



**TOP
CONSIDERATIONS
FOR HIGHLY
EFFECTIVE B2B
GLOBAL MARKETING**

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B2B marketing is complex. Creating marketing strategies to reach audience groups in multiple international markets is even more challenging. There simply isn't one "best practice" or a special marketing guide to approach every global marketing problem situation.

Obviously, we are not one big, homogenous group of humans on this planet who makes buying decisions in exactly the same way. As marketers, we know there is no such thing as a singular audience. But where do we begin in our journey to effectively develop a marketing strategy that resonates with unique audience groups in possibly 100 (or more) countries?

There are many considerations to factor when trying to reach a global audience. From economic to sociocultural, governmental and infrastructural, having a strong understanding of the full landscape is critical to developing a successful marketing plan. Beyond the external factors which can impact the current situation or opportunity, five subject areas which a well-planned B2B global marketing program can encompass may include: messaging, creative, website, media channels and marketing team structure.

BALANCING GLOBAL MESSAGING CONSISTENCY AND LOCAL RELEVANCE

As more businesses expand globally to find growth opportunities, it becomes exceedingly challenging to succeed — especially given the pace of commerce and hard-to-predict changes which can impact international business. TriComB2B, along with its client experts, brings decades of global B2B focus.

As with most marketing challenges, there usually isn't a single "best practice" to simply adopt and use. Instead, we've combined the advice of savvy global experts to provide you with a range of opinions and advice. We hope their insights will bring you inspiration and new perspectives on how to improve your global marketing efforts.

Does Your Message Travel Well?

As a steward for a global brand, the average B2B marketer spends significant time and effort defining market positioning and messaging guidelines at all levels of the business: corporate, platform, product portfolio and more. And for good reason. Ensuring a unique, defensible market position is the foundational requirement upon which an engaging, high-performing global communications platform is built. Teams are dedicated to defining and managing messaging across the business, and then ensuring the brand message is consistently deployed.

But just as a successful global businessperson must adapt as they cross into different markets — exchanging currencies and adapting languages — your messaging needs to be adaptable to be effective.



Facts, Emotion and Storytelling: What Works?

Ample research shows B2B businesspeople in many parts of the world [make decisions based on emotion](#). As a result, marketers work hard to inject personal value into their messaging to connect with decision-makers at a higher level. But think twice before applying this principle universally.

Shea Vincent, senior marketing director for [BioLife Solutions](#), offered this perspective. “Many of the stereotypes about marketing to various geographies have held true. The U.S. is a market driven on emotion. Buyers want to personally connect with a brand. Many European and Asian countries are more fact-based and technically product-driven, at least initially. But all customers want to feel confident and assured they are making the right decisions. Tailoring a company value proposition to have an emotive connection to customer assurance, user success and brand confidence has been very helpful.”

Deepak Sivanandan, head of global marketing for [Flowserve](#), noted specific tendencies from customers in the Asia-Pacific region. “The evaluation of our offering is much more detailed in APAC. The sourcing teams have a lot of influence, and most of them come from technical backgrounds. The depth of technical detail we must provide to accommodate their methodical evaluations is more extensive than we see in Western cultures.”

Esther Oon-Bybjerg, group director, corporate communications for GAC Group, concurs. “In many Western markets, the trend for communicating is now ‘less is more’. But you cannot apply that philosophy universally. In Asia, it’s quite the opposite. We need to adapt to these differences while being true to the brand.”

And while the differences between emotive and fact-based approaches are important to understand, there are also other nuances marketers may not be aware of when it comes to execution. For example, Monica Arroyave, senior director of consumer solutions at [Gilbarco](#)

[Veeder-Root](#), shared that North American marketers will need to flip their story-telling approach. “Very few marketers realize that in Spanish-speaking cultures, you build the story gradually, starting with the details and culminating on your most important message. In English-speaking cultures, readers are more inclined to want the key message or takeaway first, then understand the details from there. Cultures express ideas differently. You must be careful to understand the nuances to be effective.”

Product Availability, Audience and Business Dynamics — Get These Right

Sometimes message relevancy comes down to an evaluation of a more basic set of criteria. It could be as simple as making sure information is accurate and appropriate for your audience. Is the product you’re featuring available in the target market? Is your target persona the most relevant in that region? And what about industry regulations?

Sivanandan pointed out: “Considerations such as product availability or differences in model types or configurations must be accounted for. Providing generic information globally when in fact your offering varies regionally puts the onus on the customer to figure things out. Your marketing resources should reflect these differences, and your customer-facing teams must be equipped accordingly.”

