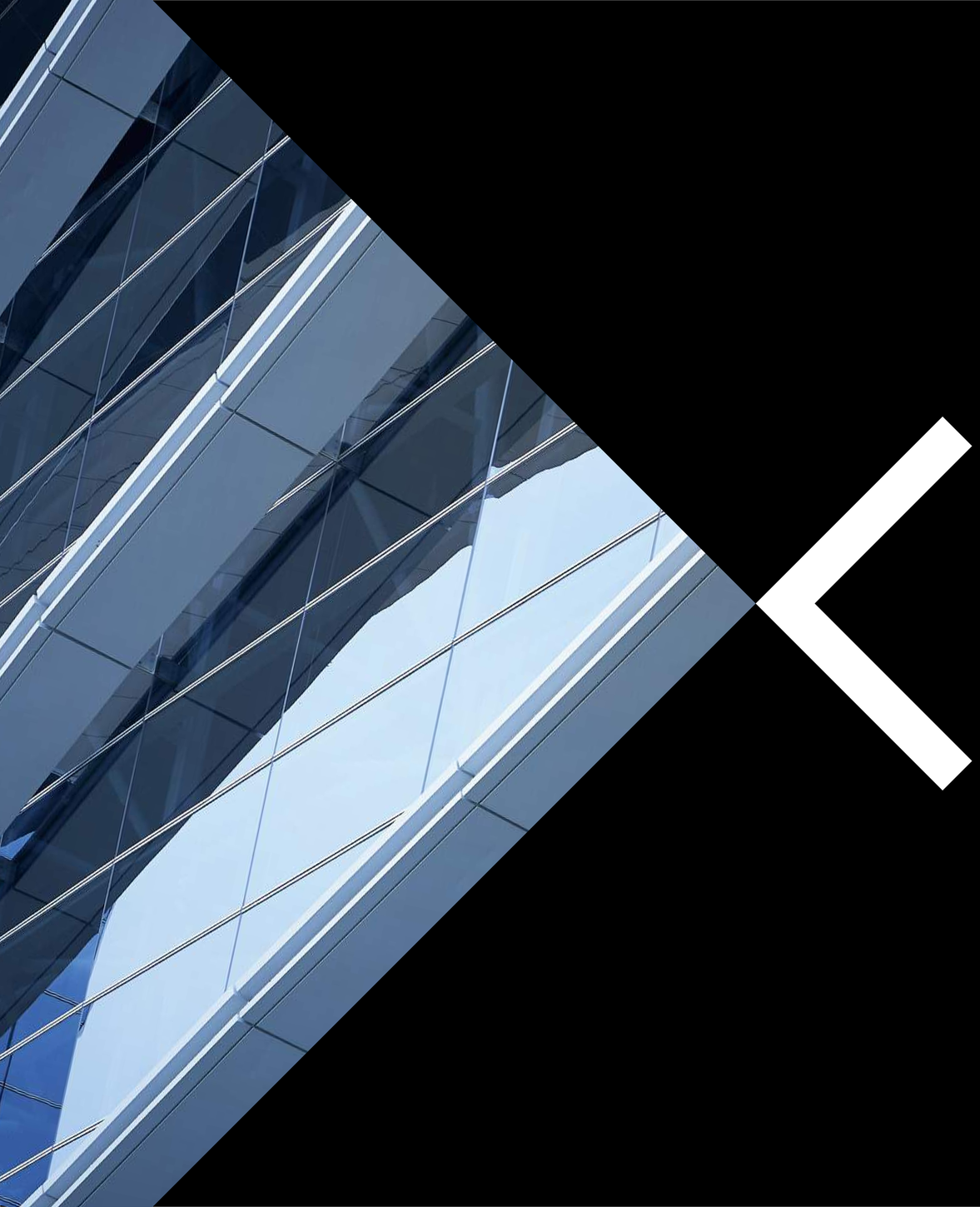
MARKETING TO

# AUTOMATION & CONTROLS ENGINEERS:

YOUR ESSENTIAL GUIDE

GODFREY



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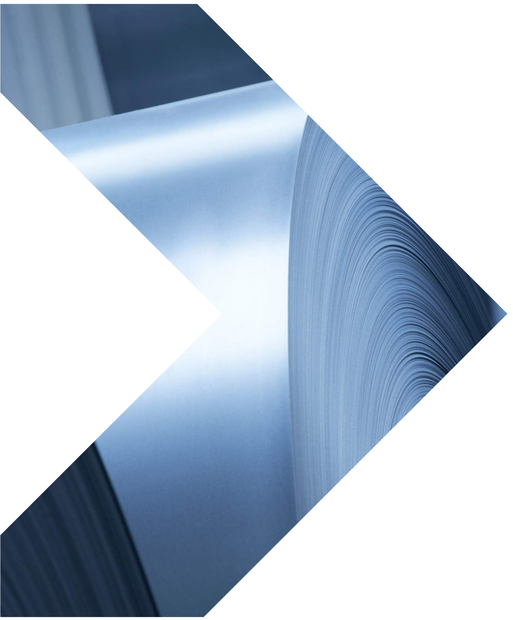
# THE GLOBAL INDUSTRIAL AUTOMATION AND CONTROL SYSTEMS MARKET WILL CONTINUE TO SHOW **STRONG AND CONSISTENT GROWTH OVER THE NEXT THREE TO FIVE YEARS**.

Automation technology is both the engine and the brains behind most of the world's manufacturing. The increased use of digital technology across virtually every component in every production machine adds new complexity and challenges to automation and controls engineers. If you're marketing to this critical space, success means making a real connection with engineers. This is easier said than done. Making the right connections requires **a unique balance of art and science** that's critical to your success.

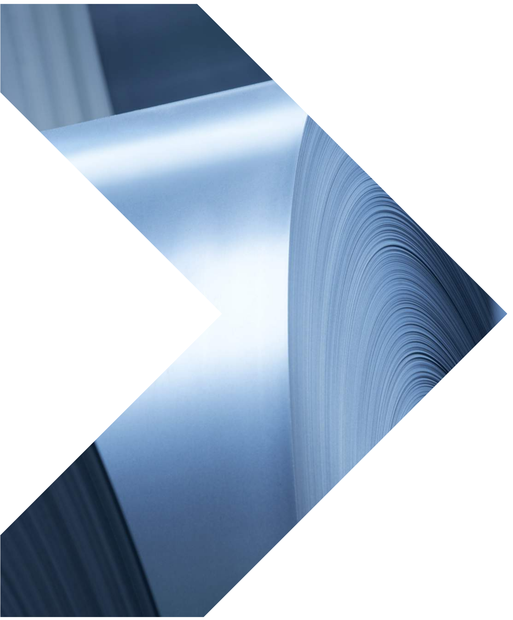


# Strong content, sustained relationships

At first glance, the engineering audience is like many B2B audiences. They're incredibly busy, challenged to keep their plants and factories operating at peak productivity while staying as far ahead of new automation technologies as possible. Their constant goal is to simplify manufacturing systems and reduce total cost of ownership of their plant's operations.

As an audience they are multi-touch, multichannel information consumers. Their need for current insights and fresh ideas on automation challenges makes them voracious consumers of information. They also collaborate with key stakeholders within their industries, including technology and software developers, quality assurance engineers, operations staff, business leadership and facilities architects. Having in-depth knowledge of technology developments is critical to successful collaboration with these groups.

So, if you know where to look, you'll find plenty of channels where you can engage them with valuable content. **At the end of the day, if your content is trustworthy and helps answer the questions they have, you can start building strong relationships.**



# Why we wrote this guide

As a B2B marketing communications agency, **the automation and controls industry is a segment we have focused on and served for decades.** We have gained valuable insights into the people, the technological evolution and communications needs for this community. We have interviewed hundreds of engineers, from both end-user manufacturers and original equipment manufacturers (OEMs), at the entry level up to the C-suite. We have developed detailed personas on engineers and others on their buying teams. We have commissioned primary ethnographic research into specific audiences, updating that research to enrich our understanding of the rapid and constant changes in the automation community, its behaviors and its preferences.

This guide provides a single place for us to organize our **research**, our key **insights** from secondary sources and our own **experience** in marketing to automation and controls engineers. We've put decades of knowledge into this book, and we've updated it to put the most current and effective marketing and outreach into the hands of our B2B colleagues. Hopefully this will make it just a little bit easier for you to make a connection for that ever-elusive audience.

