

OMS INTERNATIONAL: LEAD GENERATION FOR A SMALL B2B VIA ONLINE MEDIA

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Executive summary

This report was written to provide OMS International (OMS) with online media that would help them generate leads in market segments they were not previously active.

OMS is a small business-to-business company that sells Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) systems. EDI systems allow the transmission of data between suppliers and customers (EDI, n.d.). OMS was mainly focused on one segment of the EDI market, but that market segment is almost completely saturated. Therefore OMS decided to expand to new market segments, however, they are not known outside their current market.

In the world of increasing online B2B interaction OMS has not yet developed successful activities. OMS feels that online media can help them gain new customers, and do more business with existing customers. They want an online strategy to generate leads and increase their market share in different EDI sectors.

In order to provide OMS with online media to reach their goal a research question with regards to online media was formulated.

Which online media can be used by OMS, a small B2B company to generate leads from markets that are new to them?

There are some restrictions to this report, as there was a limited time frame, the sample size for the questionnaire was small, and there is no complete overview of the EDI market, which is partly because the market is so big, and partly because there was no time to investigate the entire market.

Theory

Several theories form the backbone of this research, for example Webster and Wind's Buying Center which indicates the different roles in the business buying process, Robin, Faris and Wind's Buy-Grid which indicates the different information needs during the business buying process.

These different information needs are also expressed in the AIDA model, the Hierarchy of Effects Model and the Think-Feel-Do model, all of which express the different stages a consumer goes through.

In order to come to a sound advice the SOSTAC planning framework has been used to help form the different steps in the plan, e.g. the formulation of a strategy and the tactics to go with the strategy.

Two other models that helped formulate a strategy are Ansoff's 4x4 matrix, which indicated four general strategies, and Chaffey et al.'s Internet-specific SWOT analysis, which illustrates strategies that are linked to parts of the SWOT analysis.

Research methods

Two different research methods were used to come to an advice, an online questionnaire spread under customers and potential customers, and observations on the competitor's online presence. The observations were not the preferred medium, but unfortunately no competitors were willing to participate in in-depth interviews. The detailed results of the research can be found in Chapter four: Research Findings on page 21.

Objectives

- Increasing website visits and click troughs by twenty percent over a three month period via the use of search engine optimization.
- Have five percent of the website visitors sign up for the newsletter in six months. Measured via website statistics and the newsletter sign up mailing list.
- Receive a ten percent increase in e-mail or phone contact with potential customers, within six months of starting the campaign.
- Turn five percent of the interested buyers into customers in six months time via the website, newsletters, and personal contact, measured via an increase in sales

Strategy

OMS aims for three marketing strategies from Ansoff's matrix; market penetration, market development and diversification. Meaning that they want to sell more to current markets, sell the current product in a new market, and bring new products to new markets.

Looking at Chaffey et al.'s Internet-specific SWOT OMS employs an attacking Strengths-Opportunities strategy. Jumping at opportunities that arise, instead of having to defend.

The main message OMS should communicate are the benefits of EDI systems bought from OMS, and thus the benefits of OMS itself, e.g. experience and knowledge.

Recommendations

First OMS's website needs to be redesigned, and the content should be updated and matched to the business buying stages.

Secondly the website needs to be optimized for search engines. Meaning the inclusion of keywords in the website coding, URLs, headings and website content, but also internal and external links leading to the OMS website.

Thirdly the newsletter OMS offer should be visible on every page of the website, in order for people to sign up. A bit of experimenting needs to be done as to what writing style customers prefer.

Fourth OMS can use e-mail marketing to update customers on market developments, or inform them on product/service offers.

Lastly, OMS wants to use some form of online media. Currently they use Twitter, but the questionnaire pointed out that this was not the preferred medium by the customers. LinkedIn on the other scored relatively well. LinkedIn has an interesting feature called Groups, here people unite around the same kind of subjects, and can start relevant discussions. OMS can provide information to customers, get their trust, and increase exposure.

Implementation

The implementation of this plan takes about two and a half months, though it could be more or less depending on the development of the website. All other media can be updated quickly after the website is done.

Different statistics can be checked during the run time of the program to see if it seems the results are going to be met.

The program should be evaluated after six months to see if the goals are met, if not research needs to point out what went wrong. If the program did succeed new goals need to be set.

Dedication

My thanks go to OMS International for giving me the freedom to write my graduation assignment and for guiding me. I would especially like to thank OMS's sales manager, Mister A. Vonk, for making time to help me with whatever information I needed and for providing constructive feedback when necessary.

Secondly I would like to thank Miss I. Louw for guiding the entire graduation process from the HU's point of view, answering endless amounts of questions and for not losing her patience with our stress levels.

Third I would like to say thank you to all HU teachers and Seneca College teachers that have taught me in the four years at the HU. Without them I would have never been able to write this graduation assignment.

Lastly I would like to dedicate this graduation assignment to my fellow group members who wrote their dissertation during the same time period. We have supported each other, given our thoughts on other people's work, provided a steady base to fall back on and gave each other pep talks when we thought we were never going to get through. Even though the graduation assignment has been carried out individually our group meetings helped form the entire assignment.

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1. Introduction

This graduation assignment is a report on which online media are most suitable to use for a small business-to-business company. The report is mainly based on data from a questionnaire filled in by (potential) customers. This first chapter introduces the background of this graduation assignment, provides a company profile, defines the problem, introduces the research question, discusses this reports' limitations and finally presents the reports' structure.

1.1 Background of the graduation assignment

Ever since the 2007 financial crisis the world's economies have faced a widespread economic downturn (Srodes, 2010). Consumers are not confident in their countries' markets, unemployment figures rise, people spend less money on luxury goods, organizations invest less money, and some companies go out of business. During an economic downturn people, and companies, become more careful in the way they spend their money. This means that companies sometimes hold off on big investments that could make their business run smoother, because of the risks of spending money while consumers buy fewer products.

Doing business also get much less predictable in an economic downturn, one day a business may seem healthy, and another it might be on the brink of bankruptcy. Therefore it is really hard to set long term goals, since the health of a company could change day by day.

A recession can also bring positive news for companies, as competitors can rethink their strategy and thus leave a market, or focus more on another product, or a competitor can go out of business. Creating an opportunity for one business to try and conquer the market share the competitor had.

1.1.1 Industry information

Hutt and Speh (2010) claim that "business marketers serve the largest market of all: the dollar volume of transactions in the industrial or business market significantly exceeds that of the ultimate consumer market" (p. 4). The same remark can be found in other business marketing books (Wright, 2004; Gillin & Schwartzman, 2011; De Pelsmacker, Gueens & Van den Bergh, 2004). One transaction in the B2B market involves a huge amount of money.

The company, for which this research is conducted, operates in what is called the traditional Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) market. EDI is a collective noun for systems that enable the transmission of data between suppliers and customers (EDI, n.d.).

The EDI market can be seen as a niche market, as the products are very specific. Furthermore, the barrier to entry for new companies is very high, due to lack of knowledge/experience for newcomers. Companies want an EDI provider that they can depend on and that has proficiency. (Arjan Vonk, personal communication, March 4, 2012)

The traditional EDI market is roughly divided into twelve segments or sectors, as it is hard to determine the entire size of and all the segments of the EDI market in the Benelux. The twelve segments include the following:

- Food
- Non-Food
- Do It Yourself/Gardening sector/ Technical wholesale
- Automotive
- Transport
- Installation sector
- Construction
- Fashion
- Furniture/Home decoration
- Healthcare
- Government
- Tax administration/customs

Where this section focused on the overall image of EDI the next section provides more specific information about the company itself.

1.2 Company profile

OMS International, in the remainder of this study referred to as OMS, is a small Dutch company which sells communication solutions to other businesses. OMS was founded in 1991 and currently employs five people.

OMS does not produce or develop any standard product. OMS buys technology licenses from software producers, and then provides the service of client specific tuning, implementing, modifying, installing and maintaining of this technology for their customers. The technology OMS sells falls under the terms Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) or Managed File Transfer (MFT) systems. According to Carroll (2006) OMS's product falls under the term complex sale, as OMS is "involved in long-term sales processes that require prolonged education and nurturing of the prospect." (2006b, p. 3) Carroll goes further stating that these companies usually provide a company with a targeted solution for a specific business problem. (Carroll, 2006b)

Currently OMS's customers can, mostly, be found in one segment of the EDI market, the automotive sector. This sector makes up only a small part of the EDI market. Due to the economic crisis, however, the automotive sector has been experienced lower sales resulting in factories going out of business etc. These uncertainties have forced OMS to

rethink their target market. OMS feels that expanding to other markets will decrease the risk, associated with selling to one market that has become unstable. A strategic meeting was held and five other market segments have been selected that could be profitable for OMS to expand to. These markets sectors are healthcare, construction, installation, transport and non-food.

The reason OMS can expand to other EDI market segments is that OMS's competitors are focusing on new products and new markets that fit their product/market mix better, but in doing so have left gaps in their 'traditional' markets, thus leaving space for OMS to grow into. Furthermore, these five market sectors are (potentially) profitable to expand to, due to the number of potential customers.

The problem for OMS, however, is that they are not known outside the automotive sector they are serving now. As they put it themselves: OMS is the big unknown in the EDI world, but they are one of the oldest. Age is one of their stronger points, as with age they gained a vast amount of knowledge about the software and sector. This leads up to the next sub-chapter, in which the problem is defined.

1.3 Problem definition

As stated above OMS is not known outside of their current market, but in order to gain a share in the other EDI markets in the Benelux they need to get more name awareness. However, OMS is a small company and has a limited budget for marketing activities, thus eliminating most costly traditional media as a way to generate leads.

Fortunately we live in a world where information is more readily available than ever due to the Internet. The World Wide Web provides companies with a cost effective way of marketing their brand, while simultaneously reaching more people that are actually interested in a particular product or service.