Two other basic marketing fundamentals are also critical: audience and competition. While it can be risky to generalize about which audiences are most influential in targeted markets, there are some notable tendencies.

“We see big differences in the ‘care abouts’ by region. For example, in certain regions, we find that capital investment decisions are mostly driven by procurement. It is a price-dominated discussion,” noted Vijith Basheer, global marketing leader for valves, actuators and positioners

for Flowserve. “In other regions, we see heavier influence from in-house and consulting engineers. As marketers, we must be able to support our sales channels effectively and be aware of how the customer decision journeys vary by audience influence.”

Thomas Heide Jorgenson, head of marketing communication at [Danfoss](#), pays careful attention to audience nuances. “The go-to-market setup can vary significantly from geo to geo. In some markets, we sell directly to end customers, whereas in others our go-to-market might be through OEMs or third-party representatives. As such, we’re careful to tailor and optimize messages based on these differences.”

Regional adaptations can be even more complex, but many companies are willing to put in the efforts to ensure maximum relevance. Mike Bell, vice president and chief creative officer at TriComB2B, shares his experience with a client who broke down messaging approaches not just by role and title, but by several other factors.

“In the Americas, our client’s technology was ideal for facilities larger than one million square feet. In the EU, their target facility was only 10 to 20 percent that size. Furthermore, factors such as pace of work, workforce stress and working conditions varied by geography, causing us to make even more granular messaging adaptations based on regional factors.”

External factors must also be accounted for to ensure maximum relevance. A one-size-fits-all approach to technical designations, certifications and approvals can mean a straight line to irrelevance with savvy buyers. One area that technical and industrial B2B companies must deal with is the regulatory environment. Complying with energy efficiency, environmental accessibility and other standards on a region-to-region, country-to-country basis is very complex and can affect which products are relevant.

Jorgenson says these types of factors are prevalent at Danfoss. “In our business, local and national regulatory requirements can be quite varied. We are diligent about ensuring communications are adapted and delivered accordingly to ensure relevancy.”

Arroyave pointed out: “For one product we developed, ergonomic features that helped customers comply with disability requirements were very important. In other countries, these attributes were non-factors. In another case, our ability to help customers achieve environmental compliance in the U.S. was paramount, whereas in other countries this consideration was still a moving target. We have to be very careful to adapt materials accordingly and be ready to make changes as new standards emerge.”

Tips for Ensuring Global Relevance

So what does it take to ensure your marketing messages are relevant globally? Time, money and resources, of course. And the foresight to get the essential *human* resources involved from the outset. Adam Sidders, marketing communications director for [Cummins](#), offered this advice.

“Be inclusive in terms of who you get involved — not just regionally but also from the point of view of true diversity. If your campaigns and programs express a homogenous, single idea of your view of the world, you’re missing an opportunity.”

Sidders went on to share that he is lucky to work at a company that emphasizes the value of incorporating diverse, inclusive points of view. So expressing diversity in marketing programs at Cummins is not only natural and the right thing to do, but also an expectation everyone on his team is challenged to meet.



Another practice that will help is moving from being reactive to proactive as it relates to obtaining feedback. Too often, marketing teams are insulated from customer interactions, which can lead to ineffectual approaches conceived in a vacuum. Vincent commented, “Your marketing team needs to be active globally. Connect with global customers through your sales team and learn what works for them and what attracts them to brands. Build relationships with distributor leaders to find out what will help them. These customer-facing resources are full of useful insights that will make your marketing better.”

It’s Still B2B Marketing

Ultimately, our client experts point to consistent advice for messaging your business across borders:

- » Adjust for differences in audience influence and information style preferences.
- » Be diligent about product availability by region.
- » Adapt for region-specific competitive and external factors.
- » Be active in getting global stakeholders involved in your messaging.

Underpinning these recommendations are well-understood principles any B2B marketer can relate to. Basheer stated it best: “The basics of B2B marketing always hold true, regardless of where you are. What customer type are you targeting, who are the audiences, what matters to them, and on what platforms are they seeking information? It’s a matter of making the effort and investments to apply this discipline on a local level.”

CREATIVE THAT CAN GO THE DISTANCE

We talked with our clients and other savvy global marketing experts to gather a range of opinions and advice about the challenge of producing globally relevant creative. You've heard it before: Consistency is key when it comes to creating a strong brand.

Consistently marketed brands build relationships, trust and credibility across markets. Expressing your brand in relevant and creative ways — whether through words, imagery or color — can be a challenge as you extend your brand geographically. According to our panel of global B2B experts, there isn't a playbook for how best to do this, and what works for one company might differ for another based on a variety of factors.

