



PARTNER MARKETING GUIDE

A Go-to-Market Primer for Solution Provider Success

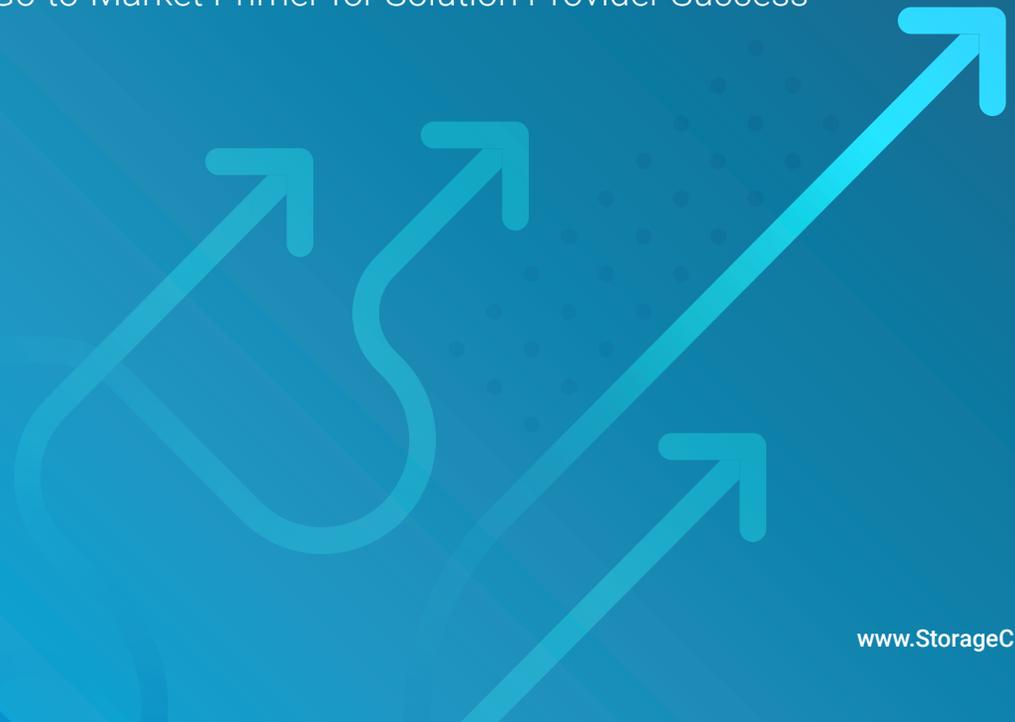


TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3 Introduction
- 4 Build Your Brand
- 5 Fill Your Pipeline
- 6 Make a Marketing Plan
- 7 Getting Started: Lay the Groundwork
 - 7 Define Your Marketing Goals
 - 8 Identify Your Unique Selling Proposition
 - 9 Develop Your Buyer Personas
 - 10 Map Your Buyer's Journey
 - 11 Optimize Your Marketing Spend
 - 12 Acquire Marketing Skills and Expertise
- 13 Go-to-Market Tools and Tactics
- 14 Content Marketing
- 15 Events
- 16 Email Campaigns
- 16 Landing Pages
- 17 Direct Mail
- 17 Advertising
- 18 Social Media
- 20 Telemarketing

INTRODUCTION

As a StorageCraft partner, your success is our success. We know how challenging it can be to win customers in today's highly competitive technology landscape. Go-to-market strategies are rapidly changing, as are the digital tools that you can use to generate leads and sales for your business.

This StorageCraft marketing guide has been designed to help you chart your go-to-market strategy with insight into tactics and techniques for generating awareness, leads, sales, and revenue so you can grow your business. For example, did you know that building pipeline opportunity is the biggest concern for solution providers right now?¹

This marketing guide has been assembled in logical steps to help you determine your marketing objectives, target markets, and unique selling proposition before you embark on executing marketing tactics and programs. With this information, you can focus your goals and develop a strategic go-to-market approach.

Let's get started ...

Checklist for Branding Success:

- Logo or Visual Identity
- Brand Guide with Color Palette and Logos
- Image Bank
- Style Guide
- Tagline
- Boilerplate
- Legal Language

BUILD YOUR BRAND

Your brand identity is central to everything you do. If you haven't already done it, develop (or refresh) your brand identity and voice. Create a brand guide to share with internal and external collaborators, an image repository that can be used across campaigns, and a style guide that details brand voice, personality, and core messaging. Do you have a corporate tagline, boilerplate description of your company, or legal language that must be included on materials (e.g., a legal disclaimer)? Be sure to add these to your style guide.