OMS feels that the Internet could help them gain more customers, but they have no plan or strategy in place to accomplish this. OMS does not intent to step into e-commerce (selling online) as their products are very technical and are adapted to the specific customer. Plus the systems need to be installed at the customer's company by a technician.

OMS is of the opinion that online media (e.g. website, newsletters, and social media) can help them increase company awareness and interest outside of their current market.

To define the problem more clearly:

OMS International needs an online communication strategy to generate leads in order to increase their share in the different Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) market sectors.

1.4 Research question

From the above mentioned problem definition a research question was formulated.

Which online media can be used by OMS, a small business-to-business company, to generate leads from market segments that are new to them?

The following sub-questions were developed in order to answer the main question.

- 1) How does B2B selling differ from B2C selling?
- 2) How are leads generated online for B2B companies?
- 3) In what manner are the current online media, used by OMS, effective?
- 4) Which online media could be effective to generate leads for OMS?

1.5 Restrictions to the study

This research is restricted by its time frame. Due to a limited time frame, there could be no extensive market research, with the result that all information on the EDI market comes from the sales manager at OMS and from two documents compiled in 2011. These two documents provide a general overview of the market at that time.

The EDI market is very large and widely spread out, therefore, as a single researcher it was deemed impossible to research the entire target audience. Instead a questionnaire was sent out to an (outdated) database of e-mail addresses of potential customers, current customers and info@ mail addresses.

This study was further restricted in its findings due to the fact that OMS is a small company, with a small budget. Therefore multiple online options were not even looked into. The options looked into have to suit OMS's work method and OMS's personnel. OMS has one sales manager who is also in charge of online communications. It is therefore impossible to suggest time consuming measures.

Finally, this is an exploratory study and the results of this study cannot be generalized. The sample size for the questionnaire is small, considering the entire population, but big considering how many people actually received the e-mail and considering they are busy professionals. Even though the sample size is small, conclusions can be drawn, as most people answered the same and the answers matched some of the expectations set before hand, and recommendations can be made.

1.6 Structure of this research study

This study consists of (number) chapter which are structured as follows: chapter one explains the background to this study and states the research problem and questions, chapter two dives in the theories that are the backbone of this study, in chapter three the chosen research methods are described, while the outcomes of the research is described in chapter four. The first four chapters are the basis for the advice for OMS; the latter chapters will provide the advice to OMS. Chapter five gives a short description of the situation, from the situation analysis objectives and a strategy are formulated which can be read in chapter six. Chapter seven explains the tactics for OMS to achieve the set objectives and after every tactic a way of measuring the outcomes is given. Chapter eight gives overall conclusions of the study and chapter nine provides a summary of the recommendations.

2. Theoretical framework

In this chapter the theories underlying this bachelor thesis are explained. The theoretical perspectives that will give insight into the research problem, namely business-to-business theory, lead generation theory, and online marketing theories, are discussed as part of the theoretical framework as follows;

2.1 Business-to-business theory

“Business-to-business (B2B) marketing involves one business marketing and selling products and/or services to another business.” (Wright, 2004, pp. 1-2) These products can be for company use, for example, for the production of another product, or for resale. The difference between B2B and business-to-consumer (B2C) marketing is the end consumer, for B2B the end consumer is either an employee or a business owner (Hutt & Speh, 2010; Wright, 2004). The difference between B2B and B2C needs to be noted, because there are also different strategies and tactics applied in both segments to reach their target markets.

The business market can be seen as “more complex, the buying process more intricate, the products and services offered are often of a strategic nature and the sales value of each order much larger than in consumer markets” (Wright, 2004, p. 5). B2B decision makers evaluate purchases differently than in the B2C buyers. B2B decision makers focus more on utility, price and value, while in consumer markets the focus is on social issues and practicality (Ellis, 2011). An overview of the differences can be found in Appendix I: Theoretical Framework.

Gillin and Schwartzman (2011) add that the consumer market is more impulse-driven, while the B2B buyers need more people to agree on a buying decision.

Ellis (2011) notes another difference between B2C and B2B, namely that the B2C market consists of millions of different heterogeneous consumers, while the buyers in the B2B market make up a very small part of the market. However, this small number of (heterogeneous) buyers has a substantial purchasing power (Ellis, 2011).

Webster and Wind (1972) label this small number of buyers the buying center. The buying center consists of “all those individuals

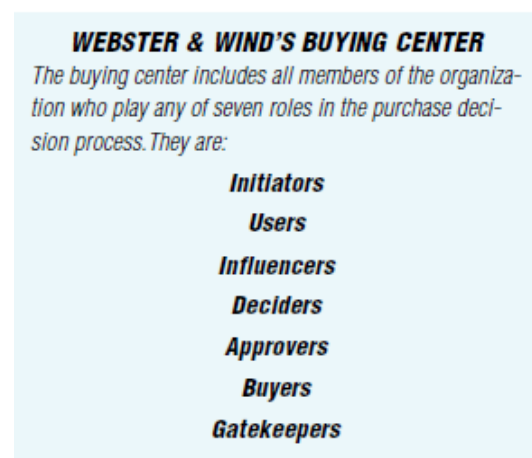


Figure 1: Webster & Wind's buying center.
Source: Phillips, 2006.

and groups who participate in the purchasing decision-making process, who share some common goals and the risks arising from the decisions.” (Webster & Wind, 1972) There are seven roles played in the buying center, however, one person can take on more than one role. The roles are, (1) Initiators, those who start the buying process; (2) Users, the people that will use the product; (3) Influencers, people who influence the decision-making; (4) Deciders, those who decide on the requirements for the product; (5) Approvers, the people that give the all clear on the decisions; (6) Buyers, who make the actual purchase, and (7) Gatekeepers, who can keep sellers and/or information from reaching the buying center (Phillips, 2006). The buying center model is important for this report, because it not only shows that different people are involved in making a decision but also that these different roles are in need of different information.

A similar view is expressed in Robinson, Faris and Wind’s Buy-Grid framework. They describe the industrial buying process as one in which there are several stages, “the buyer’s information needs differ at each stage, and therefore, so do the communication tasks of the industrial marketer.” (Berthon, Lane, Pitt & Watson, 1998, p. 693) The Buy-Grid framework consist of eight different sequential stages and three different buy situations. The eight buy stages are:

- “1. Recognition of a problem or need;
2. Determination of the application or characteristics and the quantity of needed product;
3. Development of specifications or description of needed product
4. Search for and qualifications of potential suppliers
5. Obtaining and analyzing supplier proposals
6. Evaluation of proposals and selection of suppliers.
7. Selection of an order routine
8. Performance feedback and post-purchase evaluation.” (Havaladar, 2005, p. 36)

The three buy situations are new task, meaning a first time purchase, modified rebuy, which is a replacement of the currently used product, or straight rebuy, which is a routine purchase. For the purpose of this thesis it is most important to take note of the different buy stages, as information needs differ greatly from beginning to end. The full model can be found in Appendix I: Theoretical Framework.

MarketingSherpa (2008) names the buying center “the committee”, in which a varying number of people help determine a purchase decision. The committee can either be

enormous, when a large organization has to make a decision in a risky environment, or small, but people still assume a role in the committee. The different roles have differing concerns, and these people will have to be offered the information they are looking for.

“Prospects don’t go looking for a new vendor when you happen to have a product launch or upgrade. They go looking when they are ready to and for as long as they feel they need to.” (MarketingSherpa, 2008) Therefore it is much wiser to become increasingly visible.

2.2 Lead generation

The different information each buying stage requires is also illustrated in, the AIDA model, the Hierarchy of Effects model and the Think-Feel-Do model. These models all focus on the stages a consumer goes through before making the actual purchase. These models form the foundation for lead generation as the prospective customer first needs to be aware of their own need for the product and the company. In order for the buyer to become knowledgeable the company needs to properly communicate with them. A liking and/or preference for the product is then formed which ultimately results in the purchase of a product or service. Pictures of all models can be found in Appendix I: Theoretical Framework.

The AIDA (Attention/Awareness-Interest-Desire-Action) model depicts the stages a consumer goes through during the buying process. These steps are always followed in the same order. Without attention/awareness there could not be interest, desire and then action. The model can help to target customers more effectively by basing what they ‘need’ on the customers’ position in the model (Provenmodels, n.d.). This targeting is precisely what happens in lead generation as well. At different stages different information is provided in order to reel in the lead and transform it into a (satisfied) customer (Merx, 2010).

The Hierarchy of Effects model (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961) shows similar stages, that consumers must pass through in one particular order, from awareness and knowledge (cognitive stage), to liking, preference and conviction (affective stage), to

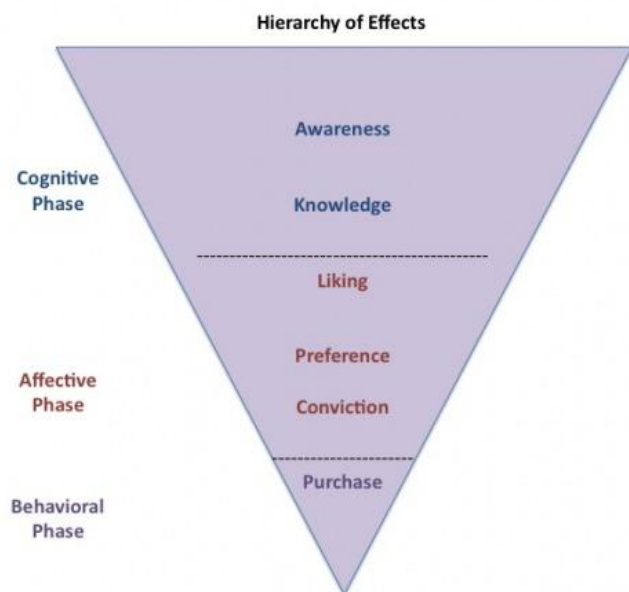


Figure 2: Hierarchy of Effect model. Source: <http://www.hausmanmarketingletter.com/tag/hierarchy-of-effects/>

the purchase (behavioural stage) (De Pelsmacker, Gueens & van den Bergh, 2004). According to Belch and Belch “(...), communication may not lead to an immediate behavioural response or purchase, but rather, consumers must fulfill each step before he/she can move to the next stage in the hierarchy.” (1998, p.146)

The Think-Feel-Do model is similar to the Hierarchy of Effects model, the only difference being the wording. The Hierarchy of Effects model has the cognitive phase, affective phase and behavioral phase, while the Think-Feel-Do model named the phases after the model stages.