# UNDERSTANDING THE LANDSCAPE

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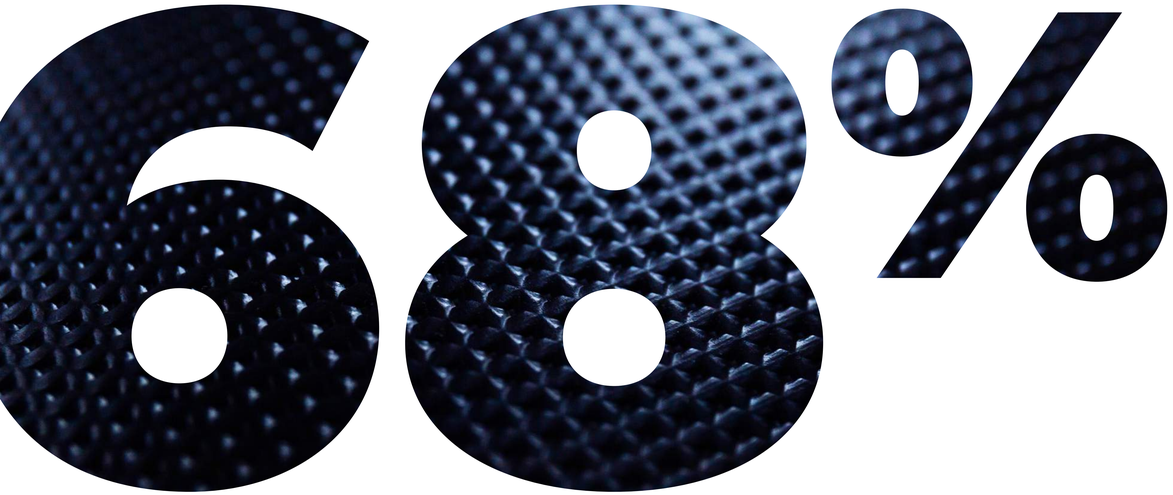



**The most recent Forester Research data**[1] on the buyer's journey indicates that **68% of the buying process is now conducted online** – and that statistic certainly represents how the automation and controls buyer operates. It demonstrates the primary importance of digital channels in the decision-making journey for both B2B and B2C buyers. Additionally, it highlights the critical influence of online content and digital interactions in shaping purchasing decisions before any direct engagement with sales teams occurs.

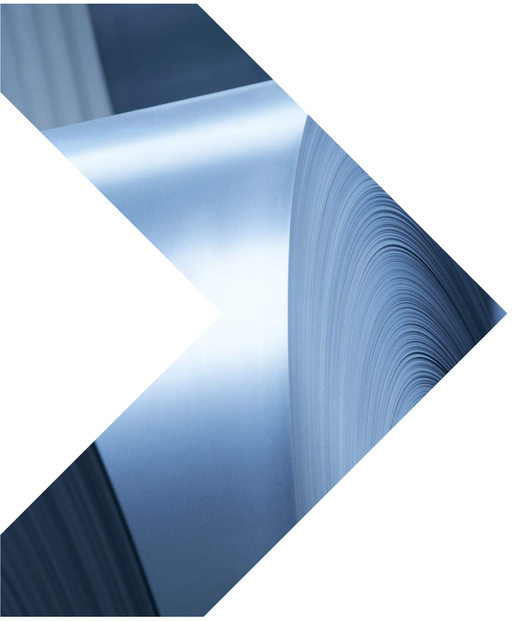
This intensifies how marketing teams and the digital platforms on which they operate play the leading role – and responsibility – to connect with the customer and guide them toward a buying decision.

They're grappling with big data, becoming customer-obsessed and dealing with the flood of marketing technology as they work to adapt to changes in the engineering community, including remote work and greater dependence on high-quality digital material, such as virtual events, streaming video, webinars and podcasts. **Branding Magazine** found that, if anything, CMOs face "too much opportunity – too many channels, too much data, too many choices to make for innovation and expansion – which then becomes the challenge."[2]

[1] Forrester Research 2023 Global B2B Buyer's Journey

[2] www.brandingmag.com

# What the new research tells us



Let's look at marketers in the automation and controls space in particular. In our research, we track social interactions among engineering marketing leads in addition to the engineers they are seeking to reach.

Like their peers in other industries, **engineering marketing leads have to handle a variety of persistent challenges**:

- Building pipeline
- Managing customer experiences
- Delivering new prospects
- Maintaining a productive team with the proper skill set
- Driving revenue
- Mining the data to power strategy/ tactics/content optimization

The **most important topics they discuss** include inbound/content marketing, storytelling, webinars, organic and paid social media, and – the hottest topic – how AI is shaping and can be most effectively utilized to drive content creation.

**Webcasts and podcasts** used to be one of several marketing tools; both formats have grown in frequency, run time, topic specificity and technical detail. B2B engineering audiences are showing increasing preference for this format, as CFE, a leading producer, can verify. **LinkedIn conversations** include social selling, conversational sales techniques, mobile marketing and new marketing channels (e.g., YouTube).

