

Beyond the Routine: Creativity Fuels Campaigns that Identify and Meet Critical Business Needs

Honestly, B2B marketing can be pretty stagnant.

All too often, we see a real lack of creativity in the way marketers design and execute opportunity generation campaigns. B2B sellers want to reach the same narrow audience profiles, and lead gen shops simply check the boxes and rely on fatigued lists and tactics to fill the order.


Using fatigued lists and tactics is an industry trend we've been working diligently to reverse with our team here at Bython. And our focus on creativity in designing and executing opportunity generation campaigns is beginning to pay real dividends.

We recently signed a deal that's probably the most exciting piece of work we've landed for 2024. It's not because it's a big-dollar contract (it's not). It's because our team collaborated with the customer to shift the initial focus of the campaign from conventional opt-ins to more of a market research effort. We're polishing the custom scripts for the campaign now, and we're eager to see the initial results.

This program gives us the chance to prove the value of the creativity we want to bring to every customer relationship. We own the data needed to fuel this high level of campaign customization and insight and have the experience and talent to support the campaign's unique demands.

And, most importantly, we're willing to ask smart questions and get a clear picture of the customer's real needs. Understanding the customer's goals is always the first, critical step in successful opportunity generation. From there, we can say **"let's get creative"** about audiences and tactics to make those goals a reality.

As markets tighten, and B2B marketing budgets are scrutinized, creativity becomes increasingly critical to making connections that result in booked revenue.



Building long-term conversations with customers can't just be a rinse-and-repeat process.

Where does creativity in B2B opportunity generation start?

First off, let's define a key term. When we say "creativity" in regard to B2B opportunity generation, we're talking about looking for new and better ways to design and execute campaigns, from audience segmentation to retargeting/escalation strategies.

You'll find a lot of opinions online about the need to be "creative" when crafting content that resonates with B2B buyers. That's valuable advice, as well.

We particularly like this [Q&A at ClickZ](#), which rates the overwhelming majority of B2B content as being somewhere between uninspired to downright boring.

But the stagnant mindset we are trying to change can derail a campaign well before a contact ever sees a tagline.

If you're set up to get the wrong people to respond to a misaligned offer, it doesn't matter how clever your subject line is – you're not going to see meaningful ROI on that campaign.

Creativity Starts with Questions

High-value creativity in campaign design boils down to asking a lot of questions at the early stages of a campaign. We probably ask more questions than most customers are used to when they kick off a typical demand gen effort. But this level of give and take is **increasingly essential to building successful campaigns**. With an upfront foundation of clear, actionable goals, we can start getting more creative with your campaign design. Until that baseline is established, you're just shooting blind with quirky ideas, and that is bad business.

It's also important to recognize that every campaign doesn't need to be groundbreaking. Sometimes, our customers really do just need a volume of MQLs now AQLs to keep the pipeline moving. We do that, too. That's the bulk of our business, and we take pride in how well we execute in that wheelhouse.

In fact, most creative campaign designs aren't going to produce a high number of contacts. They do deliver meaningful conversations with prospects who you may not have gotten to know otherwise. Creativity is about finding new audiences and generating deep engagement, not high volume.





Recognizing a typical program simply is not going to cut it is a key step in the creative process.

Creativity and collaboration go hand-in-hand

The program I'm so excited about is a perfect example of how this kind of collaborative creativity can, and should, work.

We had several rounds of planning conversations with the customer, who sells a Financial Planning & Analysis (FP&A) software product. What we found is that they don't need to run a typical bulk demand generation campaign at this point in their business cycle.

What they need to do is **substantiate their assumptions** about clients' challenges in a tumultuous landscape. The customer already knew this; in fact, we eventually learned that they have been **trying to crack this nut for about two years**. But they weren't thinking of our team or services as a way to meet that goal.

In fact, we suspect that if we just stuck with the standard approach of content syndication and a little telemarketing follow up, we wouldn't have done business with them this round. Recognizing a typical program simply is not going to cut it is a key step in the creative process.