In essence, lead generation implies attracting prospective customers that fit the companies' target consumers (Carroll, 2006). According to Brooks (2008) the idea of lead generation is to find companies or employees that:

1. Are aware of their need for the particular product
2. Have the authority to give the green light and the ability to get the funds
3. Have a sense of urgency in relation to getting the product
4. Have faith in the selling organization
5. Are willing to listen to the selling organization. (Brooks, 2008, p 2)

There are several ways of generating leads, namely face-to-face meetings, via telephone, at trade shows or networking events, via word-of-mouth either from current customers, or from other people, via the internet, as a response on direct mail, or e-mail, or via selling more to current customers. (Brooks, 2008) For the purpose of this study the focus is on online media, since these media are a cost effective way for OMS to try and achieve their goal of generating leads. Some specific ways of generating leads online include e-newsletter subscriptions, questions for more information via the website and downloads from the website, such as brochures (Gillin & Schwartzman, 2011).

2.3 Online marketing

The terms online marketing, internet marketing and e-marketing have a similar meaning. All of these terms refer to online media and how best to utilise them to reach the company's target consumers. Chaffey and Smith (2008) add that online marketing “involves getting close to customers, understanding them better and maintaining a dialogue with them.” (2008, p. 13) For the purpose of this research the term online marketing will be used in relation to the term online media.

Chaffey and Smith (in Chaffey, Ellis-Chadwick, Mayer, Johnston, 2009) developed a planning framework for Internet marketing called SOSTAC. SOSTAC stands for Situation analysis, Objectives, Strategy, Tactics, Actions and Control. This model depicts the same stages of a 'traditional' marketing plan. All strategic planning models start with a situation analysis, from which the objectives are set. After that a strategy is developed and then the tactics for reaching the goals are selected. To round the plan off implementation and measurement are specified (Ferrell & Hartline, 2011; Armstrong, Kotler, Harker & Brennan, 2009).

Myer (2007), on the other hand, offers a simpler model for creating an effective marketing strategy. He adapted Dan Kenedy's 'Three M' approach, which is a symmetrical triangle, and on each of the tips is a word; market, message and media. Myer states that the 'Three M' approach is a great way to show the order in which a strategy needs to be developed. "First you figure out your market, then your message, and finally your media." (p. 6) Myers adds a fourth M, for money, to the model, as a single line in the middle of the triangle (Myers, 2007).

In order for this report to provide OMS with online media tools that will help them achieve their objective (generate leads and thus drive sales) there has to be a strategy behind the tactics or tools used. The SOSTAC framework is used as a guide for writing the advice for OMS, as Chaffey et al. (2009) provide knowledge about Internet marketing instead of just traditional marketing.

Part of the planning process is coming up with a strategy. Ansoff's 4x4 matrix depicts four basic strategies for a company. As with many other models, the Ansoff matrix helps to simplify a complex situation.

"The four basic strategies are:

		Products	
		Existing	New
Markets	Existing	1 Penetration	2 New product development
	New	3 Market development	4 Diversification

Figure 3: Ansoff Matrix. Source: Wright, 2004, p. 453.

- Existing products in existing markets – market penetration.
- New products in existing markets – product development.
- Existing products in new markets – market development.
- New products in new markets – diversification." (Wright, 2004)

Market penetration is only possible if competitors leave space in a market, if sales can be taken from competitors, or if there is growth in a market.

The second strategy involves producing new products, services or benefits for existing customers.

Market development entails finding a new market to sell an already existing product; this could mean new customers, but also a new usage.

The last strategy, diversification, is the strategy with the most risk involved, as it implies both a new product and a new market (Wright, 2004).

Chaffey et al. (2009) state that an Internet-specific SWOT analysis can help develop an appropriate internet marketing plan that counters threats and takes advantages of opportunities. A SWOT analysis is divided into Strengths and Weaknesses, which are internal, and Opportunities and Threats, which are external to a company. "The Internet SWOT can be reviewed in the main areas of online marketing activity, namely areas of customer acquisition, conversion, retention and growth." (Chaffey et al., 2009, p. 222) The Internet-specific SWOT, shown in Table 1 can help determine a suitable strategy. "The most rewarding strategies combine Strengths and Opportunities or counter Threats through Strengths." (Chaffey et al., 2009, p. 222)

The organization	Strengths – S 1. Existing brand 2. Existing customer base 3. Existing distribution	Weakness – W 1. Brand perception 2. Intermediary use 3. Technology/skills 4. Cross-channel support
Opportunities – O 1. Cross-selling 2. New markets 3. New services 4. Alliances/co-branding	SO strategies Leverage strengths to maximize opportunities = Attacking strategy	WO strategies Counter weaknesses through exploiting opportunities = Build strengths for attacking strategy
Threats – T 1. Customer choice 2. New entrants 3. New competitive products 4. Channel conflicts	ST strategies Leverage strengths to minimize threats = Defensive strategy	WT strategies Counter weaknesses and threats = Build strengths for defensive strategy

Table 1: General Internet-specific SWOT strategy. Source: Chaffey et al. 2009, p. 222.

Some examples of Strengths-Opportunities strategies (SO strategy), Weaknesses-Opportunities strategies (WO strategy), Strengths-Threats strategies (ST strategy), and Weaknesses-Threats strategies (WT strategy) can be found in table two.

SO strategy examples: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Migrate customers to web strategy 2. Refine customer contact strategy across customer lifecycle or commitment segmentation 3. Partnership strategy (co-branding, linking) 4. Launch new web-based products or value-adding experiences, e.g. video streaming 	WO strategy examples: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Counter mediation strategy (create or acquire) 2. Search marketing acquisition strategy 3. Affiliate-based acquisition strategy 4. Refine customer contact strategy
ST strategy examples: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduce new Internet-only products 2. Add value to web services – refine Online Value Proposition 3. Partner with complementary brand 4. Create own social network/ customer reviews 	WT strategy examples <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Differential online pricing strategy 2. Acquire/create pure play company with lower cost-base 3. Customer engagement strategy to increase conversion, average order value and lifetime value 4. Online reputation management strategy/ E-PR

Table 2: Examples of how an Internet-specific SWOT can help formulate a strategy. Source Chaffey et al. 2009, p. 223.

3. Methodology

For the purpose of this research study both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used to collect data. Using only quantitative data would not give much in depth information, but using only qualitative data would make data interpretation harder and more subjective to the researcher's view (Denscombe, 2007). Using a mix method provides this study with both reliable, statistical data and in depth information.

A questionnaire was distributed online under OMS's current and potential customers, and the online presence of OMS's competitors was observed.

3.1 Questionnaire

OMS's current and potential customers were asked to fill in an online questionnaire. The addresses of the customers were taken from OMS's database. The two groups were chosen to see if OMS's customers and target customers use online media to find information on EDI, and to see what online media would be effective for OMS to use in order to communicate with their customers.

The sample for this questionnaire was obtained with the use of availability sampling, as the customers who were sent this questionnaire were selected by availability from OMS's database. The reason this sampling method was applied is because of time constraints, and the impossibility to find all OMS's prospective customers.

There were approximately 200 mail addresses in the database, more than half of those mail addresses never received the e-mail (e.g. e-mail delivery failures). In the end thirty-eight people completed filling in the questionnaire.

This sample size is not reliable to make generalisations from, but it is sufficient for this exploratory research to draw some conclusions from as the answers given were very consistent. What makes the data from the questionnaire reliable is the fact that the questionnaire could yield the same results if it was send out by another researcher (Denscombe, 2007, p. 334).

Ten questions were developed for customers and potential customers to answer. The decision to have a small number of questions stems from the target customers that would have to fill in the questionnaire. OMS's (target) customers are busy professionals. For this same reason the decision was made to use mainly close-ended questions. The customers are more likely to answer questions for which they only have to tick a box. The result of ticking boxes is quantitative data. Quantitative data is easier to process and "interpretations are based on measured quantities rather than impressions" (Denscombe,

2007, p. 283). Also impressions cannot be reproduced or checked by other researchers, but quantities can (Denscombe, 2007).

In the questionnaire one open-ended, qualitative question was selected to get more in depth, detailed information on whether or not social media was considered useful in the EDI market (Denscombe, 2007, p. 312).

Two questions were asked one with regards to how people searched for information in general and one with regards to how information regarding EDI solutions was found. These two questions were asked in order to see if search behaviour differed when the product that would solve the company problem/ fulfil the company need was already known.

After these two questions more information was asked on what kind of information (potential) customers look for. This question was asked for the sake of the newsletter, and for website content. Later in the questionnaire inquiries were made to find out what kind of information customers would like to receive from OMS, and how they would like to receive this information.

OMS also wished to know if their customers were willing to receive information from other EDI branches, therefore a question was dedicated to this subject.

As OMS's current Twitter account is not very popular the question arose if social media were even used by OMS's target audience. Therefore an open-ended question was developed with regards to social media usage. Another question was developed to see if (potential) customers were willing to follow OMS on three major social networking sites.

To understand how customers perceived OMS's current online media usage they were asked to rate the media on a scale.

The questionnaire was sent out via an online survey service called SurveyMonkey. This website allows the user to ask people questions and provides them with immediate data analysis graphs. SurveyMonkey does not provide an analysis tool for qualitative answers, therefore the qualitative answers were read and similar themes were identified.

