



## Catch Me, If You Can

*Appeal to the 5 Catch Factors to command your lead's attention, increase mindshare, and accelerate buying behaviors.*

*The first in a new eBook series.*

## Catch Their Attention

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As a marketer, your challenge is to gain the attention and mindshare of your leads and prospects, a task that many are finding more difficult in today's information-saturated reality. But it doesn't have to be hard at all. If you motivate your leads based on an understanding of their Catch Factors—even amidst an email storm—your communication gets their attention.

This same principle applies to every communication between you and your prospect, whether through email, web search returns or clicks to your website pages. Initial impressions are the gateway between you and your prospects—and Catch Factors will get you through.

Often, B2B marketers forget that they're marketing to real people. Catch Factors keep you from falling into the trap of evaluating your messaging and planning strategies based only on strict, quantitatively defined roles. To command attention, you can't forget that the Director of IT, the VP of Sales and the line of business manager are all human beings who respond based on individualized perceptions and needs. Each of your potential buyers applies and assigns Catch Factors within seconds of viewing your communication.

### *So, what are Catch Factors?*

Catch Factors are the preferences and aversions that form a lead's "gut" reaction to your communication. They help determine whether you capture your audiences' attention—or not. They include split-second assessments about their urgency for your information (e.g. does it apply to a real problem they have right now), whether or not you can impact their professional success, the effort required to access and process the information, and, finally, on their perception of your company's reputation and intent. The importance a recipient places on each of these five Catch Factors affects the attention you get—and the downstream revenue results.

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### *A matter of perception.*

A view into the beginning of a typical prospect's day demonstrates the difficulty of commanding attention—and the Catch Me, If You Can challenge.

*It's Monday morning. Jerry arrives at the office sipping a Venti Latte and empties his briefcase, taking a moment to glance through his presentation. Jerry's looking forward to the strategy meeting this afternoon, confident that the executive team will respond enthusiastically to his new pipeline momentum program. Sitting at his desk, he boots his computer and clicks to download email, pleasantly surprised at the appearance of only 182 emails waiting for his attention. Noticing he only has fifteen minutes before the departmental staff meeting, Jerry starts scanning those emails.*

*His brain immediately starts processing information, looking for senders or subject lines that appeal to him, either because they are known or because they hit on an immediate need he's got. Like all of us, Jerry searches for things that are relevant to him because of his current personal values and requirements.*

*Jerry's calendar flashes a reminder on the screen. He's down to ten minutes before his first meeting of the day. Part of his mind starts reviewing the meeting's agenda, another part wonders if he'll make his son's soccer game this afternoon, and the rest of it sifts those emails trying to deal with the most important first, decide which are useful enough to hold onto, and delete the ones that don't grab his attention.*

If you think your leads don't follow the same experience, think again.

According to Deidre Wilson and Dan Sperber's *Relevance Theory*, an individual draws a conclusion based on the first relevant meaning recognized, and the one that requires the least effort. This is where our millisecond attention spans come into play and why your marketing communication story needs to be relevant and compelling—at first glance. Leveraging Five Catch Factors helps you command attention and accelerate your prospects' buying behavior.

## Urgency Catch Factor

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Urgency is all about your recipient—how important your information is to them, whether it solves a problem they have or is simply “noise.” Don’t confuse this factor with *your* urgency, or a special time-sensitive call to action in your communication. The key to urgency is the degree of passion your audience currently has about the topic of your messaging—and it’s usually associated with a problem they have to solve.

*Is your information focused on solving a problem—or simply “noise” your prospects ignore?*

- Has a trigger event created a need for specialized expertise to quickly answer an unexpected priority shuffle?
- Are competitive advances suddenly threatening customer acquisition and loyalty?
- Has your lead discovered that their current system or process cannot deliver a critical business objective?
- Are looming deadlines forcing your potential buyer to seek alternative solutions?

Any of the above considerations affect urgency, and your chances of connection.

Often, your leads are people who are change agents in their companies—the ones who do their homework because they want to succeed. To shift the status quo, they need to amass the evidence to prove their idea is the best choice, given where their company is headed. They may also be leaders, passionate about generating particular business outcomes.

Urgency is a primary driver in focusing their attention. Do your prospects need what you offer now, in a few days, a week? If their need is longer term, it’s probably not worth it to them to pay attention at this moment. There are other, more urgent, things in their lives, making your information less valuable to them. Even if they determine that it might be useful at some future point, that communication won’t get more than their momentary attention. And, when they’re

ready, they know there'll be new information available. So, if you think they're archiving it to look at it later, that's mostly wishful thinking.

