have regular access to and positioning your organization to new prospects.

Even then, the most important element is stakeholder partners who will engage openly, share information, and be willing to try new marketing tactics they've never used before. Without that openness and collaboration, even the most strategic account won't see ABM success.

Metrics matter—not just to prove ABM's value, but to keep you on track. Start with a small set of key metrics and build from there. Analysis paralysis is real, and when you're building some-

thing new, chasing every possible data point will only slow you down. Trust me, I'm a data lover—that kind of restraint is a skill worth practicing.

## Be ready to support the mindset shift

If your organization is new to having ABM (or even a formal marketing function, in my case!), you might not have basics like CRM tracking of customer journeys in place. You may have to demonstrate the value of having that data and how it helps the larger enterprise, not just marketing.

Teams may not be used to working with marketing strategically, and ABM can often be the first time account teams see marketing as a growth partner versus a “support shop.” In my case, past marketing activities leaned more transactional, so shifting to ongoing conversations around customer perceptions, goals, and challenges was a true culture shift.

Don't be surprised if you hit some resistance when introducing new tactics. Trust with an account team doesn't come immediately, but that doesn't mean waiting. Make it super easy to partner with you and show them that their goals are your goals.

In our case, during a special government celebration week, one of my ABM leads suggested sending customers a brief note recognizing their service. To us in marketing, it seemed like an obvious win, but the account team hesitated because they hadn't done anything like that before. But as heartfelt responses from the customers started to roll in, we won the team over just a bit more.

## Partner to help all the boats rise

Just as partnership is critical for success with our customers, partnership is also critical for success in ABM—so find your champions. Every organization will

have early advocates within the business, BD/sales, and program teams. Help them shine, and they'll also help you. Ask them to send a testimonial or co-present with them—it's far more powerful for teams to hear from their peers that ABM works than just from you.

ABM is customer-centric; in fact, at SAIC, our ABM capability is actually called customer-centric marketing, and that mindset benefits the whole enterprise. Look for ways to scale its impact. For example, we partnered with BD to expand our customer relationship metric from a 3-point to a 7-point scale—giving richer, more granular insight and enabling teams to more easily see their improvement. Those deeper insights are also key when modeling future account growth—especially as we layer in AI.

## Show, don't just tell

People need to see it to believe it, especially when ABM is new. I presented the

vision often, but it only started clicking once I showed real examples. And once teams experience it firsthand? Then you're really off to the races.

As a marketing function evolving beyond brand, we had to ‘market marketing’, helping teams understand how ABM differs from other areas of marketing and communications and how it can help them. It wasn't about stopping what we were doing before; it was about thinking differently and augmenting our approach.

This has been especially important as travel budgets have tightened and tradeshow attendance dropped—something that has been happening not just in government, but across industries. You can't put all your eggs in one basket (or channel). When you do attend a tradeshow, think about how to extend its impact—can you bring insights back to customers who couldn't attend, translating what you heard into something meaningful for them?

These are perfect instances for ABM to shine, showing up in a highly personalized way that speaks directly to customer challenges.

## The journey is key to getting you to the destination

My advice for anyone building ABM in an organization, regardless of industry, is to meet the business where they are. Even if you know the destination, you have to bring others along on the journey.

And celebrate the small wins, because they add up to big progress. Our team has “glimmers” as a standing item on our weekly team agenda. It keeps morale high through the inevitable highs and lows of building something new, reminding everyone how far we've come and motivating us to keep going. After all, ABM is a state of mind, and there are always new opportunities ahead.

# The Painted Face in the Crowd: A Story of Belonging in B2B

by Scott Stedman,  
The Imaginarium

**Pull up a chintz armchair, pour something restorative, and lend an ear to a tale of two ICPs. Firstly, we have the polished “ideal customer profile,” an acronym wearing sensible shoes and a button-down. The second is the Insane Clown Posse, maestros of merriment whose followers, the Juggalos, have built a community so devoted that cults could learn from it.**

**In a moment of ecstatic clarity, I realized that between these two ICPs lies a deep wisdom for the B2B marketer. Ready for it? Then take my hand and let us wander into the fabled “Gathering of the Juggalos.”**

Scene: We’re hunched over our computers as we meticulously deconstruct our go-to-market strategy when a voice pipes up, “Wait, who is our ICP?” A hush descends, broken only by the soft whirr of the AC, or maybe the white noise of your Zoom meeting room.

Familiar question. Still a difficult answer.

So I say, “Perhaps begin by noticing what that other ICP, the Insane Clown Posse, notice.” Because the core proposition from one ICP to another is more similar than you think: Community first. Everything else follows.