The use of a questionnaire can be seen as a suitable method to obtain data from the customers on the usage of online media. Interviews and observations would take up too much time; a lot of effort would have to be put into finding people that are willing to participate and these methods would not produce the amount of data needed. Therefore the use of a questionnaire is considered valid (Denscombe, 2007, p. 335).

3.2 Observations

OMS's competitors' online presence was observed, as there was either no response or a negative response to arranging an interview. Therefore observations were chosen as another method to have a look at the competitors' online presence. All observations were made on the same day, namely April 22, 2012 between 10.00 AM and 12.30 PM.

OMS has nine (known) competitors, of which five are competitors in more than one market segment. Two competitors could be disregarded for this study as they are in a market segment that OMS is not expanding into (healthcare).

The observations that were made are viewed as qualitative data, although some data derived from the observations can also be found by another researcher at another time. For example, another researcher could also find the online media the competitors use, but he/she might have a different opinion on the media and thus come to different conclusions, or he/she might have different search methods and find more or less information etc. Observations are considered subjective and less reliable than a questionnaire or interview. However, in order to try and limit the subjectiveness of this method all steps taken during the observation were documented and drawing conclusions was limited.

Observations were not the first choice, as they are less valid than an interview would have been. However, the observations also brought up information that is relevant and deemed accurate. (Denscombe, 2007, p. 335)

Observations were made by; firstly of visiting the competitors' websites. Secondly, the three main social media sites (Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter) were visited to see if the competitors were active on one of those sites. Then the websites were revisited to see if they linked to the social media sites and if they offered their customers information via other online media (e.g. newsletters or white papers). The final step was to look at company information in order to determine the size of the company and whether or not that had anything to do with the findings.

The findings of the observations and the questionnaire are discussed in the next chapter.

4. Research Findings

The previous chapter outlined the different research methods applied for this study. A translation of the questionnaire, statistics and a table of the observations can be found in Appendix II: Research.

4.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire pointed out that (potential) customers use search engines and company websites mostly to search for (general) information. However, when searching for information with regards to EDI they use personal contact (via e-mail or phone) more than websites and search engines. Social media on the other hand are, according to this survey, never used to search for EDI related information. This stance is further reinforced by the response to the question “Do you look on social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, to keep in touch with companies that sell EDI solutions? Could you please explain why or why not?” Out of the 38 respondents only two said they did use social networks. Other respondents replied that they felt it was too time consuming, only for private use, or not a suitable medium for EDI information.

Respondents were asked whether or not they would follow OMS on Twitter, Facebook or LinkedIn. Facebook got a resounding “no” answer, while LinkedIn got the most “maybe” answers. If the content is right customers might follow OMS on LinkedIn, while the friend network Facebook should not be taken into account.

Respondents indicated that should they want to receive information, they would like the information either via an online newsletter, or via an e-mail update. The difference between these two is size and layout. Online newsletters can usually also be found as web pages, and be reread online, while e-mail updates are just what the name indicates. Eight respondents replied that they want the information via the website, and four respondents replied that a forum or LinkedIn is one of their preferred media.

The information looked for by customers concerns mainly technical specifications, new functions, and support. Other relevant information that is of importance to customers is price, software updates, company profile and whether or not EDI is the right solution for the buying company.

When asked if they would want to receive information from OMS, eleven people responded positively on wanting to receive information on new functions, ten people wanted to be updated on developments in the market, and nine were interested in news about software updates. However, providing people with information might be difficult as 71 percent of the respondents said they did not want to be kept up-to-date about

developments outside of their branch. About twenty people said they did not want to receive information from OMS.

One question was asked to see how customers perceived OMS's current online media. Most respondents replied that they thought the performance was average. However, this questionnaire was also sent out to people who are unfamiliar with OMS, and there was no neutral option. As a result it can be assumed that some of the 'average' responses have to be considered as 'neutral'. All media under question were rated more on the negatively than positively. This is an indication that improvements have to be made.

4.2 Observations

As expected all of the researched competitors have a website and nearly all use an online newsletter or magazine to provide their customers, or those interested with information. TIE, Centric EDI, InterCommIT, and Greencat, the bigger competitors, all use some form of social media. The most commonly used social media is LinkedIn.

However there seems to be a relation between company size and the utilization of online media. The larger the company the more different types of media they use to communicate. This is most likely due to larger company having a larger budget to employ people to keep the online media up-to-date.

The following chapters follow steps from the SOSTAC model (Chaffey, Ellis-Chadwick, Mayer, and Johnston, 2009) in order to come to a sound advice for OMS. In chapter five the situation is analysed, the reason a short analysis was chosen is because chapter one already provides most of the background to the problem. In chapter six the objectives and strategy for OMS are established. The tactics to achieve the goals are explained in chapter seven.

A summary of the recommendations can be found at the end of the report.

5. A brief situation analysis

OMS is a small company that sells communication technology systems (EDI) to other businesses. The product OMS sells is quite technologically complex. The software OMS sells is always tailored to the buying company's needs. Next to selling the software OMS also sells a service, namely product maintenance.

OMS operates in the (traditional) EDI market; more specifically most of OMS's clients can be found in the automotive sector. This sector is one of the twelve main EDI sectors.

There aren't many potential customers left in the automotive sector. The lack of potential sales and the fact that businesses are more careful when making investments, due to the economic downturn, have made OMS decide to expand to other EDI market segments.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expertise• Reliable software• Service and software price• Company recognition in automotive sector• Networks within automotive sector• Knowledge of processes outside of the automotive sector• The whole organisation is committed to bringing the best solution to the customer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hardly any references outside the automotive sectors• Unknown brand outside automotive sector• Small organisation• OMS misses some technology related to EDI software• No 24/7 support• No implementation experience in some sectors.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Competitors have left space in the EDI markets• EDI has become less important for competitors• Customers want to outsource EDI completely• Software houses want to offer their clients a turnkey solution	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Price support per hour• Online translation services• Other software developments (non EDI)• Competitors have entered a price battle• Small organization can act restraining

Several competitors are active in the different EDI sectors. Some competitors, however, are focusing on new products and new markets, thus leaving space in the EDI market. OMS can use this opportunity to expand to market sectors in which they were not previously active.

5.1 OMS's competitors

OMS has five major competitors that are active in more than one EDI market segment, and four other competitors that are only active in one market segment. Two of which are in a market OMS is not planning on entering (healthcare). Of the seven competitors left to consider four are part of international companies. These big four have an advantage of the smaller EDI providers, since they have employees who work specifically on the online presence.

The larger companies have more resources online, e.g. whitepapers, magazines, online brochures, search engine advertising, Twitter presences, a blog, which is only possible with man power and an extensive budget. The budget is not so much necessary for the online resources, but more for the man-hours put in producing the resources.

However, even the other smaller EDI providers have an advantage over OMS because they show up on the first page of the search engine results when typing in EDI related search terms. Their websites are most likely optimised for the search engine with the use of (the right) keywords.

In the next chapter the objectives for OMS's online campaign are set and the strategy for achieving the objectives is outlined.

6. Objectives & Strategy for OMS's online communication

OMS's target audience consists of very different people in different market segments, just like the buying center consists of multiple people with different views and information needs. However, what OMS's customers have in common is that they want their business to be running as smoothly as possible. With this target audience in mind objectives and a strategy can be formulated, in order to come to sound recommendations for OMS's online media usage.

6.1 Objectives

OMS wants to generate leads via its online channels. Arjan Vonk, sales manager at OMS, said that at this moment "OMS is the 'big' unknown in the EDI market." (Personal communication, March 7, 2012) Therefore people need to become more aware of OMS as an EDI provider and they need to be able to find OMS on the web easily.

Some more specific objectives can be set such as:

- Increasing website visits and click troughs by twenty percent over a three month period via the use of search engine optimization.
- Have five percent of the website visitors sign up for the newsletter in six months. Measured via website statistics and the newsletter sign up mailing list.
- Receive a ten percent increase in e-mail or phone contact with potential customers, within six months of starting the campaign.
- Turn five percent of the interested buyers into customers in six months time via the website, newsletters, and personal contact, measured via an increase in sales

6.2 Strategy

OMS wants to (1) market its existing products and services better with existing customers, (2) market its existing product into new markets, and (3) market new products to new markets, all via the use of online marketing communication. These three methods are defined in the Ansoff matrix as being, market penetration, market development and diversification (Wright, 2004).

Market penetration can only be achieved when (1) there are new customers, (2) there can be sold more to customers, or (3) when customers are taken from competitors. For OMS, however, there are only few potential clients in the automotive sector. The current customers on the other hand, could invest more in their EDI solutions via buying support

from OMS. So, the idea behind the market penetration strategy is to sell more, in this case support service, to current customers.

Market development, on the other hand, focuses on bringing existing products to a new market. As is stated in the problem definition, expansion to new markets is possible because OMS's competitors are focusing on markets and products away from the traditional EDI market.

The third strategy, diversification, means OMS wants to sell new software to a new market. This is possible, because new software is developed by software houses from which OMS buys the programs.

For OMS promotion is the overall strategy behind market penetration, market development and diversification. OMS needs to promote itself, and its products to raise awareness, to get people to return to OMS, and ultimately make the sale.

The target customers in these particular markets are either aware of EDI providers, as the questionnaire indicated that they prefer personal contact with the selling party if they search for information on EDI, or the target customers are not aware and search via a search engine.

The difference in how a prospect searches also indicates that they look for different information. Someone who already knows about EDI providers will already have a general idea of what EDI brings to their company, while those who search via a search engine need more convincing to consider OMS and return to their website or initiate personal contact.