Due to long sales cycles, engineering CMOs are **challenged to tie marketing efforts to revenue.** This requires tracking what's happening with prospects for a longer period of time, and that can bring out **tensions between marketing and sales**.

# How you can keep your edge

Fundamentally, marketers need to understand how engineers think and react to marketing messages and improve their ability to connect with engineering decision-makers in the automation and controls space.

AI deserves a special mention. It is a powerful new tool that offers significant opportunities to advance research, analysis, segmentation and creative development. Marketers are challenged to integrate these tools into their processes and define a road map that makes sense for their organization.

Technological innovation is something automation professionals pay constant attention to, and they are aggressively exploring how AI systems can help them improve data mining of production results, improve process workflows and schedule their supply chains. Marketers need to understand how AI-type technology works and is being used in automation environments in these ways.

While there is no “easy button,” there is a proven path to success based on our long experience connecting with engineers in this space. And that path always begins with knowing your audience.

# MEET THE ENGINEERS

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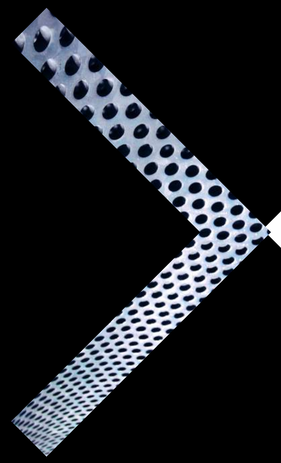


# Building a persona for the automation & controls engineer

Reaching an audience as highly skilled and technically oriented as automation and controls engineers requires not only a deep knowledge of the technology but also a thorough understanding of the audience's motivations. Engineers are sophisticated users of online resources. They can be quickly turned off to what they see as promotion or fluff, and they demand authentic, practical information. What's on their minds? Is it cost or quality? Performance or standards compliance? End user acceptance or ease of use? All of the above?

**Nailing those drivers is the key to success in marketing to this complex and multifaceted audience.**

# The five most important things to know

**1. They love data**

The more exhaustive, the better. Data lies at the heart of the job: how are our systems doing; how can they be made better? With digital transformation, they now need strong analytical skills to mine their machine data for actionable insights. For marketers, that means product information, reviews and specs. Application notes. White papers and trade publication articles. They want to see charts and graphs, performance data and hard information.

Blog posts, forums, webinars and podcasts drive traffic and engagement. As for trade shows, the pandemic did a major number on many shows, leading marketers to revisit their event strategies and explore implementing even more digital experiences.

**2. They are under pressure**

Engineers are expected to meet deadlines, reduce budget, design for manufacturability and get their products to market faster. Plus, mine their data and connect all their components to get accurate, real-time knowledge of every actuator and conveyor. Yet they're still on the hook for product reliability: according to one survey, 44 percent say the pressure to meet deadlines is putting product quality and reliability at risk.

They live with complexity – that's what they're trained to address: one design engineer we interviewed told us that he deals with more than 2,000 suppliers.

And these engineers worry about keeping up with all the new technologies and products – everything from Industry 4.0, to cybersecurity, to augmented reality, to robotics, to additive or 3D manufacturing.

# The five most important things to know

**3. The great resignation became the great retirement**

According to a 2022 manufacturing workforce survey by the Manufacturing Institute, eighty-two percent of survey respondents who left a manufacturing job in the past six months retired due to age or for health-related reasons.

The retirement wave that began in the 2010s has accelerated this decade, with the COVID pandemic a major factor. Manufacturers continue to be concerned that in both their engineering staffs and plant personnel they are losing specialized knowledge faster than they are gaining it with the newer generation of engineers.

The younger engineers coming up through the ranks have been online and connected from childhood. They expect to use a mobile device on the factory floor and are much more likely to access a video, podcast or webinar. They expect high-quality graphical user interfaces and machine readouts that match their daily web experiences, with sophisticated charts and graphs. Web browser interfaces with AI support built in will be their next ask.

