



**AT THE 2016 BMA B2 AWARDS**

this past June in Chicago, Ill., the marketing team at HCL Technologies barely had time to catch their collective breath. As soon as they sat down from accepting one award, they were called to the podium again — and again. By the end of the event, HCL had been named winner of 14 B2s, in categories ranging from New Customer Acquisition to Text Ad to Promotional Incentive.

“We believe in creating a legacy of unique and differentiated work across all spectrums because, at the end of day, marketing is about occupying a unique space in your target audience’s mindshare, in an otherwise cluttered environment,” says Matt Preschern, executive vice president and CMO at HCL Technologies, noting that the company a year ago captured 17 of the coveted B2 Awards.

Preschern, who is in charge of all marketing functions, including global business and sales enablement, talked to *B-to-B Marketer* about the link between the B2s and HCL Technologies’ communications strategy, as well as some of the larger marketing challenges facing B-to-B companies of all stripes.



# Marketing with a Bigger Purpose

**CMO MATT PRESCHERN FOCUSES ON PERSONALIZATION AND THOUGHT LEADERSHIP TO DISTINGUISH HCL TECHNOLOGIES’ AWARD-WINNING WORK**

By **Matthew Schwartz** • Photograph by **Andrew Kist**

# Q:

Why has HCL's overall marketing approach translated into so many B2 Awards?

# A:

We approach all marketing initiatives with the goal of being best- or first-in-class. This is our strategy not only for external campaigns but also for our owned media and media channels. We only spend a small amount on paid media, so the content we create has to be picked up across the board. Our content distribution strategy centers on creating and delivering content for each channel and distributing it in such a way that it provides a unified experience. We focus on digital and social media. We always ask: What is our social media strategy? How are we going to use Facebook? And how is that different from using Snapchat? It's important that nothing in B-to-B marketing be cookie-cutter.

### How is the marketing team changing, in terms of developing digital services and improving ROI?

As the marketing leader, my role is to see that the energy, enthusiasm, and disruption of the marketing team is aligned with business objectives in a way that makes sense to our senior leadership. We have a three-pronged approach [to marketing]: First, we think mobile-first. Is the content consumable in mobile? Second, we deploy marketing automation to drive the entire lead-generation process. Third, we use analytical tools to determine media impressions, open rates, and all other data points. We combine these elements into our overall marketing strategies and get to a point where the team feels great about the program's reach and potential for success.

### How have you been able to establish a tight bond with your marketing agency, ITSA?

The single most important aspect of an agency partnership, or any partnership, is the amount of respect between the company and the agency and making sure there is a meeting of the minds. As a marketer, you have to ask yourself: Do we want to build a relationship [with an agency] that's bigger than a transaction? ITSA shares our values and understands who we are. We relate to each other very well and that raises the level of trust and transparency in the relationship. And when I say, "Push the envelope," they push the envelope. A good portion of what they present to us gets rejected, but the agency doesn't get frustrated. It comes back with other ideas.

### HCL won a B2 Award for Best Tablet/Mobile Advertising. What's your mobile communications strategy, and how do you better serve your mobile audience these days?

Mobile is the channel of the future, and marketers not investing time and resources in understanding and leveraging mobile will get left behind. HCL follows a mobile-first approach; all marketing communication takes mobile audiences into consideration.

Today, 34 percent of web visits and 38 percent of form submissions come from mobile devices. Mobile also accounts for 2 percent of the overall total deal value that our website generates. From a paid promotions perspective, we make sure to add mobile-specific banner sizes, include mobile ad copy for paid-search campaigns, and use mobile-only ad units on social platforms, such as sponsored updates and InMails on LinkedIn and promoted tweets on Twitter. Video is also becoming increasingly important for mobile devices because you now have good (video) connectivity in most parts of the world.

HCL also won an award for Integrated Marketing Communications Strategy ("UnitedByHCL" campaign). How do

### MATT PRESCHERN'S 5 BEST PRACTICES

**1** Move beyond B-to-B and B-to-C; it's all about individual-to-individual

**2** Follow a mobile-first approach as it's the channel of the future

**3** Manage and improve what you measure; what's your marketing ROI?

**4** Develop real-time personalized content, as it's a powerful differentiator from marketers who spray and pray

**5** Remember that brand authenticity and being purpose-driven are the keys for 21st century marketers

## Winning Ways

HCL TECHNOLOGIES WAS NAMED WINNER OF 14 B2 AWARDS THIS PAST JUNE:

- Marketing, Brand, and Communications Strategy (entry: UnitedByHCL)
- Integrated Marketing Communications Strategy (UnitedByHCL)
- Thought Leaders Marketing Strategy (UnitedByHCL)
- New Customer Acquisition (UnitedByHCL)

- Existing Customer Retention and Growth (UnitedByHCL)
- Brand Relaunch Product/Company (UnitedByHCL)
- Integrated Communications Program: \$250k-\$1 million (UnitedByHCL)

- Total B2C and B2B Program (UnitedByHCL)
- Microsite or Landing Page (UnitedByHCL)
- Text Ad, Single or Campaign (Winning with Remarketing)
- Tablet/Mobile Advertising (ShortCutsToSuccess)

- YouTube/Custom Portal (Women Lead Australia)
- Magazine, Print or Electronic (CTO Straight Talk magazine)
- Promotional Incentive (ShortCutsToSuccess)

Visit [marketing.org/2016B2s](http://marketing.org/2016B2s) for a complete list of B2 winners in every category.