Work Your Way From the Top to the Bottom



Top of the funnel:
These prospects are
researching solutions.

Middle of the funnel:
These customers are evaluating
their product options.

Bottom of the funnel:
These prospects are ready
to make a purchase.

Did You Know?

The top priority for
marketers in 2020 is
generating leads.²



FILL YOUR PIPELINE

Pipeline is the lifeblood of sales and revenue, so keeping your pipeline filled with prospects and opportunities should be the No. 1 goal of any go-to-market campaign. A series of sustained marketing activities will convert prospects into customers.

Engagement and conversion are crucial to moving prospects through your pipeline. Once they've entered the pipeline, you will need targeted marketing campaigns to nurture them.

Your pipeline starts at the **top of the funnel**. This is the widest audience of prospects that might be interested in your product or service. Prospects might have little or no awareness of your brand or offerings. Some goals to consider when targeting the top of the funnel include:

- **Awareness:** How does your company or product/service play in this market?
- **Education:** What problem does your product or service solve?

After leads have been converted from the top of the funnel, they move down into consideration mode. They know a little about your brand and offerings, but now you need to build a connection with them. Focus on the following goals when targeting the **middle of the funnel**:

- **Evaluation:** How does your product/service differ from competitors?
- **Adoption:** What common objections to the sale do you need to overcome?

The leads that filter down into the bottom of the funnel are your sales-ready prospects. They know who you are and what you can do for them, but they need some final convincing before they will say yes. Marketing efforts targeting the **bottom of the funnel** should address the following considerations:

- **Price:** How does your product/solution offer the most value?
- **Proof:** What ROI/performance proof points can you share?

What's in a Marketing Plan?

- Marketing Goals and Objectives
- Market Overview and Audience Targets
- Competitive Research
- Barriers to Overcome
- Brand Value Proposition
- Tools and Tactics for Deployment
- A Go-to-Market Timeline
- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Success

MAKE A MARKETING PLAN

Developing a marketing plan is critical to success. Without a solid plan, you can't identify or reach your marketing goals. As simple as that seems, more than one-half (59%) of surveyed solution providers admittedly don't make a marketing plan for their business. Sixteen percent of solution providers say they only create a plan if a vendor requires it to qualify for market development funds (MDF).³

Building a marketing plan does two things. First, it aligns your marketing activities with business goals and budgets. Second, it helps you identify the resources and skills needed to implement those campaigns. For example, do you have the tools and staff to launch a marketing automation campaign? Do you have a solid brand strategy that you can communicate to your marketing team? Do you have a way to measure campaign outcomes? Do you have any existing content that you can leverage, or do you need to create new content? A marketing plan will help guide campaign development and execution strategies.



GETTING STARTED: LAY THE GROUNDWORK

Step 1 – Define Your Campaign Goals

Before embarking on any marketing campaign, you need to know what you are trying to achieve. Start by identifying your goals, then choose the marketing tactics you can use to achieve them. No need to overthink this, you simply need to figure out what you are aiming to accomplish.



Your marketing goals may include:

- New product awareness and sales
- Cross-selling and upselling existing customers
- Targeting a new audience segment
- Building brand awareness
- Establishing your brand as a thought leader
- Building a community of brand advocates
- Growing your social media communities
- Generating event registrations

Step 2 – Identify Your Unique Selling Proposition (USP)

Your business is unique, so leverage that to your advantage. Do some internal and competitive research to clearly define what makes your company, products, and services better than anything else that's on the market.

Once you have determined your USP, gather facts and proof points to validate your position. Are you first to market? Is your product an award-winner? Is your company's leader an innovative visionary? Leverage these to differentiate your brand and offering in a crowded market.



What Makes Your Brand Unique? Consider These Differentiators:

- Are you the only one?
- Do you solve a unique problem?
- Are you first to market?
- Longest running?
- Are you best-selling?
- Are you the most award-winning?
- Do you deliver more ROI?
- Do you offer more value?
- Is your solution the easiest?
- Fastest?



Points to Leverage

- Years in service
- Use case ROI
- Awards won
- Industry accolades
- Third-party validation
- Survey results
- Net Promoter Score
- Customer satisfaction ratings
- Customer recommendations/
testimonials

Personas: Who Are You Targeting?