The Urgency Catch Factor is closely tied to your lead's assessment of impact. Their need may have priority focus, but without an indication of impact, your communication won't be assessed as valuable enough to catch more than their momentary attention.

## Impact Catch Factor

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This Catch Factor mirrors your audience's evaluation of the impact of your idea, message, topic, or solution to their challenges, on their professional standing within their company, and with their peers and colleagues. Executives and managers have an ever-lengthening list of goals and initiatives they must successfully manage to deliver on strategic business objectives and take advantage of market opportunities.

Your prospects are challenged every day to fix what's not working to move the company, and themselves, ahead. Vague notions about nice to have, but not critical, benefits won't gain their attention. In a complex B2B sale, your buyers are likely the ones who create the products, services and processes that keep a company in a leadership position, growing faster than the competition. By demonstrating your company's expertise and ability to help them achieve successful outcomes, you increase their attention by addressing the potential impact—to their initiatives and their careers.

- Is the problem your prospect's facing riddled with complexities you can simplify?
- Will the successful outcome of the project have enough pay off to elevate their professional standing in the company?

*When you communicate about topics a lead sees as critical to success – they listen.*

- Have you enabled your prospective customer to see future benefits—beyond the initiative?
- Will your expertise add value to their core competency, elevating their company’s status within their industry?

When you communicate about topics a lead sees as critical to success—they listen. And when the communication is all about them, their problem, innovative approaches to solve it, including examples of others who have successfully done so—with your help of course—you raise your company’s value perception.

It’s no longer enough just to have the product or solution that theoretically solves their problems. It’s up to you to prove it. The more closely you tie evidence of related successful strategic outcomes to your expertise, the more value you will be seen as providing. Which means your targeted lead will reap the residual benefits of wise engagement—both for their company and for themselves. But first, they have to decide it’s worth their effort to find out.

## Effort Catch Factor

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Effort is based on your targeted buyer’s evaluation of accessibility, time and willingness to expend energy balanced against the perceived benefit of doing so. Is the information simple and easily absorbable? Is it straightforward, or is it filled with terms and jargon that your prospects will have to work hard to understand? People take the path of least resistance. Once they reach a conclusion, your opportunity to connect with them has been determined.

If they perceive that paying attention to your communication is too high in terms of effort, they will delete it, bury it under the paperwork on their desk, or otherwise ignore it. This is why

setting expectations is so important. Make sure it's obvious what they need to do to access and use your information. Eliminate barriers and hurdles that add to their effort. Make it easy for them to take advantage of your expertise. Simplify their experience and the effort required to interact with you. For example:

- Is information so deep that busy executives need to print and underline to understand?
- Is webpage layout so confusing your prospect works hard to find what you promised?
- Are any statistics or comparisons clearly understandable for your audience?
- Is your information presented in a way that provides “scan,” as well as “read” value?

Effort expended toward your company is assigned incrementally and is related to the experience your audience has when they attempt to access your information. If your targeted buyer decides to ante up their effort on your communication because you met their need for urgency and impact, then you'd better be sure that you don't drop those attention points by throwing barriers up when they click.

For the most part, your audience won't like surprises and they like wasting time even less. Relationships are earned incrementally, so make sure the payoff for their effort goes beyond what your potential customers expect. Consistency in providing information that delivers valuable and usable insights reduces future considerations in terms of effort. And, it sets your company up for prolonged and consistent attention.

Given the daily deluge of information, expect the Effort Catch Factor to carry a lot of weight. Unless your company rates highly with the other Catch Factors, asking a lead to expend a lot of effort is an attention killer. However, one way to increase a worthwhile effort perception is ranking highly with reputation.

## Reputation Catch Factor

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Reputation is what the audience knows or thinks about your company. This Catch Factor affects your potential buyers' reaction with the first thing that comes to mind when each one sees your company name, logo or product. How they perceive your company's "fit" in relation to their own need is of critical importance. Your company's related accomplishments are the basis for their perceptions. The better a prospect's gut response to your brand, and the perceived "fit" between your company and theirs, the higher the odds of catching their attention.

Brand awareness drives the Reputation Catch Factor, but, it goes beyond simply knowing your company's name.

- Would they say they've gotten valuable communications from you in the past?
- Have they heard of value you've delivered to others in their position and industry?
- Have their peers and colleagues spoken highly of you?
- What might they have seen about your company on industry-related websites, in the news or from analysts?

*Reputation is earned,  
or lost, based on  
cumulative  
impressions.*

Remember, reputation is earned, or lost, based on cumulative impressions. Consistency eliminates conflicts and doubts that could otherwise cost you attention.