The Brand Is the Brand

Many B2B marketers favor approaches which keep the need for local adaptations and other changes to a minimum, especially when it comes to their branding.

"When it comes to the brand, we focus on global consistency over local adaption. We only adjust how we communicate about our brand if it's really necessary or legally required. Otherwise, we stay true to the global brand," said Klaus Sejr Madsen, international marketing director, [Brüel & Kjær, HBK](#).

"With regards to brand treatment globally, the brand is the brand," stated Sidders. "We don't allow a lot of flexibility, except in a few cases where local or regional influences are very significant."

Madsen's and Sidders' declarations reflect most opinions related to high-level expressions of corporate brands. But that doesn't mean global companies want to be inflexible as they consider how to be relevant and compelling in different geographic regions. They just go about it in different ways.



Keeping Things Simple

When the overall aims are global consistency and budgetary conservation, B2B marketers find simple ways to ensure brand rigor doesn't create local relevancy hurdles.

Oon-Bybjerg stated, "Our overall aim is to ensure the corporate brand is consistent. We understand it's a global business world, but that doesn't mean we need to make radical changes that create complexity and cost. For example, we try to avoid extensive use of human imagery. We also standardized a simple set of business languages for translations that support the majority of our business."

"Budgets don't always allow for extensive localization," said Vincent. "Some of the most effective marketing assets we create are simple 2D animations and videos that require very little translations and no voice-over. These media are versatile and international and give customers something they can connect to without concern for language barriers. Keeping your visuals simple and universal minimizes the number of adaptations you need to make."

Saving Room for Adaptability

"Local adaptations leave room for markets to address specific demands, regulations, trends and more, so your brand can align with target audience and local stakeholders' challenges and value drivers," said Ralph Krøyer, managing partner of Cross-Border Communications. "Through co-creation across markets, you may discover rising trends and drivers which you could explore in other key markets."

For some, being globally relevant and effective means being highly adaptable. Consider the point of view of Basheer. "A rigid set of brand standards isn't always the answer. Allowances for color, image and other adaptations that may be more appropriate for your regional strategy are

really a must." He noted that red is the predominant feature of the Flowserve brand, but that the industrial equipment manufacturer adjusts its color palette for certain global initiatives. In one case, they shifted from their familiar red to more neutral tones to communicate a different feel to customers in markets where the green economy and decarbonizing are prominent concerns.

Color seems to be the one area where marketing leaders offer the most flexibility to their regional marketing teams.

"We try very hard to build into the brand some flexibility to meet local requirements. We need to leave some freedom that allows a good amount of creativity. This motivates our team and builds marketing momentum," said Jessica Svahn, global brand manager at [AAK](#). "One area that is key is that we included more colors in our design guide to meet different global requirements. The same goes for the imagery where we need to reflect the cultures of our served markets."

But before you start expanding your brand guidelines to allow more freedom, be sure to build in safeguards against tricky cultural missteps.



Don't Assume Anything

Bell has spent decades carefully adapting creative to global markets. And he's seen a lot of near-misses. He shared five of them with us, under the collective advice of "Don't assume anything".

1. Eastern cultures have nearly the opposite interpretations of the colors black and white. In many cultures, white is worn at funerals and black at weddings, for instance.
2. Different colors have political implications and associations in many regions.
3. In some Asia-Pacific countries, campy and outrageous creative — ideas we might consider weird in Western cultures — may be effective.
4. Doing a sports-related campaign? Watch out for futbol (i.e., soccer) uniforms that feature rival colors.
5. Logos and icons that incorporate symbols as simple as a plus sign may be poorly received in certain regions for religious reasons.

Bell's advice? No matter how much experience you have, make sure you conduct thorough local reviews before implementing a costly execution and launch.

The Power of Co-creation

While after-the-fact reviews can help to mitigate embarrassing or costly errors, many of our experts noted that getting people involved up-front is the most powerful way to ensure your creative hits the mark.

Svahn offered this advice: "Build more co-creation into your branding and campaigns to ensure buy-in from all parts of the organization. Not only does this assure a globally applicable approach, the buy-in also leads to consistent execution globally as you move forward."

"By proactively collaborating with colleagues and customers in other regions on the front end of brand conceptualization and development, companies can ensure that campaigns make sense globally from the outset," said Sidders. "That's where transcuration comes in: the concept and practice of creating ideas that are adaptive across languages, while still maintaining the intended context, style and tone." He noted that it is not uncommon for Cummins to involve dozens of go-to-market stakeholders during the early planning stages for launches and campaigns.

