

WRITING THE AMERICAN MARKETING AND PR PLAYBOOK

A HELPFUL GUIDE FOR EUROPEAN
TECH COMPANIES



SWYFT

Introduction

At first glance, promoting services and products in the American market doesn't seem that much different from how it's done in Europe. Are Americans B2B and B2C buyers not comparable to their counterparts in Brussels, Paris and Madrid? And are the best means to reach them not very similar to what is used in Europe?



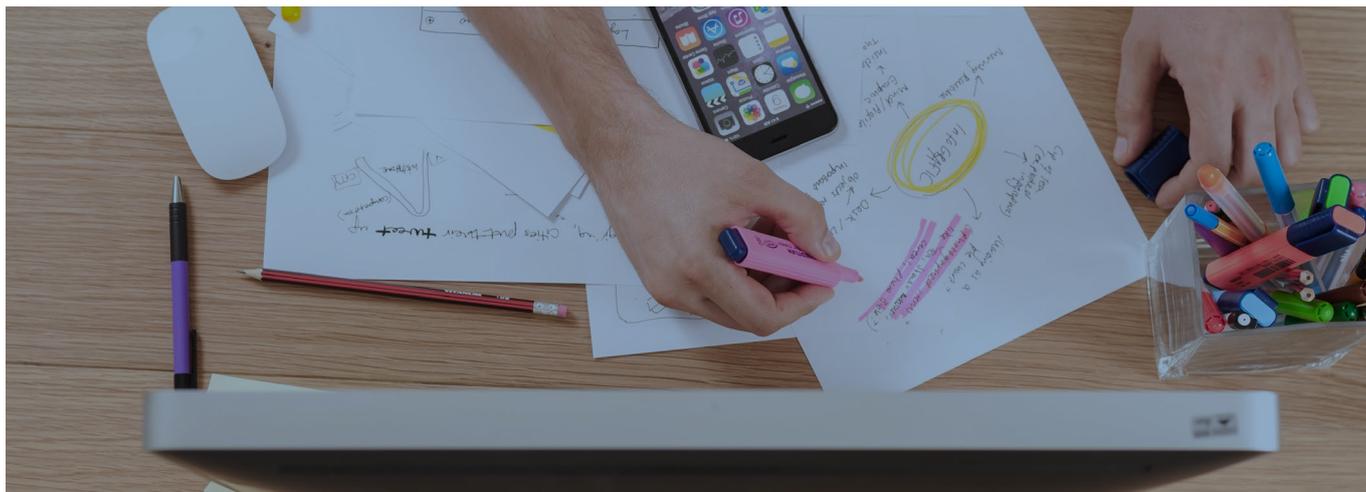
Perhaps surprisingly, the answer to both questions is a resounding ‘NO.’ European companies need a dedicated American marketing and PR playbook if they want to be successful in the American market.



This guide will explain why that is the case and provide several tips on how to approach the American market.

Before we dive into what that American marketing and PR playbook needs to look like, however, we list a couple of common errors made by European marketers who are tasked with planning for and executing the expansion of their respective businesses in the U.S.

WHAT EUROPEAN COMPANIES DO WRONG (MOST OF THE TIME)



1. Trying to 'boil the ocean'

Trying to 'boil the ocean' is an American expression referring to trying to accomplish an insurmountable task or making a project unnecessarily difficult.

Here's the thing, the American market has 300 million consumers and it's simply way too large for any European company to attack all at once, at least not with the kind of budget one normally allocates to attack a single European country (or even Western Europe for that matter).

Omar Mohout, a prominent Belgian professor of Enterprise who teaches at the Solvay Brussels School of Business and Economics, recommends that European companies first target one specific American socio-demographic

or geographic segment. For instance, say you developed a SaaS accounting solution perfect for small and mid-sized professional services organizations in the U.S. You might choose to first target only American law offices in a handful of major metro areas rather than attempt to sell the solution across multiple industries and geographic markets. In other words, figure out how to thrive and be successful in one specific niche, possibly one specific geographic market (for example, the state of Texas). Then you will have something to show when it's time to convince investors to participate in your next big push to grow market share. Both your organic growth and the extra funding will help make the next chapter in your American expansion story become reality.