Perhaps your lead read an article you wrote that was posted on an industry website they trust. Or, maybe your PR has been picked up in Industry journals or news websites they frequent. Reputation is dependent upon degrees of trust and credibility. The more competence ascribed to your company, the better your reputation. It's also critical to know what other trusted resources are saying about your company.

When you evaluate your messaging in terms of reputation, consider all the different ways your audience may have been exposed to your company, brand, products and expertise. This will be different depending on which industry they're in, or how you came to communicate with them in the first place.

Always make sure your messaging reflects the reputation you want to have in their minds – that of a vendor who is a knowledgeable expert in their field and a trustworthy partner. This is where success stories come in so strongly—people listen to other people's recommendations. The more evidence you provide where your prospects' peers are singing your praises—the stronger your brand reputation becomes within even a single marketing communication message.

## Intent Catch Factor

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Intent is dependent on your audience's perception of what they think you want from them. When used appropriately, this Catch Factor creates opportunities that you might otherwise miss.

If your message is a blatant or thinly veiled sales attempt, you risk alienating leads with your obvious self-interest. Conversely, if they perceive you are focused on providing insights they find valuable, they are more compelled to seriously consider your message. This includes new industry information, a case study showing how you've helped similar companies overcome similar problems, or even new research in an area of interest.

Make sure your communication declares your intentions so your audience can quickly and clearly evaluate why you've contacted them. According to Stephen M.R. Covey in *The Speed of*

*"...we judge ourselves by our intentions and others by their behavior."*

*Stephen M.R. Covey  
The Speed of Trust*

*Trust*, “...we judge ourselves by our intentions and others by their behavior.” A straightforward intent goes a long way in beginning a trusted relationship with your leads.

Your communications pass intention scrutiny if they are perceived to:

- educate.
- clarify issues.
- offer information with little obvious gain to your company.
- not request anything from your lead beyond their attention.

Based on the sharing of your expertise, you are seen as a vendor whose intent is to help prospects solve their problems and help them to be successful. Your leads come to know you differently than all the others competing for their attention.

However, you must also be clear about your follow-on intentions. Intention is often dependent on your recipient’s evaluation of your company’s authenticity and transparency. Don’t bait them to respond just to drag them into expending more effort than they bargained for. Make sure you don’t disappoint them. If your intentions are perceived as honorable and supportive, this may very well constitute your path to boosting other Catch Factors for future interactions.

Taken together, reputation and intent form your recipient’s reaction to your company—and influence your ability to catch and retain their attention. In combination with the other Catch Factors, the impact of vendor perception shifts attention positively, or negatively. Plus, prospects draw a lot of conclusions about whether or not they want to work with your company by how they’re treated during the marketing process.

*Intent is often dependent on your recipient’s evaluation of your company’s authenticity and transparency.*

# Catch Factors Influence Behavior

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Now let's take a look at Catch Factors' probable influence on your target market's interpretation and resulting behavior. Below are a few examples of activities that your leads probably engage in today:

- Your lead receives and immediately reads a newsletter from a vendor they consider an expert in a relevant field that they're exploring.

*Reputation + Intent:* This vendor has earned attention through both reputation and intent. It's also likely that the information they provide has a high degree of urgency that results in a worthwhile expenditure of effort.

- Your lead pays attention to a communication from a previously unknown company who may be able to help them on a project because of an industry article they read.

*Impact + Reputation:* The article elevated the lead's perception of the vendor's reputation and impact. Because the information relates directly to a current project, the urgency factor is in play. The most likely outcome is the lead chooses to visit the vendor's website to validate reputation and impact assumptions. The opportunity to increase attention now lies with your website's content and its resulting impression, based on Catch Factors.

- The subject line of an email catches their eye, but the lead hasn't ever heard of the company before. They're likely to delete it unread, unless another Catch Factor is evident.

80% of B2B technology customers believe they found the vendor, rather than the vendor finding them.

Marketing Sherpa  
Business Technology Benchmark  
Guide 2007-08

*Urgency:* This is when urgency has opened a door, regardless of vendor perception of reputation and intent. The opportunity is to provide validation for their attention. Demonstrate your competence and credibility. Showcase a brand name customer in the same industry. Use a case study to show your company's expertise in action and establish your track record. It is possible to build attention levels by capitalizing on one Catch Factor and putting the others, like effort and impact, into play.

- Your lead uses a search engine to look for industry-specific information about a problem they're currently trying to solve. A link to your company's related webpage is in the first five search results. The description appears to relate directly to an explanation they think will be helpful. They click through.