Chaffey et al. (2009) found that the SWOT analysis can also be used to identify the appropriate strategy for a company. They state that the most rewarding strategies either incorporate both Strengths and Opportunities, or circumvent Threats through Strengths. For OMS a strengths and opportunities strategy (SO strategy) works, as they jump on the opportunity that competitors have left space for OMS to grow into. An example of an SO strategy, as given by Chaffey et al. (2009), is "refine customer contact strategy across customer lifecycle or commitment segmentation." (Chaffey et al. 2009, p. 223) Meaning that e-mail and web based media can be used to track a customer and engage with said customers.

OMS needs exactly this kind of strategy in order to generate more leads. Methods to achieve this are to get higher on search engine rankings, provide customers with more tailored information that matches the buying stage they are in, differentiate itself from its competitors, improve the design of their website and the content on the website, give (potential) customers the chance to sign up for an informative newsletter, and increase

the online locations where OMS can be found. All these specific methods, or tactics, are described in detail in the next chapter. First a general explanation of the tactics is given, after which specific details are given for how OMS can implement these tactics to achieve their goal.

6.2.1 Main message of the strategy

OMS needs to communicate the benefits for companies to buy EDI systems from OMS, including OMS's experience and knowledge and the benefits of the actual software. Communication should make potential buyers aware of OMS and provide them with knowledge that could solve their information need.

7. Tactics

This chapter describes the tactics that will help execute the above mentioned strategy and ultimately help achieve the objectives previously set. Several online tactics were taken into consideration. Some tactics are dismissed because they do not suit the target customers, others were not considered because the costs would be too high. All tactics combined provide a 'system' that will help OMS generate leads. According to Goldratt's theory of constraints the success of a program/system depends on the manner of interaction of the different functions (Dettmer, 1997). As the proverb says 'a chain is only as strong as its weakest link.' However, what makes Goldratt's theory interesting for these recommendations is the fact that processes are continuous, and thus the weakest links are found and made stronger. Indicating that the tactics described below are never fully complete, there is a continuous improvement cycle if analysis points out that one tactic does not yield the right results.

7.1 Company website

Safko (2010) states that "Web sites have become such an important marketing tool nowadays that they essentially serve as the foundation for everything that's done in business."

A first time visit to a website determines return visits and time spend on site. If the visitor does not find the information he/she is looking for they will most likely not return. A site needs to be credible and of a good quality to keep visitors on the site (Chaffey et al, 2009).

Newlands (2011) states that some of the best websites are simple; easy to navigate through and have a clear main message.

7.1.1 OMS company website

OMS's website has been found to be outdated both in design and content. In order to improve OMS's website a complete redesign is required, and content should be updated. During this process SEO has to be taken in mind, as keywords and links have to be incorporated to optimize search engine visibility.

The blue and white color scheme used give the website a professional look, however, the contact information can be found right below the menu bar. This confuses the visitor, as the text starts below this banner. Another reason the contact information needs to move is because visitors need to scroll down to see the text on the page. As visitors form an opinion of the usability of a website within mere seconds, they will need to be able to see what they need right away.



Figure 4: Screenshot of the OMS Homepage. Source: http://www.omsinternational.eu/page-Home_4.aspx

In addition, the home page contains very little information, and there is another menu bar right below the text. This menu bar is about product options. The reason this need to be changed is firstly the confusion factor and secondly the products are not on one line.

It is important that the content has to be easily found on the website. If customers need to search for the information they will give up and move on to another website. Thus as Robinson, Annison and Chaffey (2010) state the journey to the information should be “as short as possible.”

Another improvement to be made is the visibility of the newsletter. Currently, the option for signing up for the newsletter can only be found via the main menu bar. It would be an improvement to inform visitors on the home page and other important landing pages that there is an option for signing up for the newsletter.

The questionnaire has pointed out that (potential) customers mainly look for technical information, new functionalities and support information. This information needs to be

added or improved. However, basic information should not be forgotten. The advantages of the software need to be pointed out clearly, as well as the advantages OMS offers its customers. Mainly, however, the Unique Selling Point (USP) has to be conveyed. The USP is what makes OMS better than its competitors, for example, OMS is one of the oldest EDI providers which also entails that they are one of the most experienced. OMS also needs to provide information for all the different roles people play in all stages of the buying process. For example, for Initiators it is important to know that there is a product that can solve their needs, while for Users it is important to know how the product will function (Phillips, 2006).

Newlands (2011) claims that a website can remain current by uploading case studies, and old copies of the newsletter in PDF format. He also states that with every content update the SEO keywords need to be adjusted accordingly. In addition to this the best ways to market the website are putting the website on all company (print) material, inbound links, and adding the website to the social media bio sections. (Newlands, 2011, pp. 78-80)

OMS can track website statistics and SEO keywords via the use of online services such as Google Analytics. These statistics indicate which pages are visited most, how long people spend on the website, and how many times a link is clicked.

7.2 Search Engine Marketing

There are basically four types of Search Engine Marketing namely Search Engine Optimization, PPC/Paid search, vertical search engines and directories, and contextual advertisements. Search engine optimization involves the process of getting your website to rank high on search engines by the use of keywords. PPC (pay per click)/Paid search involves the use of advertisements on search engines. Vertical search engines and directories are industry specific search sites. Contextual advertisements imply advertisements found on blogs or other third party sites (MarketingSherpa, 2008). However, since there is a limited budget, search engine advertising will not be used. The focus is solely on Search Engine Optimization to get OMS's website higher in the rankings.

In the *B-to-B Lead Generation Handbook* MarketingSherpa mentions in a section on search engine marketing that "you can reach business buyers at all different stages of the buying cycle – from initial explorations to final consideration." (MarketingSherpa, 2008) Thus proving that search engine optimization is a great way to generate leads.

7.2.1 Search Engine Optimization

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is the practice of using keywords and link-building to ensure that the company website will appear on top of the first page of the search results when someone searches for terms related to the business. “SEO is, quite simply, the art of making yourself easy to find through search engines.” (Newlands, 2011, p. 148) People usually do not look beyond the first page, thus the results at the top of the page get more visitors than the ones lower down (Newlands, 2011).

The search terms that a (potential) customer uses or the web pages they click on indicate at what stage of the buying process he/she is. SEO provides an opportunity to show these buyers the information that their buying stage requires. (MarketingSherpa, 2008)

```
<meta name = "keywords"
content = "social media, social
media bible, Lon Safko,
marketing, pr, sales,
```

Figure 5: Example of Meta data. Source: Safko 2010, p. 362.

Search engine optimization starts with identifying the keywords customers search for most. These keywords then need to be incorporated in the website content, the Meta data, which is the code ‘behind’ the website, and the headings, but they have to be relevant.

A keyword can also be included in a website URL, e.g. omsinternational.eu/EDIsystems (Newlands, 2011; Robinson, Annison and Chaffey, 2010). “Keywords in the meta data describe what kind of information can be found on the website.” (Safko, 2010)

The content of the website needs to be what customers are looking for; otherwise they will leave the site in a flash.

Another way to increase search engine ranking is links, both internal links leading to other pages and external links from other parties to the company website. These links show the search engine that the website or specific page offer information that is of value (Newlands, 2011).

OMS can use several keywords while optimizing their website, for example, Electronic Data Interchange, EDI system, benefits EDI, electronic communication, xml EDI, b2b communication, EDI messages, and EDI software. More related terms can be found via Google Adwords’ keyword tool. These keywords need to be incorporated in the website’s text and titles, however, the content should still be valuable to the searching customer. The keywords also need to be integrated in the Meta data, or source code, of a website. It is probably best for a website developer to include these tags, as a small mistake in the website code can have the whole website malfunction.

Newlands (2011) claims it is a good idea to use keywords as headings and section titles as long as it makes sense. He also says that "if you are linking out from your page to another one, make sure you hyperlink only the text that contains the keyword(s) you want to be ranked." For example OMS could write, "OMS International provides customers with EDI solutions that benefit their business." The words EDI solutions would be made into a hyperlink, which traffics people to the EDI solutions page.

Linking one page to another (internal linking) increases the likelihood that search engines rank a website high, thus meaning that OMS should link its pages to each other. However, this should only be done when it is relevant to link to the other page.

7.2.2 Vertical search

OMS is already on two vertical search sites or industry directories. However, the information on these websites is less than sufficient. On both sites OMS is listed under the EDI specialist section, but neither of the sites gives information on OMS. The first website is called edi.besteoverzicht.nl¹ and lists only OMS's website. The second directory is called handige-zaken.nl², the descriptive text with the website link looks like website coding.

These directories are not only important for people to find OMS, but also for the external links that search engines take into account while ranking a website.

OMS could improve these directories by suggesting one or two lines of information on OMS.

The effectiveness of SEO can be measured by the use of the specific keywords; this can be checked via services such as Google keywords, which is a part of Google Adwords.

Via this service the amount of times a search term is used can be seen, and OMS can keep the keywords on their site up-to-date.

7.3 Newsletters

"E-newsletters are easily accessible to readers, who are just a click away from the content, and can provide a maximum amount of information in a limited amount of space and time." (Gorey, 2007)

E-newsletters can be used to build relationships, and they are especially useful to slowly ease customers into the sale if the product has a long sales cycle (Fernando, 2011). The difficulty associated with a newsletter is to create one that is actually read by the

¹: <http://edi.besteoverzicht.nl/Edi-specialisten.html>

²: <http://handige-zaken.nl/edi/edi-specialisten.html>

recipients. A newsletter will have to capture the attention of the reader immediately.

Catching attention starts with the subject line. The subject line should invite people to read; therefore it should not consist of a set of keywords alone (Fernando, 2011).

Fernando (2011) also states that different content needs to be created for different customer groups. For OMS this is very challenging as they are a small company, the risk of not making specific content for specific groups is that the customers unsubscribe. However, the time that needs to be invested in writing different content for different customer groups, is probably not worth it.