ANA B-TO-B HALL OF FAME

## GARY SLACK

First inductee proud of his role in advancing business marketing

Like more than a few executives in the advertising/marketing arena, Gary Slack, the first inductee into the ANA Business-to-Business Hall of Fame, started his career as a newspaper reporter. But it wasn't long before the New Mexico native got hooked on marketing communications.

After a nine-month stint covering everything from crime to local water issues at the *Santa Fe Reporter* and then the *Albuquerque Tribune*, Slack took off for Washington, D.C., for a job as a writer with the public relations agency Porter Novelli. "That's where I was exposed to marketing communications," he says. "I was assigned to a lot of the agency's trade association clients, and that introduced me to marketing."

Slack flourished at Porter Novelli, and caught the eye of the company's top brass, who decided to move him to the Chicago office. "Gary joined our firm as a rookie and was a quick learner and a natural at strategic planning, client service, and business development," recalls agency co-founder and former president Bill Novelli, now a professor at Georgetown University. "He rose quickly through the ranks and eventually became a top performer and an all-around go-getter. His strongest suits were always an innate marketing savvy and a very strong client orientation."

It wasn't long after Slack arrived in Chicago that the entrepreneurial bug hit him and he began thinking about starting his own business. It was 1988, he was 34, and he knew he wanted to pursue some combination of marketing and communications.

"I thought about starting a consumer ad agency, but that would take me two or three lifetimes to really get it off the ground and running," he says. "At that time I had become very interested in the concept of integrated marketing and was influenced by [Northwestern

University professor and integrated marketing expert] Don Schultz. And I had always liked B-to-B, so I decided to start an integrated marketing communications agency."

The plan worked and, in the ensuing years, Slack built a successful business — Slack and Company — that today employs 55 people serving 15 clients and generating \$8 million in annual revenue. The company is considered one of the world's first integrated marketing communications agencies and one of the few that works exclusively with business marketers. Unlike most B-to-B marketing agencies, which specialize in either branding or demand generation, Slack and Company has invested in both disciplines. As proof of its great work, the company has been named "Agency of the Year" several times by both the *BMA* and *BtoB Magazine*.

Slack served on the national BMA board of directors from 2008 to 2015, first as national chairman from 2009 to 2011, then as vice president of professional development from 2011 to 2015. He also organized the association's annual global conference from 2009 through 2015, helping to increase attendance from 125 to 1,000 over that seven-year period. What's more, he twice served as president of the BMA's Chicago chapter.

"I think I've played a modest role in helping advance the B-to-B marketing profession," Slack says. "When I started in this business almost 30 years ago, B-to-B was a backwater, and much of it was bland and boring. B-to-B was not the first choice of young people looking to go into advertising and marketing. But in the last 30 years we've come a long way. Today the best B-to-B work rivals the best consumer work, and like our consumer counterparts, we use data, digital platforms, and all available marketing technology."

— John Wolfe

### **B-to-B marketers bolster their integrated marketing campaigns and break down the business silos?**

From getting the [marketing] team aligned to having the finance and procurement teams recognize the ROI and long-term impact of the project, the UnitedByHCL program offered us many interesting challenges. The greatest challenge, however, has been steering the HCL armada with 110,000 employees and more than 20 influential business leaders in the same direction. With different P&Ls and different departments, there are going to be some integration challenges. The idea is to create a platform that's bigger than the individual business units and that employees [within the specific departments working on a campaign] can see is bigger than themselves. It goes back to values and being aspirational with how you set up integrated campaigns. Our integrated campaigns involve multiple stakeholders across different functions working to deliver differentiated engagement and experiences to a target audience. A good example is our global Twitter recruitment campaign, which involved employees, human resources, the executive team, and marketing, and used the channel to identify and interview [job] candidates.

### **As customers and prospects become more elusive, how do you ensure that you are able to monetize the customer experience?**

You have to recognize that different buyers look at different content at different stages of the funnel. The beginning is very different from the final stage, when the person is ready to close a transaction. We try very hard to customize the content for each level. Our overall strategy is to provide personalization and thought leadership throughout the buying and selling cycles, which results in developing different levels of engagement with prospects.

### **What are the biggest marketing challenges right now in terms of keeping existing customers, finding new ones, and managing for growth?**

The ubiquity of consumer technology has made the process of getting your information to your audience more difficult. However, at the same time, there is an opportunity to be more targeted; feature-led marketing gave way to benefit-led marketing, which is evolving into purpose-led marketing.

### **As a marketing organization, how do you define your purpose and make it relevant for your target audience?**

It's no longer just what you deliver to your customer but how you do it and whether it adds value. How we define the success of a marketing organization is another challenge. We might appear to be doing groundbreaking work, but none of it matters without a measured and relevant outcome. Finally, how do marketers stay ahead of the organization and define the strategy and charter for the organization/company?

It's also important in B-to-B marketing to be emotionally connected and to ask, "Is it fast enough?" We live in an always-on mode, and you need to adopt online tools to show whether your marketing organization is providing content that's aspirational and has a return on investment. If you're a B-to-B marketer, that's what you need to aspire to. **B**