Who are the users
of your product?
[RECOMMENDERS]



Who oversees the users
of your product?
[SPECIFIERS]



Who has purchase
authority?
[BUYERS]



Who holds the budget
authority over purchases?
[FINANCERS]



Step 3 – Develop Your Buyer Personas

How Do Your Personas Differ?

Each persona faces different challenges. Communicate how your product and service can help them overcome these challenges, taking into consideration the following questions:

- What is their business challenge or pain?
- How does that challenge impact their job?
- What do they need to alleviate this pain?
- How does your product/service alleviate that pain or challenge?
- What outcomes are they most concerned about?
- What is their measure for a successful outcome?

Once you have refined your targets/personas you can readily shape your marketing campaigns and messaging to communicate how your product/service addresses their needs. The more you understand and know about your personas, the more successful you will be in connecting with them via both marketing and sales efforts.



According to Gartner, the B2B buyer's journey looks something like this:⁵



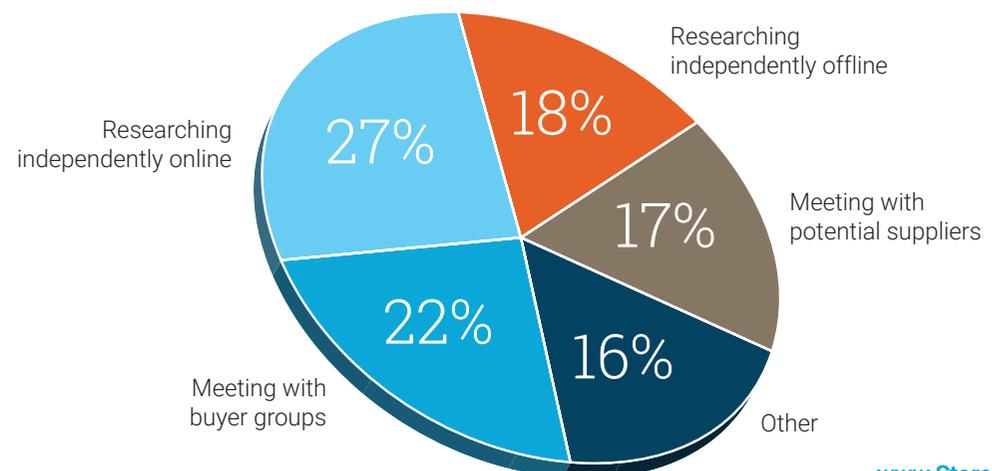
Step 4 – Map Your Buyer's Journey

The B2B technology buyer's journey is complex, involving many different stakeholders who have independently gathered information and who must reach a consensus before a purchase decision can be made.

The B2B buying journey involves as many as six to 10 decision-makers who each consider four to five pieces of information.⁵ Perhaps this is why 77% of buyers say their B2B purchases are very difficult.⁵ Part of the complexity is that the journey isn't linear; it's looping. They may go back and forth across the different steps before landing on a consensus.

The marketer's goal is to provide potential customers with prescriptive advice and practical support to help them advance through the buyer's journey. How can you deploy a campaign to help a persona move from problem identification to consensus creation? You do this by targeting each phase of the buyer's journey. In these campaigns, engage the prospect with challenges and offer credible industry proof points that validate your technology or service as a solution.

How B2B Tech Buyers Spend Their Time⁵



New to MDF?

Here's what you need to know.

MDF are funds made available by a manufacturer or brand to aid channel partners, resellers, VARs, or distributors to sell its products or build brand awareness. As a StorageCraft partner, you will have opportunities to take advantage of our MDF programs to fund some of your go-to-market efforts. You will need to follow a specific claim and reimbursement process, which will be outlined to you before funds are distributed.

Contact your StorageCraft account manager to learn more about your MDF options.

Step 5 – Optimize Your Marketing Spend

As a channel partner, there are a variety of ways for you to finance your go-to-market campaigns. This includes your operating budget, sales allowance funds, vendor MDF, and vendor accrued co-op funds. The more you can make use of other people's money, the more you can optimize your marketing and budget spend.

It's estimated that 62% of marketing spend is financed with operating expenses, and 13% from vendor MDF.³ Approximately 63% of solution providers say MDF funding is one of the most critical forms of marketing support they receive from their vendors.³

Along with MDF, StorageCraft also helps boost marketing profits with Deal Registration, Competitive Upgrade Pricing, free use of our marketing and sales collateral, and MSP pricing. Read the blog post to learn more about the [free ways to expand your marketing](#) with us.