A second important aspect of writing a newsletter is the design, which needs to reflect OMS's house style. The visuals need to be clear and the text easy to scan through. Links can be used to direct people to more information, but ensure that there is indeed more information (Gorey, 2007 & Fernando, 2011).

OMS thus needs to ensure the subject line captures the attention of the readers, as well as formulate content that they want to read, and package it all in a nice clean (consistent) design that lets people know the newsletter came from OMS. In order to write in a style that OMS's customers like best a bit of experimenting needs to be done. Measuring the click-through rates can help determine what writing style appeals to OMS's customers most.

The questionnaire showed that (potential) customers are most interested in technical specifications, new functions of the software and support. Thus indicating that these are the topics people want to know most about. OMS could also include stories of how EDI benefitted a certain company (case studies), and general information on OMS or the EDI market.

Also some newsletter articles can lead back to the website or OMS's social media profile(s), but only when this is actually relevant, either because more information can be found, or for filling in a form.

It is also very important for OMS to not only work from a very obvious sales angle. Information will be seen less as spam, than sales infused newsletters. Thus, instead of sending the updates from sales@omsinternational, it is best to send newsletters via oms@omsinternational, or any mail address that does not immediately ring a sales bell.

Newsletters should be sent out via a consistent schedule (Gorey, 2007), for OMS this could be once a week, once every two week or even once a month. The frequency needs to be based on actually having something to say that is relevant to the subscribers. Keep to the schedule, and don't send out more than one newsletter a week. Professionals are

busy people who are most likely signed up to more than one newsletter. Sending too many will put them off, and they will certainly unsubscribe.

No company wants people to unsubscribe from their newsletter, but it happens as people lose interest or get annoyed with the amount of mails received. Therefore a clear unsubscribe button should be added to the newsletter.

Gorey (2007) and Fernando (2011) both stress the importance of tracking the open rates and click-through rates, which tell what articles people found interesting to read, and which articles were skipped. These rates can be measured via online services. These services can measure if people open the newsletter and which articles in the newsletter are most clicked on.

7.4 E-mail marketing

Newsletters are sent out on a regular basis, but e-mail marketing e-mails are sent out for specific offers and are more push-marketing. It is considered the online equivalent of direct marketing. These e-mails are sent out to everyone in the database, and usually include an offer or a reaction to an industry development.

OMS can use this form of marketing to inform their customers of support offers and/or industry developments. Just like newsletters these mails have to be clearly structured, easy to read and clearly designed. The design has to let people know the mail was sent by OMS.

However, e-mails with offers or information should not be abused; meaning that not too many mails must be sent out. Plus, e-mails and newsletters should not clash. If something important needs to be sent out make sure there is at least a day between the two. Otherwise there is a risk that people get annoyed with the e-mails.

The effectiveness of the e-mails can be measured via the amount of either clicks on a link or via personal contact following the mail.

7.5 Social media

OMS really wants to use some form of social media and is currently using Twitter to reach their customers, but looking at their followers and the outcomes of the questionnaire, this is not the preferred medium by the target audience. In order to save time it is better to abandon Twitter and focus the attention on LinkedIn. Although, Gillin and Schwartzman (2011) claim that "Twitter is particularly popular with professionals in the technology, marketing, and communications fields." (p. 108) Indicating that it might have some merit for OMS to stay on Twitter.

The questionnaire pointed out that a lot of people might follow OMS on LinkedIn, and the observations showed that many of the competitors are on LinkedIn. On top of that Safko (2010) writes that the job title division on LinkedIn shows that 50 percent of the users are decision makers, 18 percent is in middle management, and 16 percent in senior management (Safko, 2010, p. 33). Indicating that LinkedIn is the medium to reach decision makers.

Two other interesting features of LinkedIn are LinkedIn Answers and Groups. In Answers people help answer questions. In Groups people form groups around a subject and can then start discussions (Gillin & Schwartzman, 2011). There are several EDI groups on LinkedIn, some are interesting for OMS to join. Providing people with information, without sounding like you want to make a sale, will get OMS's name out, as well as it will help form an interest or preference in the customers' minds. Plus, providing customers with valuable information gets them to trust you.

All the different methods discussed above will help OMS attract leads to their website, and gives OMS the opportunity to inform them on the products as well as the services OMS provides. However, they are not stand alone media. The various media have to be linked to one another, all flowing back to the website and personal contact.

7.6 Implementation

The total time for implementation depends on the development of the new website, to be sure at least two months should be taken to complete the website. After that another two weeks can be taken to finalize all other media, as it is unlikely that an employee of OMS can spend eight hours working on the development of the media.

First the website has to be redesigned and the content should be updated. This process can take a long time, as the first design needs to be approved, then tested and improved and then the second version needs to be tested and so on until it is perfected. Another step that makes the redesign take a long time is content writing. Content should be written and then checked both for truthfulness and grammar.

The complete redesign could take up to two months, which includes the testing phases, the uploading of the content and the inclusion of keywords for SEO.

The redesign of the website can influence the design of the newsletter, but the redesign does not prevent OMS from sending out the newsletter. After the redesign of the website, the newsletter needs to get a design update as well. The new newsletter template could be created in one or two days. The same goes for e-mail marketing, the design needs to be updated, but it is a fairly simple update.

A LinkedIn profile is made within an hour, only a bit of time needs to be spend on joining the appropriate groups. However, at least two or three times a week these groups need to be checked for active discussions, to see if OMS can provide some insight for people.

The different media should be monitored and updated continuously. The effectiveness of the different media should be analyzed two months after the new website has gone online and all other media are updated. After which adjustments can be made if the media do not yield the expected results.

After six months the entire campaign needs to be evaluated to see if the objectives were met. This can be done via website statistics, newsletter statistics, sales, and e-mail traffic. If the objectives were met new goals can be set. Have the objectives not been achieved, an investigation should be started as to why not.

No real budget indication can be given as the entire budget depends heavily on who will be hired for developing the new website, whether it is a student, an independent web developer or someone from a company and if this person also helps develop the other media. The budget also depends on the time spend on developing the website, the content and the other online media.

8. Conclusion

This thesis research was conducted in order to provide a small business-to-business with an online marketing proposal that suits their company needs. Online media are a cost effective way for OMS to increase awareness and generate leads.

The main question of this report is:

Which online media can be used by OMS, a small business-to-business company, to generate leads from market segments that are new to them?

Some sub questions were formulated to help answer the main research question.

- *How does B2B selling differ from B2C selling?*
- *How are leads generated online, for B2B companies?*
- *In what manner are the current online media, used by OMS, effective?*
- *Which online media could be effective to generate leads for OMS?*

The answers to these questions were crafted from research into business-to-business selling, lead generation, and online marketing.

8.1 How does B2B selling differ from B2C selling?

B2B selling differs mostly because there are more people involved in making a buying decision and the people in the buying centre have differing information needs at different buying stages (Berthon, Lane, Pitt & Watson, 1998). In the consumer market businesses target a large group of individual customers, while B2B marketers target a smaller group of people that make a buying decision together. Another great difference is the monetary value of the transactions. Buys in the B2B market are of a high value, and the purchase is evaluated on the basis of price, value and utility. In the B2C market purchases are of lower value and are evaluated on the basis of social needs and practicality (Ellis, 2011).

8.2 How are leads generated online for B2B companies?

Gillin and Schwartzman (2011) state that leads can be generated online via the use of website downloads, e-newsletter subscriptions and requests for more information. The first stage of online lead generation, though, is optimising the company website, so (potential) customers will find the website as one of the first when they search for related terms.

8.3 In what manner are the current online media, used by OMS, effective?

A questionnaire was conducted under OMS's potential and current customers in respondents had to answer a question about OMS's current online media usage. The respondents either answered that they thought the expressions were average or they answered they thought the expressions were below average or they thought the expressions via the online media were bad.

Another way to rate the effectiveness of the current online media are the visitors of the website, the followers of the Twitter account and the newsletter subscriptions. All these rates are low to non-existent. Indicating that they are not effective in generating sales leads.

8.4 Which online media could be effective to generate leads for OMS?

First of OMS's website could yield results, but it would have to be redesigned, the content should be updated and the website should be optimized for search engines (e.g. include keywords and links).

Secondly newsletters for which customers can subscribe on the website can be used for updates, providing information and gently easing (potential) customers into a sale.

Third e-mail marketing can be used to inform (potential) customers in the database on industry developments and special offers.

Fourth OMS can use LinkedIn to increase online presence and join LinkedIn groups that focus on the subject of EDI. OMS could then provide people with information, this will increase awareness and will get people to trust OMS.

The answers to the sub questions helped formulate the recommendations, which were already discussed in detail in the chapter on tactics. However, a summary of the recommendations can be found in the next chapter. The recommendations also provide the answer to the main research question, as it asked which online media OMS could best use to generate leads.

9. Summary of the recommendations

The extensive explanation of the recommendations can be found in the chapters on objectives and strategy and tactics. This chapter provides a summarised step-by-step plan.

9.1 Step 1: Company website and SEO

OMS's website needs to undergo a redesign and the content should be updated. This has to be done with SEO in mind. Keywords have to be incorporated in URLs, Meta tags, headlines, subheadings and body text, and pages have to link to each other to give them more value for search engines.

The new design would have to be clean and information should be easy to find. After landing on a page visitors need to see the most important information right at the top without having to scroll on the page.

The subscription to the newsletter should be visible on the homepage, so it draws attention. The same goes for information that can be downloaded from the website, e.g. case studies or a brochure with product information.

The effectiveness of the website and its corresponding SEO can be measured via services such as Google Analytics and Google Adwords Keyword tool.

9.2 Step 2: Newsletter

Customers that signed up for the newsletter expect to receive extra information from OMS on EDI solutions. The newsletter should bear similarities to the website with regards to design.

A schedule should be in place as to when to send out the newsletter, this schedule should be followed consistently.