## What the Insane Clown Posse gets right

Instead of just accumulating a community of listeners over the last 30 years, the Insane Clown Posse cultivated comrades. Face paint as luminous as a coral reef, symbols that could be identified on the side of a truck on some midwestern highway, rituals so consis-

tent you could set your watch by them. In B2B terms, those are the unignorable markers of identity, Jenni Romaniuk’s distinctive assets, and the reason an in-market buyer says, “Ah! These are my people,” and pulls up a chair to listen.

If your ICP can’t be recognized from across the conference floor (by problem language, shared stories, or visible badges), then you have a tribe in theory only. Community building is a process of creating unique connections that can be shared, but that are unimaginable without you.

“Very good,” you say, “but how would I bottle such lightning without drenching the office?” And good for you! That’s a fun metaphor.

## Vocabulary

You need to codify belonging. Juggalos call each other “family.” That single word collapses the marketing funnel. Awareness? Redundant. Family knows where to find each other.

So, what single, resonant phrase encapsulates the fate you and your customers share? Not a tagline that has been combed through until it lies flat and lifeless, but a vow—short enough for a lanyard, strong enough for a lifetime. When you identify that phrase, you have not just a profile but a pledge, and prospects stop feeling prospected and start feeling expected.

## Choreography

Community is also choreography, and the Insane Clown Posse knows this.

Call-and-response. Shared beverages launched with gusto. Seasonal gatherings that function as both homecoming and onboarding.

Translate this to B2B: recurring ceremonies where customers are co-authors, not seat-fillers. Quarterly business reviews that are less dentist, more fête. Slack channels where newcomers are greeted not by the yawning void but by elders bearing links, lore, and well-placed gifs. When you diagram your ICP, include the dance steps. Where do they meet? How do they greet? Which rites make rookies feel fluent in a fortnight?

## Common enemies

Next, while a community is unified in what it stands for, it’s also well aware of what it stands against. Juggalos’ embrace of their own is only matched by their exclusion of those who won’t don the face paint or spray the ol’ Faygo soda.

Great community building excludes as artfully as it includes. Many marketers fear sharp edges; Juggalos use edges for definition. In B2B, edges are your qualifying criteria: the pains you emphatically solve, the stages of maturity you serve, the industries where your similes map cleanly. Broadcast those edges without apology. A good ICP says, “If you are here, this is your feast; if not, we’ll help you find the right restaurant.” Clarity is kindness.

## Mythos

Then there’s mythos; the narrative spine. The Insane Clown Posse built a world

with recurring characters and themes, a serial story rewarding attention with belonging. Your ICP deserves the same.

Map your buyer’s journey as a saga of installments: the early episode (chaos and duct tape), the mid-season twist (growth outpaces governance), the finale (scale without entropy). Give names to the beasts they battle and the rewards you provide. A myth memorable enough to retell in an elevator is the sort people actually retell in an elevator.