And while this final tip might sound self-serving, the right agency partner can also make a difference. "It is helpful to partner with a creative agency that has a global team," said Vincent. "They know what is trending and popular in their region and can give guidance on what you should be doing."

Global Creative Isn't Just a Marketing Opportunity

For many, the idea of developing globally relevant creative goes beyond simply doing an effective job for business reasons. Being thoughtful about inclusivity and diversity is a principle that is more prevalent today than at any other time in B2B. And that's a good thing. Perhaps Sidders said it best:

"If your campaigns and programs express a homogenous, single idea of your view of the world, you're missing an opportunity. Not to mention, incorporating diversity into your work is the right thing to do as a human. This is a huge part of our company values, so it naturally bleeds into our work. I hope these beliefs are prevalent throughout more and more companies like ours."

GETTING IT RIGHT ONLINE

A surprising number of industrial B2Bers still hang their hats on an English-language, one-size-fits-all website as their hub for global marketing. But let's face it: you're not global unless you're meeting a minimum threshold of localization with your online presence. Our B2B experts have some ideas on what that means.

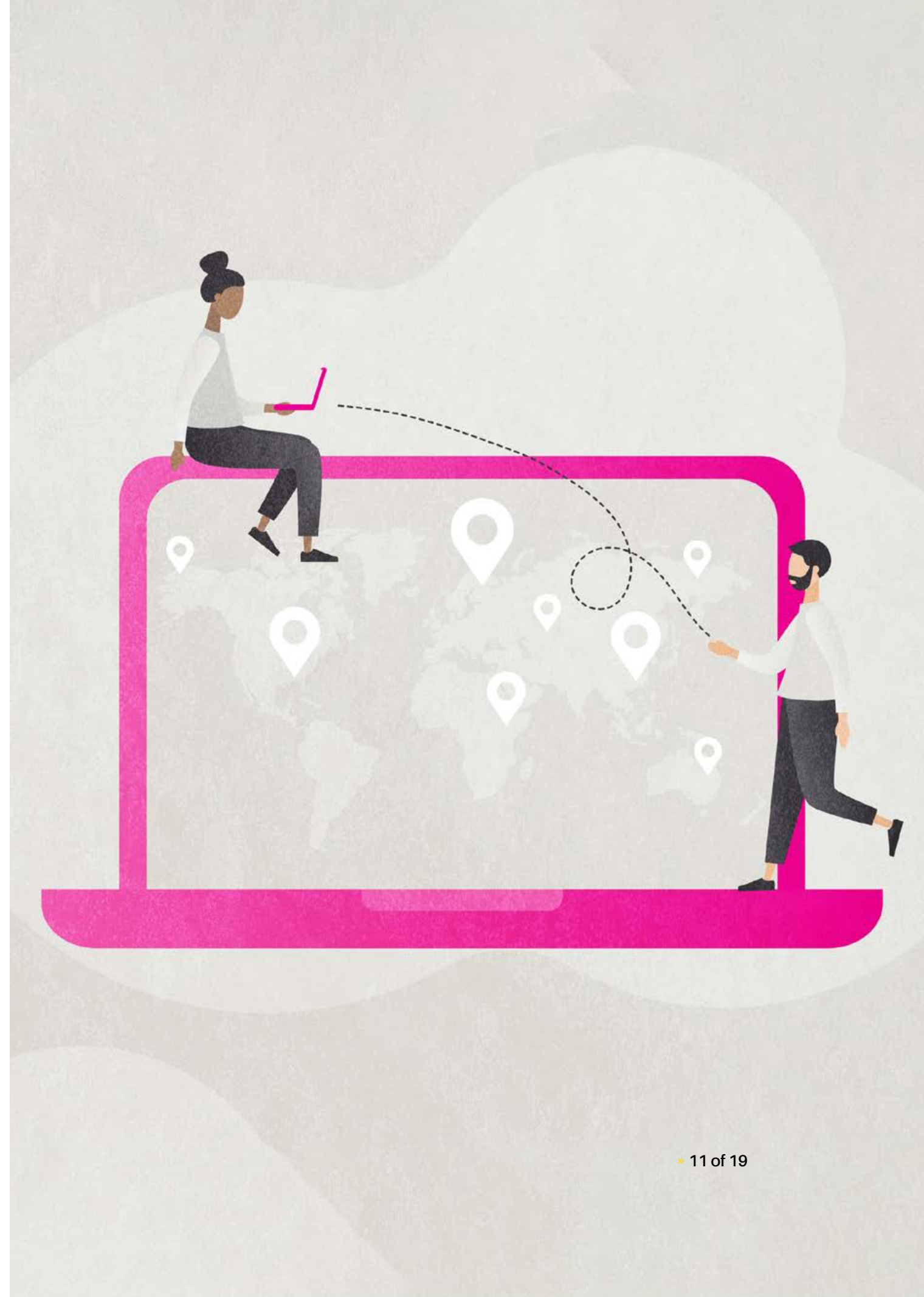
The Minimum Standards

"The minimum website experience is translated content. Period. You can't risk the appearance of irrelevance or worse, arrogance, by sending global visitors to an English-only website," said Arroyave, an accomplished multi-lingual global marketer, who has plenty of international experience. She added, "And if your products are designed or offered specifically by region, your website must reflect that. Customers must see what is applicable to them and their environment."

Sejr Madsen agrees. "We must market globally, and we recognize language adaptations are the basic point of entry. We have one website translated into the 10 key languages we deem as essential to our business. We also ensure downloadable documents are offered in a country-specific manner."

However, the 'minimum' extends beyond simply swapping out English copy for another language. Basheer clarified: "Don't forget about website performance. Your websites need to load quickly and deliver an optimal experience wherever they are being accessed."

For example, the number of letters in a given word varies from language to language. [A word in Portuguese may have twice as many letters as the same word in English, for instance.](#) Consequently, pixel widths and design complications can arise. Many content management systems (CMS) and web developers alike fail to take this into account. Headlines run into extra lines or become misaligned, images are shifted into odd places, unintended page breaks occur, etc. These can end up expressing bias and favoritism to your English-speaking visitors, even if unintentionally.



Respect each of your pages as you would each of your customers. You need to translate your templates and designs in addition to translating your copy. This extra attention paid to detail will go a long way.

Customizing the Experience

Once your minimum threshold for a localized web presence is met, you can consider more sophisticated experiences for global audiences.