The content of the newsletter should be easy to read and preferably link back to more information that can be found on OMS's website or OMS's social media profile(s). A bit of experimenting has to be done with regards to writing style.

An important feature of the newsletter that should never be forgotten is the unsubscribe button. OMS does not want to annoy its (potential) customers by making it hard to get rid of the newsletter, as this could irk them so much that they move away from considering OMS for a buy.

There are certain statistics that can be checked in order to see if newsletters are received well. Several online services offer tools to measure open rates of newsletters, but also clicks on links can be measured. These clicks indicate which articles were perceived as most interesting by the target audience.

9.3 Step 3: E-mail marketing

The current database and the new newsletter subscriptions provide OMS with a mailing list for e-mail marketing.

These mails include information about product offerings, or special service offers, as well as information about industry changes.

Just like the newsletter this e-mail should be designed to resemble OMS, meaning that all design should look alike. Another thing to keep in mind is that e-mails should not clash with the newsletter.

The effect of a mailing can be measured either via included links, or an increase in personal contact following the mailing.

9.4 Step 4: LinkedIn

OMS currently used Twitter to convey information, but the questionnaire pointed out that OMS's target does not use Twitter to connect with EDI companies. They do indicate, however, that they might follow OMS on LinkedIn.

This opportunity should not be overlooked, which is why it is recommended that OMS create a profile on LinkedIn, the business social network. LinkedIn does not only provide OMS with the chance to create a company profile, it also provides OMS with the opportunity to join the EDI community via the use of groups. There are several groups on LinkedIn with a focus on EDI.

OMS could benefit from these groups if they provide its users with information. The users will then get to know OMS (increase company awareness) and they can perceive OMS as knowledgeable and trustworthy.

Followers on LinkedIn can indicate the usefulness of the medium, but it is hard to measure the effectiveness of providing people information via LinkedIn Groups.

9.5 Implementation

The whole implementation step starts with the redesign of the website. The entire process of creating new content, designing a new website, building and testing the website could take up to two months.

After these two months the other media can be updated, design wise and content wise. A LinkedIn page can be created and OMS can spend some time providing information to the people in the specific EDI LinkedIn Groups.

The implementation phase can take up to two and a half months, depending on the development of the website.

After six months the campaign should be evaluated to see if the objectives were met, if not an investigation should be started as to what went wrong. The campaign can be evaluated via the use of several statistics, namely website statistics, newsletter and e-mail statistics and sales.

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Appendix I: Theoretical Framework

I.I Broad differences between B2C and B2B buying behaviors

<i>Behaviours & characteristics</i>	Consumer buying	Organizational buying
Number of buyers	Normally large	Normally small
Size of orders	Small	Large
Value of orders	Normally low	Normally high
Evaluating criteria	Social, ego, & utility	Price, value, & utility
Purchase initiation	Normally self	Normally others
Level of risk	Low to medium	Medium to high
Complexity of decision	Low to medium	Medium to high
Information search	Normally short	Normally long

Figure 6: Broad differences between B2C and B2B buying behaviours. Source: Ellis, 2011, p. 39.

I.II Buy-Grid framework

buy phase		new task	modified rebuy	straight rebuy
1	need recognition	○		
2	need definition	○		
3	solution specification	○	○	○
4	supplier identification		○	○
5	proposal solicitation			○
6	proposal evaluation & vendor selection			
7	order routine selection			
8	performance review			

○ : most critical phase(s) of buyclass

Figure 7: Buy-Grid framework. Source: <http://www.provenmodels.com/549>

I.III The AIDA Model

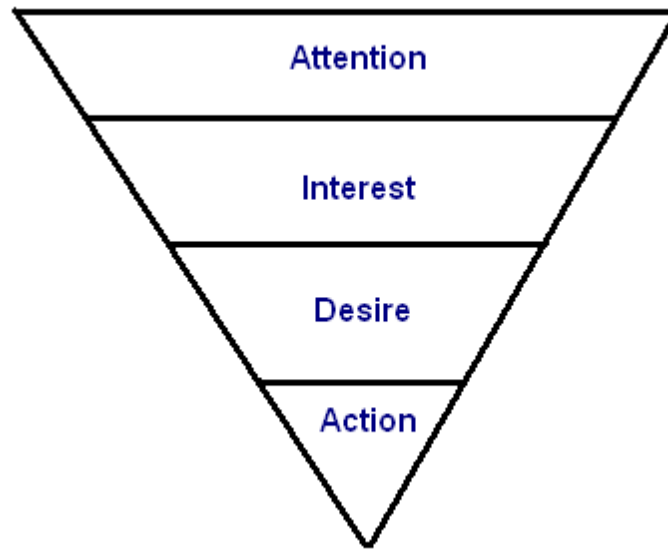


Figure 8: The AIDA model. Source:
<http://www.intemarketing.nl/sites/intemarketing.nl/files/AIDA.PNG>

I.IV Think-Feel-Do model



Figure 9: Think-Feel-Do model. Source:
<http://www.marketingsavant.com/2009/06/marketing-classics-the-hierarchy-of-effects/>

I.V SOSTAC framework

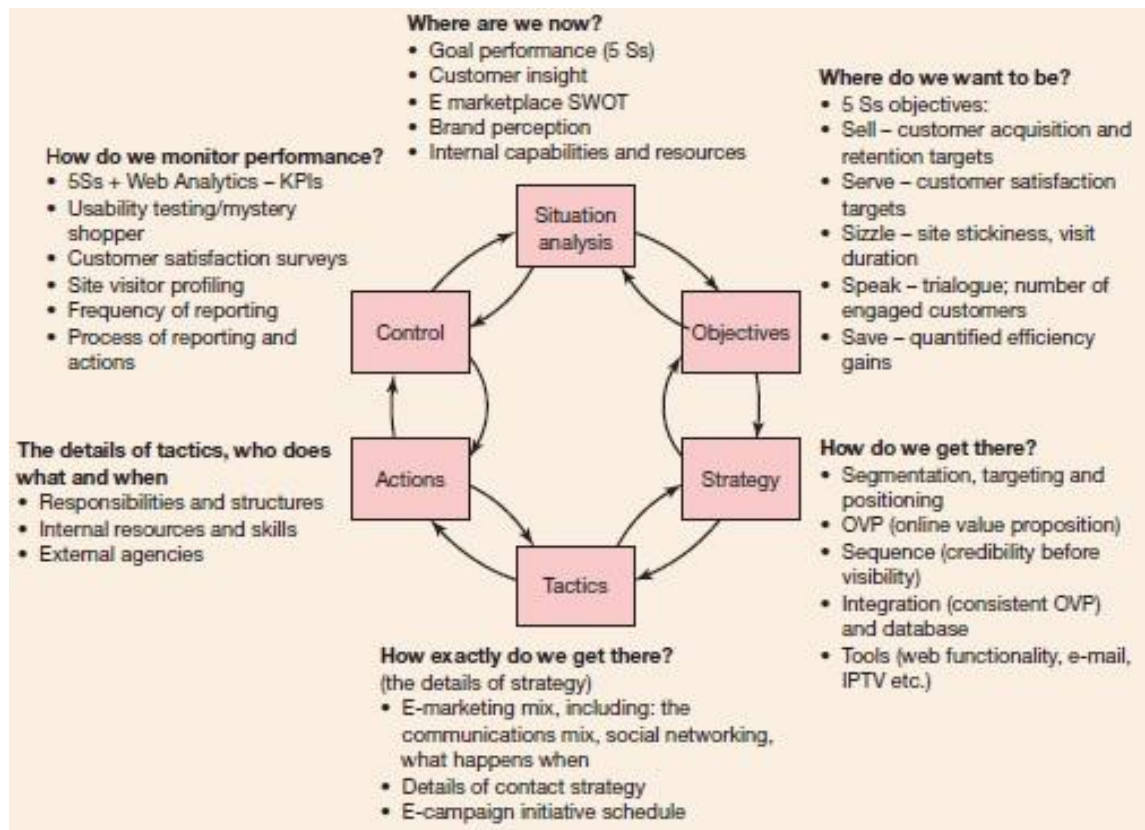


Figure 10: SOSTAC framework by Chaffey and Smith. Source: <http://www.davechaffey.com/images/Internet-marketing-strategy.png>

Appendix II: Research









II.I Translation of the questionnaire

Two different introductory e-mails were sent out. One of those e-mails was directed to current customers, while the other was sent out to potential customers. However the questions asked to both groups were the same.

1. Which of the following media do you use to find information (multiple answers possible)?
 - a. Website
 - b. Online newsletter
 - c. Twitter
 - d. Facebook
 - e. LinkedIn
 - f. Forums
 - g. Otherwise, namely [Fill in]
2. Do you use the following media to search for information about EDI solutions? (1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = frequently, 4 = often)
 - a. Search engines 1 2 3 4
 - b. Company websites 1 2 3 4
 - c. Forums 1 2 3 4
 - d. Facebook 1 2 3 4
 - e. Twitter 1 2 3 4
 - f. LinkedIn 1 2 3 4
 - g. Contact with companies via e-mail 1 2 3 4
 - h. Contact with companies via phone 1 2 3 4
3. What kind of information regarding EDI are you looking for? (multiple answers possible)
 - a. Price information
 - b. Technical specifications
 - c. Support
 - d. Company profile
 - e. Software updates
 - f. New functionalities
 - g. Other, namely ... [Fill in]
4. Would you like to be kept informed of developments in the field of EDI outside of your own industry?