## Evidence

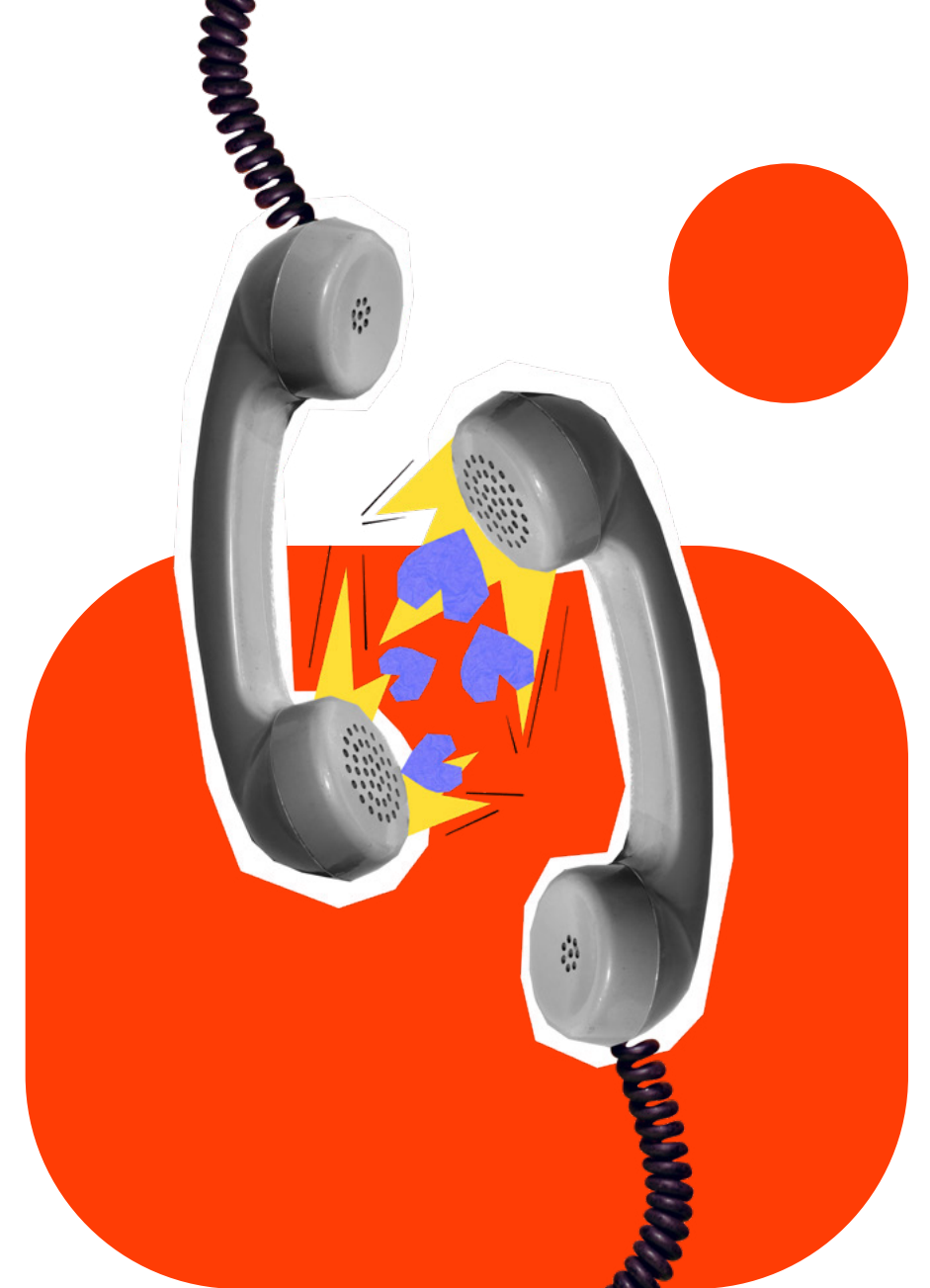
Hush. I hear the analytics inclined among you murmur, well, “What of metrics? One can’t measure success with vibes.”

This is true! The Juggalo miracle is retention and advocacy, two numbers to make any finance chief smile. In your ICP work, instrument the community motions. When the community is healthy, marketing spend shifts from acquisition to retention (less peacock, more gardener), and your CAC takes a graceful bow.

## Product

Ah, but what of product? The Insane Clown Posse’s artifacts—think albums, shows, gatherings—are not merely consumed; they are commemorated. Each becomes a memento, a chapter marker.

Craft B2B equivalents: launch rituals that feel like holidays, features christened by the community, release notes that read like postcards from an expedition you all took together. Your ICP should be able to place themselves in



time by your milestones, as one would remember summers by the seaside.

## Hospitality

Finally, hospitality. At Juggalo gatherings, the first-timer is shepherded with care. In your world, the warmest energy should go to the newest hands.

Pair rookies with seasoned guides. Encourage face-paint moments—figuratively, unless your compliance team is unusually accommodating—where members adopt visible signals of belonging. Send welcome boxes that teach the secret handshake. Publish a “field manual” written by customers, for customers, in the language they speak when no marketer is listening.

## Now bring it all together

We return to our double I.C.P. If you take away anything from me, let it be this: the ideal customer profile is real, it’s alive, it’s not spending its days stuck on a presentation slide, and it’s ready to be welcomed at the door. The Insane Clown Posse proves that when you build a hearth, the right people bring the wood, the stories, and the friends. Granted, it’s one of the more colorful comparisons out there, but the point stands, and it got you reading.

Your job, fellow B2B marketer, is to trade the chill of segmentation for the warmth of communion. To specify boldly, ritualize kindly, measure wisely, and host lavishly.

So there you have it...

My, aren't we lucky to be surrounded by such smarts? Though this is the end of the magazine, you can find more cutting-edge B2B wisdom on [unbundledabm.com](http://unbundledabm.com). If you'd like to become a contributor, simply email [hazel.muellers@imaginarium.agency](mailto:hazel.muellers@imaginarium.agency), and we'll get back to you ASAP.

Finally, and most importantly, a big thank you to all who made this publication possible:

#### **Contributing columnists**

Gayle Meyers  
Ross Whittaker, InterSystems  
Patrick Reynolds, Solutions by Text  
John Ruvolo, Nomology  
Tara Pritchett, SAIC

#### **The Imaginarium**

Scott Stedman, CEO  
Tiiso McGinty  
Hazel Muellers  
Molly Skinner  
Mimi Hammer  
Ruxanda Vihrest  
Kael Pryble  
Alexandra Watson

# The Imaginarium