CREATING AN EFFECTIVE MARKETING FRAMEWORK

How to reach your buyers where they are, from prospect to post-sale

liongard™

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated digital transformation and created a rapid adoption of remote employees and distributed teams that left many managed service providers drinking from the proverbial firehose of current customer needs and new customer requests. The changing business landscape is creating impressive growth in the MSP industry—by 2025 the global managed services market is expected to grow to $329.1 billion, at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 8.1% between 2020 and 2025.

In the new normal of hybrid workplaces, MSPs are becoming an essential part of most business operations, with 75 percent of SMBs already outsourcing some of their IT to a managed service provider. And it's easy to see why when you look at the numbers—it's estimated that managed services reduce IT costs by 25-45 percent and increase operational efficiency by 45-65 percent.

PART 1

CREATING AN EFFECTIVE MARKETING FRAMEWORK

PART 2

CONTENT AND MESSAGING FOR EACH STAGE OF THE BUYER JOURNEY

PART 3

USING DATA TO GENERATE MORE QUALIFIED LEADS AND CLOSE MORE DEALS

With service in such high demand, competition becomes stiff as more providers flood the market—in 2019 ConnectWise estimated there were 40,000 MSPs in the US alone—and MSPs looking to gain an edge are focusing on marketing and messaging that speaks to the unique needs of their target audience. And a more personalized approach to marketing your MSP can be powerful—in 2020, customer experience beat out product and price as the key brand differentiator.

But what's the ideal experience for your unique customers? In this three-part guide, you'll learn how to make your MSP stand out from the competition and build a marketing plan that covers the buyer journey from prospect through post-sale.

STEP 1

DEFINING **YOURSELF**

Before you start creating a marketing plan, you need to define the ultimate business goals of your MSP. What are you good at? What will your service offerings be? Will you be focusing on specific industry verticals? Without addressing some basic questions about your business, it's impossible to create marketing messaging that speaks to your value or proves your expertise to potential customers. Ask these questions about your MSP to help focus and define how you want to present your company to your target customers.

SIZE

Whose needs do you address better: SMBs or Enterprise organizations?

The needs of small and medium-sized businesses can be much different than those of larger organizations in terms of pain points and value proposition. Marketing messaging that works for small and mid-size businesses without a current IT department might miss the mark with larger organizations that have a full tech staff. That's why it's important to first identify the type of organization your will target. Keep in mind that, as your MSP grows, your marketing framework can shift with your priorities—so if you're focused on scaling your MSP with SMBs today, that doesn't mean you can't make Enterprise organizations your target customer in the future.

LOCATION

Do you plan to service a metro area, state, region, country or go international?

The move to "work from anywhere" means MSPs can expand their market are more easily than ever. More organizations are making mostly- or fully-remote permanent for employees, which means an MSP in Chicago can have customers from New York to Australia. You market area will influence both how you attract prospects and what you say to them.

For instance, if you are targeting your local metro or state, your messaging can focus on the personal, local service you provide and any digital marketing efforts—search results, ads, social posts—can be targeted to focus on your specific area for maximum impact. MSPs targeting a broader geographic area may want to emphasize their multiple office locations, their 24-hour customer service or their experience managing services for multi-national organizations. All of your marketing efforts, from lead sources to advertising vehicles and Sales outreach to demos, will be influenced by your target location.

VERTICALS & SPECIALTIES

Does your MSP have compliance or other specialty certifications?
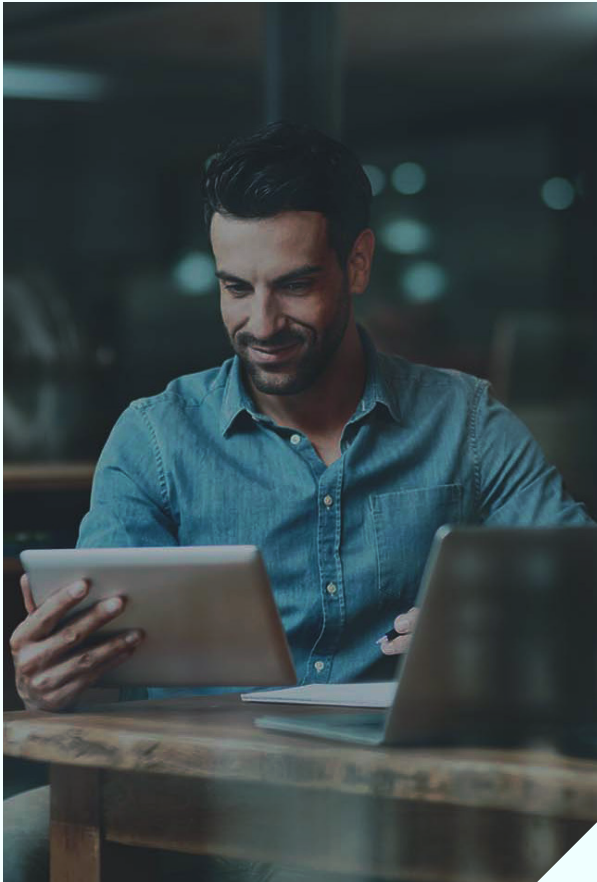
Specializing in an industry can help an MSP better understand what tech stack they need to know—medical and other nice industries often have vastly different support, technology and compliance needs.