Jorgenson employs a more decentralized approach. He noted that for geographic markets where the business opportunities are significant, Danfoss offers websites with a full range of country-specific content. Other variations include versions of their website for smaller-opportunity geos where the content is less extensive and customized, but still translated. They deploy even more customized versions in certain geos where a particular customer type is prominent.

Sidders offers this description of the ideal global website experience: “Beyond ensuring customers see the right products for their region, we should also strive toward a more personal experience. That means letting the visitor choose their region and then serving up the language, imagery and support information that is specific to their area.”

Make It Easy for Customers to Find You

The search engine marketing (SEM) environment takes time to master just in one country, let alone on a global scale. But that hasn't deterred globally ambitious brands from forging ahead to attract and convert website visitors.

Madsen said that for Brüel & Kjær, HBK, search engine optimization (SEO) plays a very important role in their global marketing efforts. “Keywords are defined early as part of every campaign planning process. The fact that we do this on a global basis adds a level of complexity, but we are intent on finding the balance between great content that is also localized and search optimized.”

Jorgenson noted Danfoss is similarly committed to SEO globally. “We have a great focus on SEO but need to balance corporate and local needs to get the best performance. We also know SEO isn't enough. We balance these organic efforts with our paid programs while also making sure we have the right tools in place to capture the opportunities we create.”

Make sure to let Google know where your translated pages are and how they relate to their English counterparts by adding an 'hreflang' tag to your HTML or sitemaps. This simply tells Google that a group of pages are all effectively the same but presented in different languages. Not only does this help to avoid technical issues like duplicative content penalization, but it also allows Google to point users to the best pages possible on your site, depending on the language and theme of the user's query.

Similar to the 'hreflang' tag, LinkedIn offers a convenient [affiliate page](#) system in which multiple LinkedIn company pages, each with a specific regional or linguistic focus, can be connected to a primary brand identity. Often, companies try to juggle posts in multiple languages on the same account, or face conflict between regions posting similar messages in competing times of the day. Not only does this confuse audiences, but it doesn't segment them well. Affiliate pages offer a simple way to address this by allowing regional autonomy, without losing track of the brand's bigger-picture goals. Just make sure your different regional marketing teams are clear about how to represent your brand and adhere to some common posting cadences, messaging practices, etc.

Make the Effort — and New Friends

While the idea of creating multi-language, customized websites is daunting for many B2B marketers, our experts agree there are no excuses for having anything less than language-friendly websites for global visitors. So are there any helpful tips to making this easier (and affordable) to implement and maintain for your business? We asked an agency expert to weigh in.