Partners spend as much as 20% of their marketing budgets on:³

- Telemarketing
- SEO
- Tradeshows/Events
- Lunch and Learn events
- Content Marketing
- Lead Nurturing
- Advertising



Tips for Optimizing Your Marketing Budget

- Align budget resources with your marketing plan
- Make use of MDF and co-op funds
- Leverage free collateral available from your vendor
- Create evergreen content that can be repurposed across campaigns



Read a StorageCraft Case Study on How MDF Can Make You More Profitable



Step 6 – Acquire Marketing Skills and Expertise

You may have an in-house staff of marketers to help you plan, build, and launch your go-to-market campaigns. Or, you may need to work with an outside resource to assist. For example, according to an IPED Consulting Channelytics report, some of the top areas where solution providers reach out for guidance and expertise include:

- Leveraging Marketing Automation
- Targeting New Emerging Buyer Personas
- Building Long-Term Campaigns
- Integrating Web Marketing
- Branding Strategies for New Business Models



Sources for Outside Marketing Expertise

General Advertising Agencies: These agencies can do it all: digital, print, advertising, broadcast, radio, outdoor advertising. Choose one that has expertise in serving technology companies.

Digital Agencies: These agencies provide niche expertise in digital campaigns and aid in SEO, PPC advertising, social media campaigns/advertising, website design, email marketing, and landing page conversion.

Marketing Services Agencies: These partners work as an extension of your internal marketing team, helping to close specific skills gaps and provide the expertise that you might be lacking.

Consultants/Freelancers: These individuals work alongside your internal or agency team. They may provide design, writing, and marketing strategy expertise. Some digital consultants specialize in PPC campaigns and SEO.

45%

of partners say digital marketing training and skills for staff are among the most important forms of marketing support they seek from vendors.³

GO-TO-MARKET TOOLS AND TACTICS

An integrated marketing approach that employs a variety of tools and tactics is most effective. Some customers and prospects might be more digitally engaged, while others might prefer offline experiences like tradeshows, and others may be most comfortable with one-on-one engagement such as direct mail or email.

An integrated campaign that communicates the same campaign message and imagery across channels will yield the best response.



Benefits of integrated campaigns include:

- **Range:** Reach more prospects across all marketing channels.
- **Recollection:** Reinforce your campaign message between marketing channels.
- **Validity:** Instill trust in your brand when prospects are exposed to it through trusted sources.
- **Economy:** Save money when you use assets and messaging across different channels.

CONTENT MARKETING

It's true that "content is king." But unless your content is relevant, meaningful, and timely, your targeted audience is unlikely to engage with it. You may have some content that you could leverage, such as staff member blogs or a paper on a particular new technology. If you don't have custom content, StorageCraft has content available for you to repurpose.

Content can be used in lead nurture, social media, and content syndication campaigns. You'll want to create a wide range of content that satisfies each of your personas at the different stages of the buyer's journey. Some content examples include:

- White papers
- eBooks
- Infographics
- Case studies
- Blog posts
- Website content
- Solution briefs
- Videos
- PowerPoint presentations
- Data sheets



Event opportunities include:

- **Tradeshows:** Great for targeting a large group of influencers and buyers in your target market.
- **Conferences:** Ideal for educating your audience on your technology approach.
- **Virtual events:** Cost-effective way to connect with new prospects and build brand exposure.
- **Lunch and Learns:** Small, targeted events ideal for more qualified buyers.
- **Webinars:** Ideal for gaining share-of-mind with prospects on your technology.

EVENTS

Events are an essential part of your marketing mix. They provide you with an opportunity to connect with a wide range of stakeholders in your community, including buyers, influencers, competitors, thought leaders, and disrupters, along with investors and potential business partners.

Events like tradeshows are generally very targeted. The event producers ensure that attendees are qualified buyers or researchers in a specific technology or marketplace. As a result, tradeshows are a great way to generate leads, promote new products, gather industry research, and develop important partnerships.

You can participate as an exhibitor, sponsor, or speaker. In each scenario, the event can provide valuable opportunities to extend your brand and thought leadership to eager buyers and decision-makers.