*Urgency + Effort:* Once on your website, they like what they read, but, because they haven't heard of your company before, they try to satisfy other Catch Factors. In addition to the compelling explanation, the webpage displays a related analyst report that lists your company as an expert in addressing this issue. You've established vendor reputation, addressed urgency and provided a return on effort that will likely extend their momentary attention.

## The Importance of Catch Factors

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Today's leads are better at researching information and discovering vendors than you think. The long tail of Internet search is more prevalent than ever and, as evidenced in Marketing Sherpa's Business Technology Benchmark Guide 2007-08, 80% of B2B technology customers believe they found the vendor, rather than the vendor finding them. This creates a huge pressure to make sure that your content and communications are as engaging as possible—and

makes addressing Catch Factors all the more important as a key tool in escalating your marketing and sales results. For, without initial attention, there's nowhere to go in building a relationship.

When we consciously evaluate Catch Factors, it's easy to get the impression that your audience whips out a checklist, but that's not true. These factors are applied subconsciously, efficiently creating an overall, instant impression. Leveraging Catch Factors in the appropriate ways commands your lead's attention, driving initial interactions that evolve into an interactive conversation with your potential buyers—and ultimately revenue with a long-term customer relationship.

*The result? Quantifiable downstream revenue that's attributable to your communication strategy.*

Attention levels are earned, or diminished, over time. The cumulative effect of your communications on individualized Catch Factors is critical in catching and extending attention.

High Urgency and Impact plus Low Effort coupled with the perception of an honorable Reputation with authentic Intent helps you catch and keep the attention level you need to transition prospects into “sales ready” buyers.

Your reputation has escalated to the point that, when you reach out to them, your prospects enthusiastically respond. They know no hidden agendas will surface after they engage. Your potential buyers know they can count on you to provide valuable insights they need to solve their problems successfully.

Now that you recognize the opportunities available to command more attention, you have the potential to accelerate your target market's buying behaviors. The result? Quantifiable downstream revenue that's attributable to your communication strategy.

And, that's how you catch them.

## Catch Factor Assessment Worksheet

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The reception of each communication made by your company is influenced by Catch Factors—good or bad. Use the worksheet below to analyze a single communication and evaluate how well your message is positioned to catch attention.

**Urgency Catch Factor:** [choose all that apply]

Your communication addresses a...

- known trigger event that have shuffled priorities. (executive change, compliance regulations, etc.)
- recognized problem, issue, challenge or opportunity.
- valid competitive threat.
- looming industry issue with long-term consequences.

**Impact Catch Factor:** [choose all that apply]

Your communication shows leads...

- how to simplify a complex issue and the resulting payoff.
- alternative strategic choices and how to evaluate those options for net benefits.
- the effect of desired outcomes on your prospect's career and company.
- future benefits that impact strategic growth.

**Effort Catch Factor:** [choose all that apply]

Your communication implies...

- easy access to promised information.
- first glance relevance. [scan quality]
- no barriers or hurdles.
- a worthwhile exchange for their attention.

**Reputation Catch Factor:** [choose one]

Which would your leads be most likely to say about your company – in relation to your communication?

- We know of and trust this information source. (5)
- We have a peer or colleague referral to consider this source. (4)
- We know of, but have no reason to trust, this source.(3)
- We've never heard of this company. (1)

**Intent Catch Factor:** [choose one]

After reading your communication, you're audience is likely to conclude which of the following?

- You are trying to sell them something. (1)
- You want something from them beyond their attention.(2)
- You have no hidden agenda. (4)
- You shared valuable information with no obvious gain for your company. (5)

**Scoring:**

For Urgency and Impact—give yourself 5 points for each answer checked.

For Effort—give yourself 3 points for each answer checked.

For Reputation and Urgency—give yourself the points indicated to the right of each answer.

**Scoring Summary:**

51 – 62 Superior, you're all set to Catch them!

41 – 50 Good, you're very close.

30 – 40 Adequate, but could be improved.

00 – 30 Ignorable, your communication lacks the ability to consistently Catch attention.

## About the Author

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B2B marketing strategist Ardath Albee helps companies increase their marketing effectiveness by generating more and better leads for their sales organization. She helps them catch the attention of website visitors and target markets, and move them through the buying cycle with high value content until they are "sales ready."

Ardath has a unique ability to develop content strategies that work hand-in-glove with overall corporate and product positioning to deliver hard hitting e-marketing programs and tools that compel customers to buy. Her blog posts are referred to often by other industry leaders and her articles have been used for university ezines, published in CRM Today, Selling Power and Enterprise CRM News.

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