“You don’t have to do it all at once,” noted Andrew Humphrey, director of media strategy at TriComB2B. “If you’re not on an urgent timeline, try testing a paid digital promotion for a specific service or product in a new international region, but only serve your ads to English speakers. If a topic really resonates, you can take the next step and translate your pages, assets and ad copy that support that product or service in the region’s primary language preferences. Keep escalating your efforts as you learn what’s working and what isn’t. For a lot of businesses that are just trying to dip their toes into international outreach for the first time, this is a pretty fail-safe approach.”



CONTENT FOR THE CONTINENTS

Global content marketers often face the balancing act of producing relevant, helpful content and reaching the appropriate global audience.

While our experts haven't uncovered a novel new media channel or way to communicate globally, they do offer interesting insights about what it takes to be locally relevant with customers.

Content Flexibility and Relevance

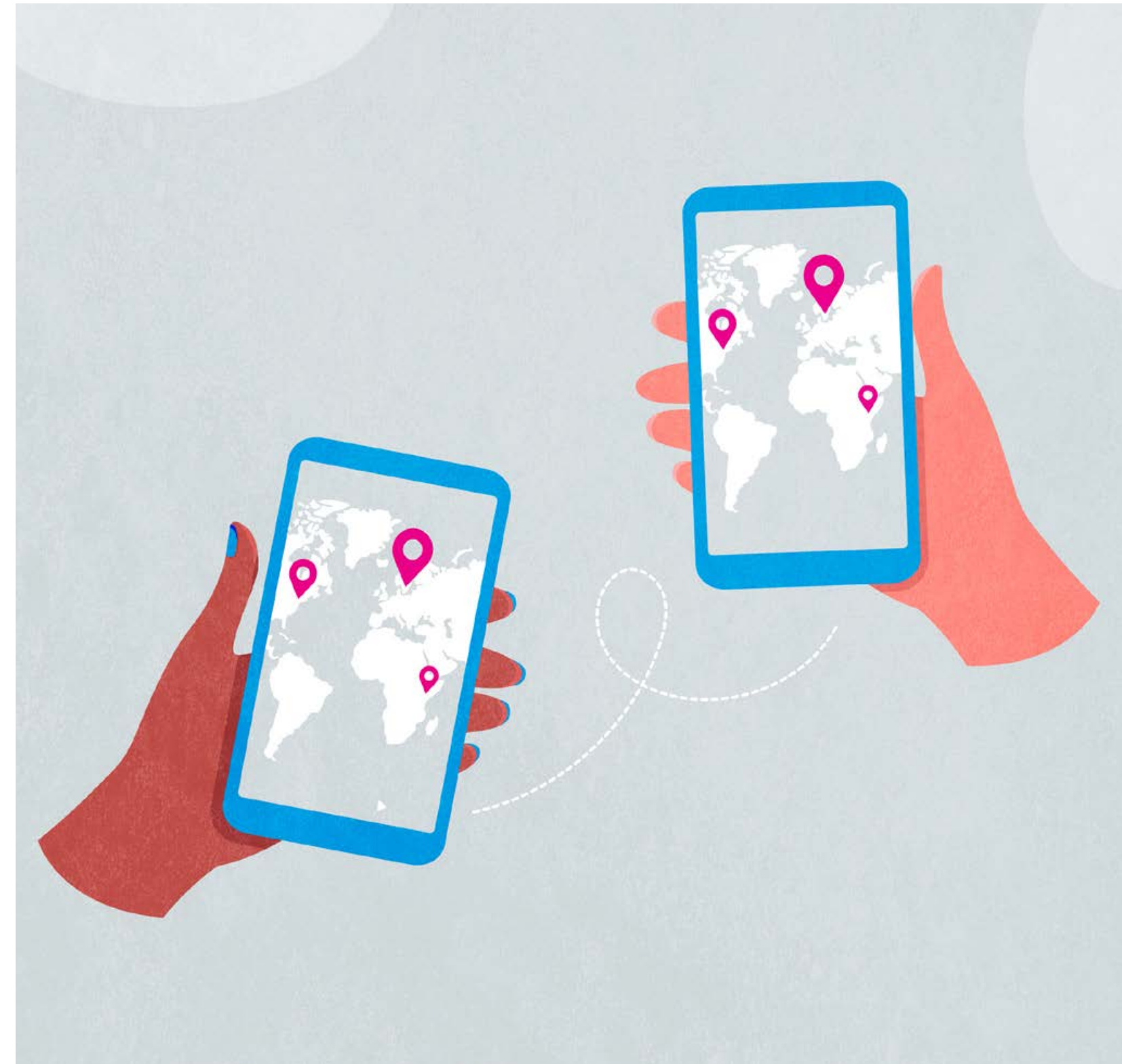
B2B marketers know it's important to put global audiences at ease when consuming marketing messages. Of course, that means translating content whenever feasible. But companies take different approaches to this, mostly influenced by perceived complexity and overall cost.