But we asked the right questions, and then we asked the right follow-up questions, and the program we eventually designed is really more market research than demand gen. It's a mix of outbound, content and highly tailored phone outreach, enriched with what we've learned about FP&A from our web properties and other programs we've run in the space.

Right now, we are finalizing the details of the content we are going to show prospects, based on what we learn. This campaign isn't going to generate a lot of sales calls. **It's not supposed to.** Instead, it is tailored to fit into and inform future efforts when the market cycle is ready.

Building trust for creative campaign design

The big hurdle for us in building the creative relationships we want with customers is that, for the most part, B2B marketers just don't think of data-driven marketing partners as a source of "creativity."

Most people still think of us just as a data and telemarketing company.

That perception is changing, but we still have to prove ourselves with each new customer we meet. **Trust is everything** when you're asking a company to stop thinking of you as just a service provider and embrace you as a strategic partner.

Before we earn the right to get "creative" with a customer's strained marketing budget, we have to establish these four points of trust:

1 - We can execute on the basics



Very few B2B sellers are going to lift the veil to a potential new partner about what keeps them up at night. You have to earn your seat at that table, and that often means executing on some tried-and-true opportunity demand campaigns. This builds credibility, which is the first step toward trust.

Once the customer knows that we can deliver what we promise, they are far more open to fielding questions about their challenges and letting us get creative with solutions.

2 - We prove that we are, in fact, smart



We've talked a lot in this post about the need to ask questions early on in the campaign design process. Let's clarify that these aren't the kind of questions that you'll find on a standard order form. We'll already know the budget, target job titles, and other core criteria before we jump on a planning call.

The smart questions we ask tend to focus on issues like:

Strategic position
in the market

Risks to business on
3- to 5-year horizon

Sales Challenges

These kinds of questions require us to have a good working understanding of our customers' markets, and to think a couple steps ahead. We're not asking for basic info that we should have already gathered before we jumped on a call.

That would just be annoying.

3 - We are willing to challenge the customer's assumptions



Sometimes, our questions take the form of, **“Do you really want to do that?”**

This can be a little dicey. We have to build credibility first, obviously. And sometimes we find that we need to re-evaluate some pretty fundamental aspects of the customer's expectations, particularly when it comes to audience segments and targeted account lists.

We reviewed a proposal recently that asked for 35 BANT opportunities with C-level IT leaders from nine companies. **That's not a typo: nine companies.** Another recent proposal was looking for an average of more than 100 leads from each of the companies on the customer's proposed target list.

These are extreme examples, of course. But as we said from the outset, B2B sellers keep going after the same people with the same messaging, and it wears thin. (we should write a post soon about unreasonable target lists and how they are really hamstringing Sales growth.)

One of the creative value adds we provide is identifying and reaching new audiences. This may seem like a no-brainer, but it often does require a little pushback on what the customer believes (or wants to believe) about their potential customer. It's a nuanced conversation that has to be driven by both data and professional experience.

4 - We recognize and own the risk that comes with creativity



When you try something new, there's always risk.

As we were finalizing plans for our prototype FP&A market research program, I told the customer: “This might not work, and we all have to be okay with that.”

Of course, we expect to succeed. We've put a lot of thought into this. But if we do fail, we will fail fast – we'll monitor the campaign's performance in real time, and we'll make adjustments as needed. We'll understand what's working and what's not working, and we'll be **completely transparent with the customer about what key metrics are telling us.** And we are on the hook for delivering results.

The willingness to be upfront about risk – and design campaigns where that risk is contained within reasonable parameters – has been hyper-valuable for us as we build credibility, we need to get a little more creative with our customers' campaigns.

A background image showing a person in profile working on a laptop. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent hexagonal grid pattern. A grey text box is positioned in the lower right corner of the image.

When you try something new, there's always risk.

The tools of creativity

To deliver on our creative campaign ideas, we've built a comprehensive tool set that supports every phase of program design and execution. We know if we don't deliver, **we're not going to get another chance to be creative.**

Data

If you're going to find new, fertile audiences for campaigns, you need an enormous breadth of contact and behavioral data. We own our data here at Bython, and we have strong relationships with leading data aggregators if we find that we need to augment our records for a specific campaign.