2. Underfunding the effort

This second mistake is closely related to the first. Not picking a segment that is small enough for you to thrive in will lead you to underfund your marketing and PR effort. But even the ones that do manage to pick a realistic segment will unfortunately often commit critical budgeting mistakes. For instance, marketing and PR agency costs run higher in the United States than they do in Europe (especially if you are contracting agencies on the West and East Coast).

It stands to reason that the cost of any effort aimed at brand awareness and lead generation in one European country is much smaller than attacking the EU as a whole. The same rationale applies to the U.S., only on a potentially larger scale. The per unit cost of acquiring leads may vary in the U.S. as well, if only because the degree of competition in the tech space is incredibly intense. Even the cost of sponsored posts on national trade websites will cost much more than counterparts in Europe. Google Adwords campaigns are tricky given the competitive nature of many U.S. tech businesses; it's not uncommon for bidding amounts to run so high as to make the ROI on leads untenable. For instance, an international analysis by Wordstream found that the CPC in the U.S. was 13 higher than in the United Kingdom and 50 percent higher than in Spain.

What can you do to avoid underfunding your marketing effort? Aim for what you can reasonably afford -- don't attempt to overreach on market size and in the process underfund the effort. Do plenty of research into your target market and what works and doesn't work when it comes to marketing and PR. Don't be shy about reaching out to local agencies for advice. What you learn from them could be the difference between success and failure.

3. Not speaking the language



European marketing and PR professionals may underestimate the effort that should go into producing professionally worded content for the U.S. market. If you are not a native speaker then there is a good chance that writing perfectly crafted English copy for your target American audience is out of your reach.

This means that you will need to call upon copywriters and/or translators, or even a local marketing agency that can manage the effort and conduct quality control. The people that help you in this endeavor should be native speakers of American English. British English is as different from American English as orange marmalade is from grape jelly. American consumers are best addressed in American English.

4. Picking the wrong channels

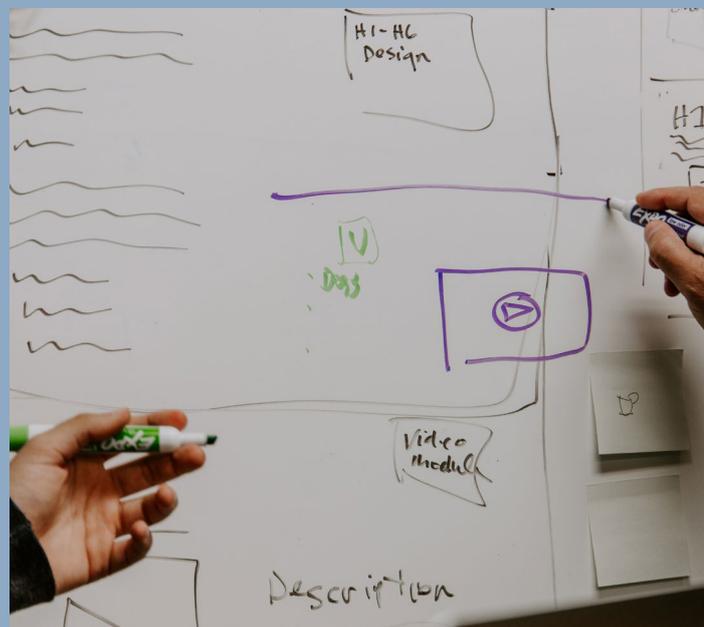
You have selected a segment that you want to target, but now the work begins. You will need to select the best mix of channels to achieve your marketing and PR objectives given your budget and target audience. If you are new to the market you will have to spend a majority of your time creating awareness. Don't forget to track your inbound leads and properly attribute their source (e.g., Twitter ad, Google AdWords campaign, trade show, etc.) in some kind of spreadsheet.

Fortunately, many marketing automation platforms (HubSpot, Pardot, etc.) do a reasonably good job at lead attribution. That said, lead attribution will only partially help inform your marketing spending decisions. Take SEA (Search Engine Advertising) for example: For European marketers, SEA equals Google AdWords. But in January 2018 Bing had a 23.7 % share of the American search engine market (source: Statista). While it's not the largest search engine in terms of search volume and ad spend, you can't afford to ignore it in the long run if you hope to pick up market share against your competitors.