Jorgenson noted that most of their master materials are created using English, then translated to local languages. Two countries, China and Russia, are given much more flexibility in how content is adapted, with allowances for messaging changes where cultural and audience differences may dictate a shift.

Oon-Bybjerg stated that despite a strong, centralized approach to messaging and campaign ideas, GAC provides a lot of local freedom. "It's either global or it's local. And when it's local, we need to make sure what we're doing is ideal for the audience. There are no 'regional' compromises for this. Proximity does not mean similarity."

Localization goes beyond translations. Vincent said a key local consideration is customer relevance. "We encourage creating case studies, customer references and testimonials that are geographically relevant and trusted locally. The more local and relevant, the more belief you can instill that your brand and offerings are taken seriously in the target geo."

The B2B marketing field has converged on another area of agreement: social media.



It's All LinkedIn (Oh, and WeChat)

When it comes to content dissemination across social channels, our B2B clients are unanimous in their preference (if almost exclusive use) of [LinkedIn](#).

Marketing leaders from [Cummins](#), [AAK](#), [Flowserve](#), [Danfoss](#) and others cited LinkedIn as their main focus for social media strategy. But because of cultural differences and governmental policies, LinkedIn is a notable exception for Chinese markets. In late 2021, LinkedIn removed the platform from China entirely. So, what's a marketer to do about establishing a social media presence there? The default answer right now is [WeChat](#). However, Western companies could have trouble penetrating this channel in meaningful ways without help.

Vincent takes the path of least resistance for BioLife Solutions' content in China. She leverages a Chinese distributor who shares their social media content as part of their distribution agreement. The same goes for Basheer at Flowserve. "Venturing into WeChat as an American company comes with challenges. One potential approach we are exploring is to seek partners in China who can aggregate content on WeChat for end user and engineering companies in target segments."

While the choice of channels seems straightforward — LinkedIn and WeChat — the decision to localize is more challenging. Jorgenson said that while Danfoss does run local social media campaigns, it's not a global practice. "It is a challenge to set up and run effective local campaigns where there simply isn't follower volume to justify this. Therefore, we still spend most of our effort on creating global campaigns."

Flowserve is examining messaging apps in markets where long commutes on public transportation are the norm. "We're not there yet, but we want to figure out how to deliver mobile content via messaging apps where we know our audiences are spending long periods of time on their phones," said Sivanandan. "This will become more of a priority as we move forward."

While our experts talked mostly about digital channels, there were a few revealing comments made about print.

Print Lives On (In Some Countries)

Arroyave noted that customers in Mexico have traditional preferences. "Our customers in Mexico still embrace the tactile deliverable. They want something physical they can hold and experience. It's important to recognize these country-specific differences and not fall into the trap that digital is the answer everywhere."

One of the world's fastest-growing and most important markets is also a print-centric market, according to Basheer. "Print is not dead in India. There is still a huge appetite for it, and that includes print advertising. Finding the right trade publications and working with media reps in India is imperative for building your presence there."

And those media rep relationships can bear fruit in other ways beyond effective advertising campaigns.

Trade Media Relationships

While many of our panel members engage with the trade media on a more centralized basis, Svahn said AAK's targeted PR and earned media efforts originate at the local level, with regional teams' efforts supplemented by global initiatives in key trade media.

Jorgenson said Danfoss operates similarly. "Local media is run by our local market teams, often supported by corporate insights and resources. We help them assess the optimal target audience touch points from customer studies and apply those insights to build programs with trade publications with very targeted audiences."

Whatever the manner you choose to leverage trade media — global or local — building strong relationships with editors should be at the center of your strategy. “Global trade media is so important, but more important than advertising in these publications is connecting with the editors and reporters and establishing relationships that are mutually beneficial. If you can prove to be a valuable contributor to their editorial content, this can go a long way toward a steady presence for your brand in target geos,” explained Vincent.

So, What Else?

When asked where they would be focusing efforts beyond digital media, our panelists gave the nod toward a fairly traditional mix of channels. The most noteworthy were:

- » Webinars, especially for technically heavy content
- » Trade shows, but with thorough participation and media engagement, not just exhibiting
- » Account-based marketing (ABM)

And there’s that acronym: ABM. While our interviews didn’t reveal any detailed program results from ABM, it’s still a strong area of interest. We sense there’s frustration within the B2B marketing community related to realizing the full promise of ABM, but it’s still a viable practice that needs attention. If you’re getting ready to dip your toes into the ABM pool, we recommend you [keep it simple](#) or you may find yourself awash in theories and martech additions that may not pay dividends.