Email Do's and Don'ts

- **DO** be sure you are using an opt-in email list.
- **DON'T** forget to include opt-out language in your email footer.
- **DO** be sure to include a strong offer and call to action.
- **DON'T** include deceptive content in your emails.
- **DO** engage your prospect with engaging, conversational messaging.
- **DON'T** include too many messages or calls to action.
- **DO** test subject lines and headlines.
- **DON'T** include attachments as they could cause your email to get trapped as spam.
- **DO** keep graphics aligned with your brand.
- **DON'T** use colors that are not included in your brand guide.
- **DO** try personalization for higher engagement rates.
- **DON'T** make it difficult to find the call to action.
- **DO** try to keep emails short and drive to a landing page for conversion.

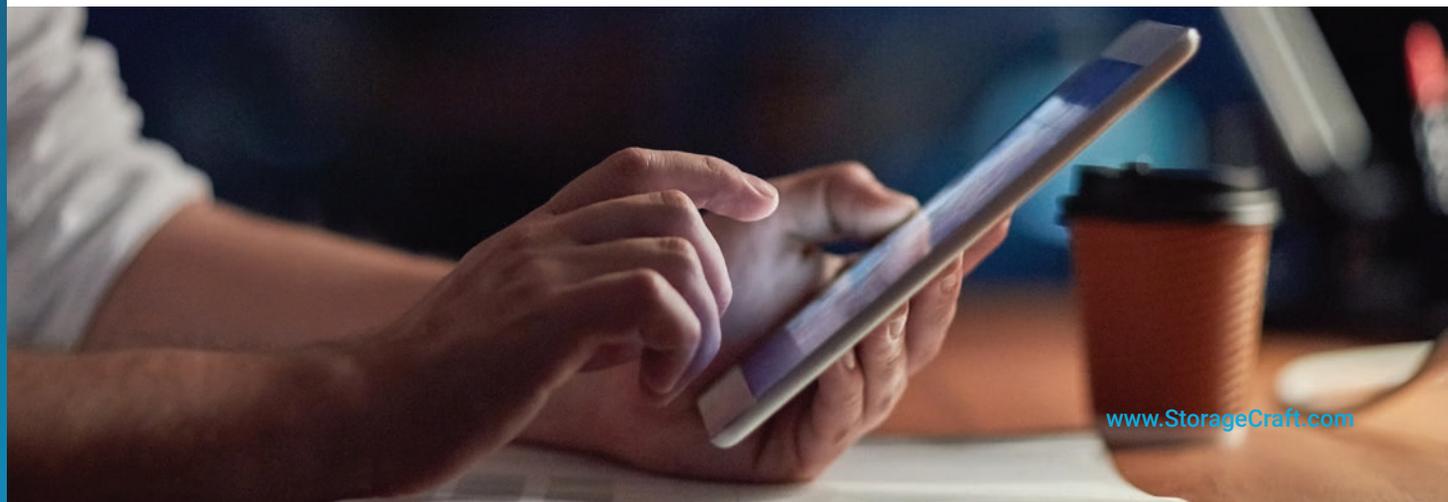
EMAIL CAMPAIGNS

As a digital one-to-one campaign tactic, email can be used for lead generation, lead nurture, and customer loyalty. It enables you to target your audience based on email lists that you build over time or that you rent. You can target companies, titles, and industries with your email list. Email campaigns can be multitouch, in which you send several email deployments to try to convert your prospects. Or you may employ a drip campaign that starts with engagement and ends with sales qualified leads.

LANDING PAGES

The job of a landing page is conversion. Landing pages provide a place for prospects to “land” from your outbound campaigns, whether it be email, social, content, or digital advertising. You can use landing pages to host assets associated with your campaign. Landing pages may include lead capture forms and cross-sell/upsell on other offers.

Always fulfill the promise you made in your campaigns on the landing page. For example, if you promised to share an asset or provide information, be sure to do it here. Messaging should focus on getting the prospect to perform the desired action (e.g., buy, download, view, read).



Solution Providers Can Use Direct Mail to:

- Promote an event
- Communicate a sales offer
- Announce a new product or program
- Keep prospects informed and engaged
- Cross-sell and upsell existing customers

Types of Direct Mail

- Self-mailer postcards
- Dimensional folded self-mailers
- Personalized letter packages
- Newsletters
- Posters
- Calendars/branded promotional items

DIRECT MAIL

Direct mail isn't dead. It's evolved to become an integral part of the marketing mix. Today's direct mail can include QR codes to drive prospects to a landing page or web page. Direct mail is a great way to generate leads and gain more brand recognition. Enveloped direct mail is easier to get past mailroom gatekeepers, while self-mailers are cost effective and highly engaging. Digital imaging and new inking technology allow for deep personalization and incorporate handwriting fonts into your creative.