- a. Yes
 - b. No
- 5. Do you ever look at social networking sites, like Facebook and Twitter, to be kept informed of companies that sell EDI solutions? Can you explain why or why not?
[Open-ended question]
- 6. How effective do you find OMS's expressions via: (1 = poor, 2 = below average, 3 = average, 4 = above average, 5 = excellent)
 - a. Twitter 1 2 3 4 5
 - b. E-mail 1 2 3 4 5
 - c. Website 1 2 3 4 5
 - d. News updates 1 2 3 4 5
- 7. Would you be interested in receiving information from OMS on
 - a. Updates Y/M/N
 - b. Support Y/M/N
 - c. New functionalities Y/M/N
 - d. Developments in the market Y/M/N
- 8. How would you like to receive this information? (multiple answers possible)
 - a. Via an online newsletter
 - b. Via e-mail
 - c. Via forums
 - d. Via Twitter
 - e. Via Facebook
 - f. Via LinkedIn
 - g. Via OMS's website
 - h. Other, namely [Fill in]
- 9. Would you follow OMS on
 - a. Twitter? Y/M/N
 - b. Facebook? Y/M/N
 - c. LinkedIn? Y/M/N








II.II Questionnaire statistics

1. Welke van de onderstaande media gebruikt uw bedrijf om informatie te zoeken? (meerdere antwoorden mogelijk)			
		Reactie percentage	Reactie telling
Bedrijfs website		76,3%	29
Zoekmachines		94,7%	36
Online nieuwsbrief		34,2%	13
Twitter		7,9%	3
Facebook		10,5%	4
LinkedIn		31,6%	12
Forums		21,1%	8
Anders, namelijk ... Reacties tonen		15,8%	6
		beantwoorde vraag	38
		overgeslagen vraag	0

2. Gebruikt u de volgende media voor het zoeken naar informatie over EDI oplossingen						
	nooit	zelden	regelmatig	vaak	Gemiddelde score	Reactie telling
Zoekmachine	16,2% (6)	51,4% (19)	24,3% (9)	8,1% (3)	2,24	37
Bedrijf's website	20,0% (7)	51,4% (18)	25,7% (9)	2,9% (1)	2,11	35
Forums	46,9% (15)	37,5% (12)	15,6% (5)	0,0% (0)	1,69	32
Twitter	93,8% (30)	3,1% (1)	3,1% (1)	0,0% (0)	1,09	32
Facebook	93,8% (30)	3,1% (1)	0,0% (0)	3,1% (1)	1,13	32
LinkedIn	71,9% (23)	21,9% (7)	3,1% (1)	3,1% (1)	1,38	32
Contact met bedrijven via e-mail	26,3% (10)	23,7% (9)	31,6% (12)	18,4% (7)	2,42	38
Contact met bedrijven via telefoon	26,3% (10)	23,7% (9)	42,1% (16)	7,9% (3)	2,32	38
					beantwoorde vraag	38
					overgeslagen vraag	0

3. Naar wat voor een informatie zoekt u met betrekking tot EDI? (meerdere antwoorden mogelijk)

[Diagram maken](#) [Downloaden](#)

		Reactie percentage	Reactie telling
Prijs informatie		31,6%	12
Technische specificaties		71,1%	27
Support		47,4%	18
Bedrijf's profiel		15,8%	6
Software updates		23,7%	9
Nieuwe functionaliteiten		47,4%	18
Anders, namelijk ... Reacties verbergen		15,8%	6
Reacties (6) Tekstanalyse Mijn categorieën (0)			

6 tekstreacties worden weergegeven

Geen reacties geselecteerd

Of het überhaupt voor ons meerwaarde biedt

24-4-2012 14:52 [Reacties bekijken](#)

Wij werken met EDI en zijn niet op zoek naar een andere oplossing

23-4-2012 19:59 [Reacties bekijken](#)

voorbeelden, internationale afspraken, codelijsten

23-4-2012 18:16 [Reacties bekijken](#)

zijn niet op zoek naar EDI

23-4-2012 16:25 [Reacties bekijken](#)

Wij zijn er niet actief mee bezig. Huidige oplossingen volstaan.

23-4-2012 16:04 [Reacties bekijken](#)

testberichten



23-4-2012 14:37 [Reacties bekijken](#)

beantwoorde vraag 38

overgeslagen vraag 0



4. Wilt u op de hoogte worden gehouden van ontwikkelingen op het gebied van EDI buiten uw eigen branche?

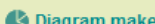
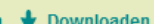
[Diagram maken](#) [Downloaden](#)

		Reactie percentage	Reactie telling
Ja		28,9%	11
Nee		71,1%	27
		beantwoorde vraag	38
		overgeslagen vraag	0

5. Kijkt u wel eens op sociale netwerk sites, zoals Facebook en Twitter, om op de hoogte te worden gehouden van bedrijven die EDI oplossingen verkopen? Kunt u uitleggen waarom wel of waarom niet?		Downloaden
		Reactie telling
		Reacties verbergen 38
Reacties (38) Tekstanalyse Mijn categorieën (0)		
38 tekstreacties worden weergegeven		Geen reacties geselecteerd
nee		
3-5-2012 13:43		Reacties bekijken
Nee eigenlijk nooit. Dit omdat wij in het algemeen de informatie van de bedrijven zelf krijgen.		
27-4-2012 16:31		Reacties bekijken
Nee, sociale media zijn mijns inzien niet de plaats om business related items te promoveren.		
26-4-2012 20:50		Reacties bekijken
Nee. Heb EDI geïntroduceerd in 2003. Wordt binnen ons bedrijf nu door collega / afdeling beheerd.		
26-4-2012 10:38		Reacties bekijken
nee, volgens mij niet doelgericht		
26-4-2012 10:24		Reacties bekijken
nee		
26-4-2012 7:00		Reacties bekijken
Gebruik ik meer in Privé-sfeer		
25-4-2012 11:49		Reacties bekijken
Nee, momenteel geen interesse in EDI-oplossingen aangezien met andere projecten bezig.		
25-4-2012 9:17		Reacties bekijken
Niet omdat dit waarschijnlijk niet het gewenste effect heeft		
24-4-2012 18:30		Reacties bekijken
Ja, puur informatief		
24-4-2012 16:44		Reacties bekijken
nee, we zoeken niet naar profielen		
24-4-2012 16:31		Reacties bekijken
Nee, Facebook is voor mij echt hobby sfeer, internet is vollediger		
24-4-2012 14:52		Reacties bekijken
nee, profiel drempel		
24-4-2012 12:08		Reacties bekijken
nee		
24-4-2012 11:29		Reacties bekijken
Niet geïnteresseerd		
24-4-2012 11:04		Reacties bekijken
sociale netwerken kosten veel tijd en leveren weinig op		
24-4-2012 10:20		Reacties bekijken
facebook en twitter gebruik ik prive, linkedin is voor zakelijke activiteiten		
24-4-2012 9:49		Reacties bekijken

Not all reactions were shown, as the picture would have become unreadable.

6. Hoe effectief vind u OMS's uitingen via:							 
	slecht	beneden gemiddeld	gemiddeld	boven gemiddeld	uitstekend	Gemiddelde score	Reactie telling
Twitter	31,6% (12)	21,1% (8)	42,1% (16)	0,0% (0)	5,3% (2)	2,26	38
E-mail	13,2% (5)	7,9% (3)	63,2% (24)	10,5% (4)	5,3% (2)	2,87	38
De website	15,8% (6)	2,6% (1)	68,4% (26)	7,9% (3)	5,3% (2)	2,84	38
Nieuws updates	15,8% (6)	7,9% (3)	65,8% (25)	5,3% (2)	5,3% (2)	2,76	38
beantwoorde vraag							38
overgeslagen vraag							0

7. Zou u het interessant vinden informatie te ontvangen van OMS over:						 
	Ja	Misschien	Nee	Gemiddelde score	Reactie telling	
Updates	23,7% (9)	15,8% (6)	60,5% (23)	2,37	38	
Support	18,4% (7)	18,4% (7)	63,2% (24)	2,45	38	
Nieuwe functionaliteiten	28,9% (11)	23,7% (9)	47,4% (18)	2,18	38	
Ontwikkelingen in de markt	26,3% (10)	21,1% (8)	52,6% (20)	2,26	38	
beantwoorde vraag						38
overgeslagen vraag						0

8. Hoe zou u deze informatie willen ontvangen? (meerdere antwoorden mogelijk)			Diagram maken	Downloaden
			Reactie percentage	Reactie telling
Via een online nieuwsbrief			42,1%	16
Via e-mail updates			42,1%	16
Via een forum			10,5%	4
Via Twitter			0,0%	0
Via Facebook			0,0%	0
Via LinkedIn			10,5%	4
Via de OMS website			21,1%	8
Anders, namelijk ... Reacties tonen			28,9%	11
			beantwoorde vraag	38
			overgeslagen vraag	0

9. Zou u OMS volgen op						Diagram maken	Downloaden
	Ja	Misschien	Nee	Gemiddelde score	Reactie telling		
Twitter?	2,6% (1)	10,5% (4)	86,8% (33)	2,84	38		
Facebook?	2,6% (1)	5,3% (2)	92,1% (35)	2,89	38		
LinkedIn?	10,5% (4)	31,6% (12)	57,9% (22)	2,47	38		
						beantwoorde vraag	38
						overgeslagen vraag	0

II.III Observations

Company name	Number of employees	Market segments	Website	Social Media	e-newsletter/ e-magazine	Other
TIE	>100	4	Yes	Twitter, LinkedIn	e-newsletter/ e-magazine	Whitepapers, online presentation, introduction video
Centric EDI	>5.300	4	Yes	LinkedIn, Blog	e-magazine	
Rozis	<15	2	Yes	-	-	
SRC	-	2	Yes	-	e-newsletter	
InterCommIT	Part of a global company. > 600 employees worldwide	4	Yes	LinkedIn, Twitter (not company, but two marketers)	e-newsletter	Online brochure
Gusti	-	1	Yes	-	-	
Greencat	51-200; part of bigger international company	1	Yes	LinkedIn	e-newsletter	Online cases
E-Novation	201-500	1	Yes	LinkedIn	Magazine (online and offline)	
Centric Health Care Solutions	-	1	Yes	-	-	