STAYING CLOSE TO THE ACTION

And putting your best foot forward in a new market should also include a team structure organized to effectively market on a global basis.

Most of our interviewees come from large, global companies, so the way they do things could be challenging to implement for a smaller organization with fewer resources. The central theme from our experts is ensuring you have marketing expertise that is geographically close to your target customers; this concept is universally applicable. You may have to be creative in how you implement it if you don't have the internal resources.

Hub and Spoke

The balancing act between maintaining consistent brand expression while achieving local relevance emerges again as we look at marketing organizational structure. Our experts were unified when it comes to the application of a 'hub and spoke' model, with varying degrees of responsibility and freedom given to local resources.

Jorgenson noted that Danfoss deploys regional marketing teams for maximum efficiency. "Previously, marketing was run quite locally by a few marketing resources who managed many aspects, including media. But there are too many competencies needed to run effective programs at this level, so our model is now regional where we can have a stronger cross-section of functional experience within our teams." He went on to explain that the global marketing team has defined a clear value proposition for what they offer to the regional teams, including service level agreements to local teams.

At [Gilbarco Veeder-Root](#), their ‘hub and spoke’ approach is built around a shared services model. “Our optimal model for marketing globally is to have brand centralized in one group and to use a consolidated shared services model for functions that aren’t impacted by regional and local differences, like data management, CRM, marketing automation and basic asset creation. But creative and content are done regionally, decentralized to the experts who can account for offering differences and cultural nuances,” stated Arroyave.

Sejr Madsen shared his marketing team model, which smartly divides responsibilities. “We have a centralized brand and campaign development team that develops content and digital execution for larger campaigns and initiatives. This includes channel selection and reporting, with input from local teams. Our local field marketing teams support local sales initiatives, events, execution and social media campaigns. They are vital to our effectiveness locally.”

Co-creation: There’s That Word Again

Although developing the brand and strategies for campaigns from a centralized group makes sense, it can’t be done in a vacuum. If you’ve ever worked in an organization where the corporate marketing group feels disconnected from regional and local teams, you’ve probably witnessed how a brand can be misinterpreted (and even mistreated) in some cases. That’s because the local teams aren’t bought in to the corporate team’s wishes.

But it’s an issue our B2B experts have figured out.

Jorgenson explained: “Our global marketing team works in close partnership with the local teams to get their input on programs up-front. We know they play an important role in being closer to the customers. This allows us to collectively set clear goals and expectations for local markets, and also make sure we have the resources to execute the campaigns.”

Svahn is also committed to the full involvement of all marketing team members. “Even in our

somewhat decentralized organization, we have managed to secure great buy-in to our brand and the key messages we want to communicate. This buy-in is the result of a bottom-up process that makes sure everyone is heard and ultimately onboard.”

Scheduled Interactions Keep Connections

If you want to keep centralized brand and strategy teams connected and working effectively with regional and local teams, make it part of your meeting cycles and budget. Svahn noted that their global teams connect at five annual meetings where they discuss branding and marketing challenges, mostly face-to-face. This allows them to effectively share experiences and optimize common efforts.

Sidders noted that for a recent global product launch, they flew in marketing team members and a cross-section of other go-to-market stakeholders from every corner of the world.

Everyone had a say in the best approaches to the launch. In his words: “There were no holes at all in our product and the launch because everyone’s opinions were considered. The output was stunning.”

No Overnight Miracles

Every company is at different points in their marketing maturity as it relates to being locally relevant in their global efforts. Achieving buy-in from executives — especially for the headcount and other resources required to make this happen — is a process. And even when the structure is in place, the journey to full efficacy is a difficult one. Jorgenson sums it up best.

“Have respect for the distance from global to local marketing. It’s a long and delicate process, which needs a lot of attention.”

But a worthwhile one, we think.

GLOBAL B2B MARKETING: COMING FULL CIRCLE

Planning a B2B global marketing program that addresses messaging, creative, website development, media channels and a strong marketing team structure requires thoughtful planning and strategies. But when done well, these initiatives can lead to employment opportunities in new regions, market expansions, competitive advantages, diversification of markets and a capacity to make use of surplus production — all of which are critical to sustaining strong business growth.

Global marketing is valuable work that can lead to numerous opportunities to collaborate, solve industry-wide problems, and broaden a customer base in a part of the world just waiting for your B2B solutions.