WHAT EUROPEAN COMPANIES SHOULD DO (ALL THE TIME)

Any modern marketing and PR campaign must be integrated. Integration implies that you will try to have your 'owned' (your website, blog, etc.), earned (media coverage) and paid (advertising) channels working together to reinforce one another as much as possible. In many cases 'shared' (online shares) is added to the mix, forming PESO (paid, earned, shared & owned). In what follows we stick to the first three tracks and count shared with earned.

Here is a list of tools that are available for a marketing and PR campaign in the U.S. For each campaign you will be making a very unique selection of building blocks. And since you have now been fairly warned about selecting the right market segment, speaking the right language, funding your effort sufficiently and employing the right channels, all of your marketing activities will now be poised to yield the highest possible return.



Owned Media

- Website with content and style tuned to an American audience (either a U.S. site or American pages on your global site) and plenty of call-to-actions to help people convert through the sales funnel.
- Blog with articles that depart from the benefits of your products or services as they are relevant to American buyers.
- Newsletter to send out content that is geared towards different American buyers.
- Video content aimed at providing valuable information to prospective buyers.

Earned Media

- Distribution of press releases to American news outlets and wire services that serve your target audience.
- Offering interviews to journalists attending a trade show where you have a booth.
- Pitching stories (including offering exclusives) to individual journalists.
- Press tour to visit the offices of journalists for one-on-one talks (this assumes you are a sizable player in your respective industry or are first-to-market with disruptive technology).
- Contributed articles to trade magazines.

Paid Media

- Advertising in print or online media.
- Promoted content and/or ads on social media.
- SEA on Google and/or Bing.
- Sponsored posts (native advertising) / advertorials in print or online media.
- Sponsoring of podcasts.

Integrating owned, earned and paid

As mentioned earlier, marketing and PR campaigns that yield the best results are ones that are fully integrated. Pitching interviews on a story in October, promoting posts on Facebook in January and paying for a sponsored article in March can and will have some impact, but they are not nearly as powerful as a fully integrated campaign where you bring everything together in ways that are mutually reinforcing.

Let's illustrate this with an example. Let's say you are a Swedish software company that just conducted a survey about a hot issue in your industry. How can you maximize the impact of that survey to increase brand awareness and stimulate lead generation?

- **Owned:** You can make the survey report available on your site for people who leave their email address (make sure you respect American CAN-SPAM regulations while you are at it); write a series of blog posts on the results, illustrated by an infographic; dedicate a status update to the survey on your Facebook page; and publish a slide deck on your SlideShare account.

- **Earned:** You can send out a release about the survey (after negotiating a scoop with a major tech news outlet or a trade publication if it's got strong enough news value), pitch interviews with your CEO about the results and use the survey to feed your proof points for a contributed article in a key trade magazine.

- **Paid:** Companies will typically not pay to promote a survey, but the buzz that is created by the survey will allow your now 'primed' audiences to be extra receptive to any advertising campaign that you would want to run in the months following the campaign.



Marketing and PR
campaigns that yield
the best results are
fully integrated.



About the Author

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Jo Detavernier has 15+ years of communications experience. He started his consultancy career in top-tier consultancy agencies in the Brussels market and has been a Partner and VP in Swyft since 2015. Jo holds degrees in criminal justice, marketing and management. He has counseled over the years a host of B2B and B2C companies with among them Boston Consulting Group, Viacom, Pfizer, SWIFT and Unilever. His competencies include public relations, corporate communications, content marketing, issues and crisis

communications, C-suite executive training and measurement. Jo is both APR and SCMP accredited. He is also a Member of the Global Communication Certification Council that manages the IABC certification program. A Belgian by birth, Jo tends to obsesses about the Belgian national soccer team and is still searching for American made chocolate that meets his standards. Jo is fluent in English, Dutch and French.



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About Swyft

Swyft is an agile marketing and PR agency serving B2B technology companies seeking faster growth. Our team is made up of industry veterans who combine creativity, deep tech industry knowledge and marketing expertise to help our customers reach their most important brand goals. We excel at amplifying product and startup launches, revitalizing struggling brands, and enhancing existing corporate growth strategies. With an international agency network to rival some of the largest agencies in the world, our roots are in Austin, but our reach is global.

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