We know how potential audiences have engaged in the past. We know their aptitude for having more in-depth conversations, and their appetite for various pieces of content. And, of course, we can refine audience selection with intent, firmographic intelligence and any other type of targeting data you can think of.

Without that breadth of data, there's simply no way we could help a customer looking for 100 opportunities from each company on its target list. (And I'm happy to say we've accomplished that trick, more than just a few times.)

Technology

Machine learning and AI have been central to data-driven marketing and look-alike audience segmentation for over a decade, and this tech **continues to advance at a remarkable rate.**

Today, we're focused on ways the latest technology can give us more operational speed. We use AI on the backend to transcribe calls and summarize campaign performance. Our roadmap has us model asset response across new audiences and tackling the industry-wide issue of scaling out beyond those fatigued target lists. But for now, the rapid feedback loop that allows us to "fail fast" (when we fail at all) is where AI lets us be a little more creative.





Multichannel tactics

After we find the right audience, we identify the right channels and tactics for connecting with those potential customers. Finding the right mix of touchpoints can be a real creative challenge, particularly if your campaign extends beyond the typical personas you're used to talking with.

Don't get me wrong – we're big believers in content syndication, even if I've referred to it a few times as a tactic that may be overused. We certainly use content and email in most of our programs.

But there are other tricks in our bag.

We at Bython are big believers in telemarketing. Phone is a big part of the market research program that has us all so excited. We've pitched telemarketing to one of our biggest customers, who for years has adamantly refused to incorporate it in their campaigns.

There's real value in having a conversation with somebody and learning something about their specific challenges. Just pumping your content into an ABM target organization doesn't mean the right people have time to read it.

We're also building a nice business with our custom, interactive web landing pages. (Here's a nice example of [a decision-tree whitepaper we created for IBM.](#)) They don't feature prominently in most of our programs yet, but they do give us the chance to add creative value on the content side of the opportunity generation piece of the equation.

Ultimately, it's about finding the right rhythm of communication. Do we email them and then call, or do we call and then email a PDF leave-behind or a link to an online decision-support tool? Building out our portfolio of these tools helps us be creative from the start.

People

We've waited to discuss the most important factor in our creativity until now, but as you might expect, it's our people who initiate challenging conversations and come up with innovative solutions.