If you're focused on a few industry verticals or specialty services, you can create separate marketing messaging for each. It might seem like a lot of work, but personalizing your buyer experience can reduce customer acquisition costs by 50 percent!

For instance, you might have experience with HIPAA or other regulatory compliance that your competitors don't have. You can customize your outreach efforts or make strategic decisions about which customers to pursue or try and upsell.

STEP 2
DEFINING **YOUR CUSTOMER**

When you're developing a marketing strategy, it's important to identify the type of customer you want to attract. Are you going after SMBs or enterprise organizations? Will you be focusing on industry verticals? This target buyer is known as your **Ideal Customer Profile (ICP)**. Think of your ICP as your customer wish list—in a perfect world all of your customers would be a perfect fit for your solution, and that's what your ICP represents. Defining your ideal customer allows you to be laser-focused on marketing and selling to targeted accounts that are a great fit for your MSP.

Unfortunately, we don't always live in a world where we can target only our ideal customers, and that's where buyer personas come in. Buyer personas are representations, or stories, you create based on the goals, motivations, and challenges each persona is facing. Your buyer personas should be based on the types of buyers you will encounter in the sales cycle.

For instance, your MSP might have separate buyer personas for IT Administrators, CIOs and CEOs that each vary based on the individuals needs within the organization. While an IT administrator might be focused on end users, the CIO's main concern might be security and the CEO might be focused on scalability. Buyer personas help you create targeted messaging that speaks to the individual needs of your buyers, creating a more personalized experience that attracts and converts more leads.

DEFINING YOUR ICP

→ **Company size**

→ **Company budget or revenue**

→ **Industry**

→ **Technology stack**

→ **Geography or location**

BUILD YOUR BUYER PERSONAS

Here's an outline to help you build out buyer personas for your future customers.

TITLE

INDUSTRY

PAIN POINTS/MAJOR CONCERNS

HOW YOUR MSP IS A SOLUTION

ONE-SENTENCE VALUE STATEMENT

CUSTOMER EXAMPLE/SUCCESS STORY

DEFINING YOUR VALUE

When it comes to defining your value, and then showing that value to your customers, it all comes down to product marketing.

PROTIP

"You should be viewing things from your customer's lens, always. Think about the day-to-day friction they might encounter, and then tie that directly back to how your services will be the solution to their problem. If you just talk about your MSP and your products, you're going to miss that opportunity to connect with your customers. If you tell them that you understand their frustration with setting up the right IT access for onboarding new employees, for instance, and then explain how your services solve that problem, you have a much better chance of them really understanding the value your MSP brings to the table."

Devaney Devoe
Product Marketing Manager, Liongard

Product marketing has four main components: understanding the market, your customers and your product; taking a product to market; enabling internal teams; and optimizing product adoption. As an MSP, you need to figure out what your customers' needs are (pain points, compliance requirements, etc.), and then marry that with your service offerings to create solutions that solve for those pain points. You figured out pain points in Step Two, now you need to identify the right service offerings for each buyer persona.

What's the best approach? Remember that your product is ultimately about your customer, and talk more about them than about yourself. Your product and feature set is the endpoint, not the start point. Ultimately, your product as an MSP is a solution to a problem, so start with the problem and then work your way back to the solution. This puts the customer first and allows you to back into talking about your product in a natural way that demonstrates its value in helping them solve their problems.

PROTIP

"At least twice a year you should be asking your customers what's going well, what problems they are encountering and what additional services they're interested in. Also, conduct quarterly business reviews (QBRs) to help your customers understand what you've accomplished and what's coming up next, and demonstrate your value. This is also a fantastic opportunity to help them address their current business issues, ask them about growth plans for the next 6 months, and how your MSP can help them prepare for that. Keep your eye on industry and market news for trends and issues that could be important for your customers, and for ideas on how to upgrade your offerings."

Jonathan Pipek
Director of Product Marketing, Liongard

LISTEN TO YOUR CUSTOMERS

If you're looking for feedback about a new service offering, conversations and customer surveys are some of the best ways to get feedback. Ask prospective customers about their IT needs to get an understanding of their pain points and how they align with your capabilities.

LOOK AT THE COMPETITION

Also, look at the competition and what they're offering, and that can give you an idea of the services that are in demand in your local area. And if you find that your capabilities are aligned with both your prospective customers' needs and your competitors' offerings, then that's a good sign that you've created the right service offering.

POWER YOUR MARKETING PLAN WITH **LIONGARD DATA**

MSP marketing starts with understanding your customers and their needs. Liongard helps you gather insights about your clients you can use to demonstrate your value and differentiate yourself from competitors at every stage of the buyer journey. A personalized customer experience, from prospect to onboarding and beyond, is crucial to developing a partnership with your customers enabling you to go from vendor to strategic partner.

Liongard was founded by former MSP owners who understand the struggles today's firms face in attracting new customers, growing client relationships and scaling their business. We built our platform with MSPs in mind, offering unified visibility across all your customer systems—taking you from data to actionable insights as quickly as possible.

Standardize, secure and scale your IT Managed Services with Liongard, the only automation platform that delivers unified visibility across the stack. With a global partner base, Liongard is changing the way MSPs manage and protect thousands of businesses worldwide. Ready to manage modern IT with confidence? Learn more at liongard.com.

Discover how Liongard can support your MSP marketing strategy. Schedule a demo today for a custom walk-through of our platform.