



## **Creating Clarity in the Mind of Your Customer Starts in the C-Suite.**

To establish clarity in the minds of customers, the C-suite must make corporate messaging a strategic priority across the organization and fully buy into the fact that the story directly impacts the financial performance of the business. It also requires that the C-suite get sales, marketing and customer experience leaders in a room to define what the story is and devise a new game plan for how that story will be delivered across all three phases of the customer experience (self-service, sales, post-purchase).

For executives to develop a compelling and authentic message, the corporate story should be rooted in the company's go-to-market strategy, competitive intelligence and insights gained from voices that matter. These voices include prospects, customers, employees and partners. Then the executive team must invest the time and energy to build a holistic Corporate Messaging Platform that will serve as the foundation for customer communication across the enterprise.



This platform must include specific, intentional words and phrases that tell the complete corporate story. A story that captures the essence of the company's:

- > Purpose
- > Vision
- > Mission
- > Values
- > Promise to customers
- > Positioning statement
- > What we do
- > The value we deliver
- > What makes us different

### **The critical role your story plays in all three phases of the customer experience.**

With a strategically aligned Corporate Messaging Platform in place, executives must then work with customer experience professionals and functional leaders to activate the story. The goal is to establish conviction in the story and ensure processes are in place to activate consistent messages across critical channels and touchpoints throughout all three phases of the customer experience (self-service, sales and post-purchase). Let's examine the role each phase plays in the customer experience:

#### **Self-Service Phase**

This phase of the customer experience is increasing in importance every day. The self-service phase is where prospects and customers are engaging with your corporate story independently, without any human interaction from your organization. This is where they are learning more about your company, people, products and services predominantly online, consuming content and messages through a wide range of digital channels. According to Kapost, a content management company ...

“60% of decision makers start their buying journey with informal research, using search engines and business blogs to research products, problems, and solutions.”

To reap the greatest value in the self-service phase of the customer experience, you must cultivate engagement and trust, which is accomplished by ensuring that a clear, compelling and consistent message is delivered across critical self-service channels and touchpoints.



### Sales Phase

The buying journey is a critical aspect of the customer experience and consists of two distinct, yet highly connected processes: self-service and sales. The self-service phase, as we have discussed, takes place when prospects conduct independent research and consume your corporate story without interacting with anyone at your company. This is when they decide if they want to engage in actual sales conversations. If they like your story, content and point of view, they will engage with a sales person.

At this point, the goal is to ensure sales professionals are well-positioned to connect with, extend and add to the story consumed during the self-service phase. However, if marketing and sales are not working from the same sheet of music, the self-service and sales experience can break down because of inconsistent and disjointed messaging. That's why it's imperative that marketing and sales are working from a common Corporate Messaging Platform, and why sales enablement tools and selling conversations must be infused with strategic messages from this shared platform.

Companies that connect the self-service and sales phase of the customer experience with a clear, compelling and consistent corporate message spark meaningful and trusted connections and conversations with customers.

### Post-Purchase Phase

The post-purchase phase of the customer experience plays a significant role in repeat purchase, customer retention and loyalty. In fact, according to research conducted by New Business Strategies ...

**“60 percent of Fortune 500 companies say their purchase decision is based on what the buyer believes their post-purchase experience will be like.”**

Many executives default ownership and accountability for the post-purchase phase of the customer experience to the customer service or support department. Needless to say, this is a blatant oversimplification. The truth is, almost every aspect of the business plays a role in the post-purchase experience. Sales, sales support, product management, marketing, public relations, account management, and professional services just to name a few. The executive team must get more involved in shaping the post-purchase phase of the customer experience. After all, it is in this phase of the journey when the promises and messages the company has communicated during the self-service and sales process must actually be fulfilled. Purpose-driven brands leverage the power of a consistent story.

The bottom line is, your story shouldn't (can't) change from one phase of the customer experience to the next. The story should become richer, clearer and more compelling as the customer journey takes shape. This reminds me of a great quote in the Wall Street Journal from Susan Credle, Global Chief Creative Officer at FCB ...

**“The most successful brands are purpose-driven and don't get bored with their story, because it is authentic to them. They retell it over and over again in new, surprising, creative ways. The story doesn't change because of a new CMO or a new agency. The pace might get more dramatic, the plot might take a twist, but it is still the same story.”**

**Are you telling a consistent and compelling story throughout all three phases of the customer experience (self-service, sales, post-purchase)? If you are not, you're missing out on an opportunity to build stronger, more profitable customer relationships that will deliver sustained business growth.**



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James F. O'Gara is the CEO and Founder of OnMessage a leading B2B Communications Consultancy. Mr. O'Gara has spent thousands of hours formulating winning go-to-market strategies and stories for dozens of Fortune 100 companies and hundreds of high-growth businesses. O'Gara's expertise in go-to-market strategy development, Voice of Customer research, messaging and positioning, as well as customer-centric culture development, has earned him the respect of executives around the world. His ability to breakdown strategy, sales, marketing and positioning challenges in complex industries has been invaluable to CEOs, CCOs and CMOs at a number of leading companies. James is also an active member of the Forbes Communications Council and his thought leadership often appears on Forbes.com.

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About OnMessage:

OnMessage is the B2B communications consultancy executives call when it counts. When strategic shifts in the business take place, when financial performance is on the line and when the message absolutely must deliver material business results. OnMessage specializes in helping C-suite and communications executives ...

- > Reposition and differentiate their businesses
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- > Establish clear, compelling messaging for specific industries and geographic markets
- > Communicate changes in vision / strategy or leadership inside and outside of their organizations
- > Develop effective communication programs in support of M&A integration and other organizational changes

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- > 600+ Strategic Messaging Engagements Delivered
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- > 75+ Years of Combined M&A Communication & Integration Experience
- > 50+ Years of Combined Organizational Communications Expertise
- > 16-Years of Consistently Exceeding Client Requirements

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