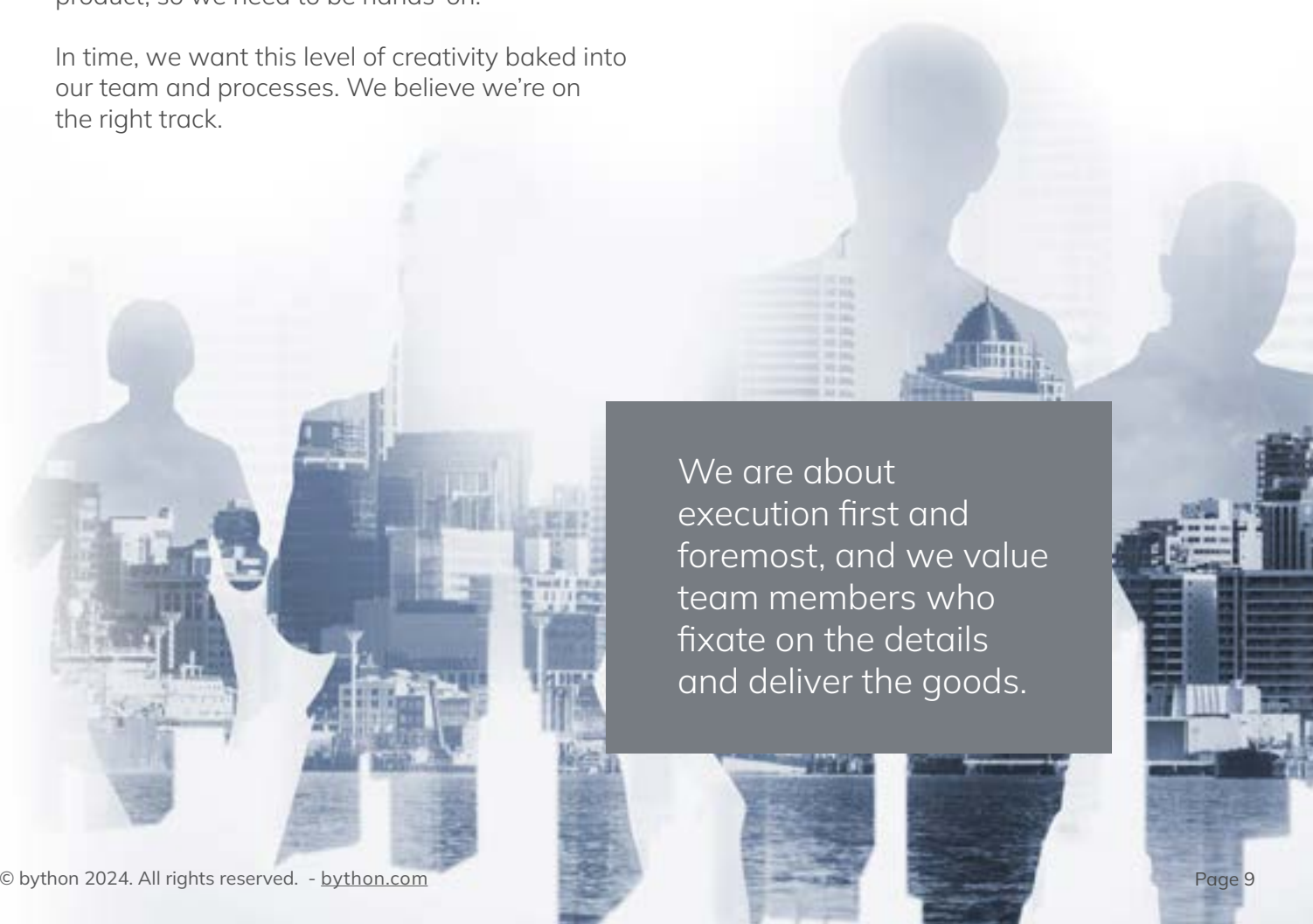
To be clear – not everybody is creative. We are about execution first and foremost, and we value team members who fixate on the details and deliver the goods.

So, we hire our people for a mix of aptitudes, skill sets and experiences. We've got people who worked for LinkedIn and people who worked for big data platforms. We've got folks who've worked for major publishers and for our major competitors. We don't want everybody on the client success team or the sales team to have the same resume. Bython wants people who have seen what works, and what fails in different environments.

From that starting point, we can have smarter, more diverse and more creative conversations with customers.

As we grow, we're reaching the point where we can cast our planning calls with the right team members to provide insight and experience that best matches customer needs. Candidly, it's still a work in progress. Our leadership flew to Mexico to work with our team as they crafted the scripts for our prototype FP&A market research project. We'd love to grow this approach into a replicable product, so we need to be hands-on.

In time, we want this level of creativity baked into our team and processes. We believe we're on the right track.

The background of the page features a light blue, semi-transparent image of three people's silhouettes standing in a cityscape. The cityscape includes various buildings, a prominent dome-shaped structure, and a body of water in the foreground. The silhouettes are positioned in the foreground, with the city buildings behind them.

We are about execution first and foremost, and we value team members who fixate on the details and deliver the goods.

When potential customers see that we get creative about tackling their opportunity generation challenges, it's a real selling point.

Creativity never sleeps

When potential customers see that we get creative about tackling their opportunity generation challenges, it's a real selling point. But it's not something most B2B sellers look for from us when we first meet. Honestly, it's why Bython spends more time on sales calls than we probably should because we enjoy being creative and proving the value we bring to the table.

In time, we believe the level of creativity and innovation we are building into our team and business here at Bython will become the norm, not the exception, in B2B opportunity generation, and we're excited about keeping us ahead of the curve with new ideas and approaches.

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