Direct mail is tactile and has a longer shelf life than digital promotions. Since so many companies have shifted to digital outreach, there's less direct mail for you to compete with so your message and offer will stand out.

ADVERTISING

Advertising is a one-to-many marketing tactic and comes in both offline and online forms. In both cases, you can use advertising to promote a brand, offer, or message. The appeal of advertising is its broad reach. You are communicating to a large audience of prospects that you might miss with your other, more targeted channels.

Most advertising is short form, including just a headline, subhead, a line or two of text, and a call to action. It's best used with a strong offer, perhaps a white paper, video, or case study. Because it's a one-to-many tactic, use strong graphics and headlines to capture attention.

- **Print ads:** Great for targeting prospects in local media or trade publications.
- **Digital ads:** Ideal for promoting offers on targeted social media or websites.



Checklist for Social Engagement

- ❑ Create social media pages for your company.
- ❑ Establish corporate guidelines to allow employees to post on your page
- ❑ Use social monitoring tools like Hootsuite or HubSpot to monitor your outreach
- ❑ Track mentions of your brand
- ❑ Follow thought leaders and influencers
- ❑ Curate content to share
- ❑ Share custom content to establish your expertise

SOCIAL MEDIA

More partners are using social media to track their followers, push out content for consumption, and build communities of brand advocates. The immediacy and engagement of social media provide marketers with instant feedback and metrics they can use to hone their messages and offers.

As powerful as social media is, you'll want to develop a strategy for engagement and have a dedicated resource to monitor and respond. Since social media is a real-time engagement tactic, your followers will expect you to respond in a timely manner.

Social Channels for B2B technology engagement:

[LinkedIn](#)
[Facebook](#)
[Twitter](#)
[Instagram](#)
[YouTube](#)

Define Your Social Metrics

Determine if your goal is to gain likes, followers, shares, retweets, etc. Before choosing which social media platform to use, determine which platform(s) most closely aligns with your targeted audience.



SOCIAL MEDIA (CONTINUED)



Advance Your Social Initiatives

- Determine what you will share
- Map out a publishing calendar
- Respond and engage with individuals who react to your posts
- Analyze your results and tweak your content and messaging as appropriate
- Use content like visuals and videos when possible
- Get your work colleagues to participate and share
- Boost your presence with paid social advertising
- Distribute content across your social channels



Tips for Social Media Success

- Keep social posts short
- Use hashtags when appropriate
(be sure to test them to make sure they lead to relevant content)
- Don't be offensive or overly political
- Leverage curiosity as an engagement tactic
- Use statistics and numbers to communicate authority
- Stay relevant to your audience and your offer



TELEMARKETING

Telemarketing helps you reach out to prospects via telephone to engage with them and uncover new opportunities. Cold calling potential acquisition accounts can be done. Ideally, telemarketing should be employed to follow up with prospects that may have come to your booth at a trade event, downloaded some content from your website, or attended a webinar you ran. Prospects who have shown some interest are more likely to convert into opportunities.

You may have a sales resource or an inside sales team that can make some of these outbound calls. If not, consider engaging a reputable third-party telemarketing organization to do the calls on your behalf.

Typically, these telemarketing organizations charge a daily rate. Whether you use internal sales teams or a third party to make the calls, you need to brief them on the objectives of the campaign and provide as much detail about the customers you are targeting as possible.

It is critical that all details captured during the telemarketing calls be recorded and then immediately assigned to a sales team member to follow up on. Telemarketing can be relatively expensive, but it is very targeted and a great tool to build pipeline.

¹The Channel Company, Channelytics, "Covid Channel Impact Sales and Marketing PPT," 2020.

²HubSpot, "Not Another State of the Marketing Report," 2020.

³The Channel Company, Channelytics, "The State of Partner Marketing at a Glance," 2020.

⁴CoSchedule, "The Marketing Management & Strategy Statistics You Need to Know in 2019," accessed Aug. 2020.

⁵Gartner, "The New B2B Buying Journey," accessed Aug. 2020.

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QUESTIONS?

Reach out to your StorageCraft account manager for assistance.

StorageCraft | 380 Data Drive, Suite 300 | Draper, Utah 84020 | (801) 545-4711

www.StorageCraft.com