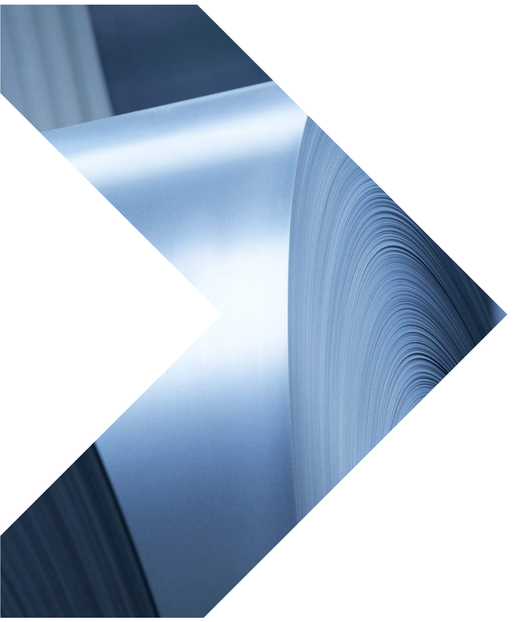
**4. They are part of a team**

No longer does one engineer specify or authorize a purchase. More and more, engineers are buying as part of a team. And that team grows larger every year. In addition to other engineers, it might include representatives from operations, IT, marketing, R&D, manufacturing, procurement and sales for an OEM.

There might be a technical committee involved with specifications or a commercial committee in charge of negotiating contracts – in other words, squeezing their suppliers on price and delivery.

**5. They love being engineers**

Despite the pressures and frustrations of their jobs, research Godfrey has conducted confirms that 84 percent of engineers would recommend their profession to a friend or child. Seventy-four percent feel appreciated and respected, and 71 percent think engineering is a respected profession. When marketers provide engineers with the content and insight they need to solve the challenges they face, marketers have a chance to share in their satisfaction and success.



# The “skills gap”: major factors driving engineer retirements

The “skills gap” concerns the challenges manufacturers face competing to hire skilled personnel while also dealing with the retirement of a large portion of the workforce with deep expertise in automation and control systems. It’s difficult to replace these skilled works due to factors such as:

**Aging Workforce:** The industry has been dominated by older engineers with decades of experience. As they retire, their knowledge and expertise are not easily replaced by younger professionals who may lack hands-on experience with complex automation systems.

**Lack of New Talent:** There is a shortage of young engineers entering the field of industrial automation. This is partly due to a general decline in interest in manufacturing and industrial careers among younger generations.

**Training and Knowledge Transfer:** Companies are struggling to implement effective knowledge transfer programs. Industrial automation is extremely complex, so it can take years of on-the-job experience to reach the level of expertise that retiring engineers possess.

**Technological Advancements:** Rapid advancements in automation technology mean that the knowledge base required is constantly evolving. This creates a situation where even newer engineers need continuous training, which can be resource-intensive for companies.

# THE MANY PERSONAS OF THE AUTOMATION & CONTROLS ENGINEER

There is no single persona for “The Automation and Controls Engineer.” This category of buyer contains its own subsets of unique personas, each approaching your brand with their own motivations and concerns. Let’s look at a few of these audience groups in general and explore what makes them different.

# Persona #1:
# End-User Senior Engineer Manager

They manage engineering for major projects for their company, collaborating with OEMs, integrators and product manufacturers from design to implementation. They constantly seek to simplify manufacturing systems and reduce total cost of ownership for their plant's operations.

**Their critical challenges include:**

- Machines that increase cycle rates/ throughput, improve plant productivity
- Faster installation and commissioning time
- Seamless data integration
- Decreased downtime/increased uptime
- Ways to improve/increase flexibility for new machines and technology to accommodate changing products
- Product quality and availability, as well as engineering support, are also key factors.
- Finally, product features and benefits are important, especially in helping OEMs differentiate their equipment for end users.

**The content they prefer includes:**

- Technical product data (specs, data sheets)
- Product demonstrations (video)
- Technical articles, application stories
- Case studies
- Online tools/calculators

# Persona #2:
# OEM VP of Engineering & Manufacturing

This executive is an experienced engineer who takes a broader view of the company's automation needs and challenges. VPs need insights on how to stay on the forefront of innovation to meet market demand and realize full growth potential. They are responsible for business case development and financial analysis, are key decision-makers on major projects, lead operational excellence and ensure compliance.

**Their critical challenges include:**

- Rapidly evolving technology & compatibility
- Identifying/staying ahead of trends
- Attracting, retaining and engaging high-performance teams
- More competitors
- Price & time demands from customer
- Increased customization demands

They are highly influenced by senior management, sales and marketing (theirs), procurement, IT and customers/key accounts. Their information preferences include conferences/keynotes, business news outlets and key LinkedIn Groups.

**The content they prefer includes:**

- Long-form articles for key content, but mostly prefers short-form content
- Conference presentations/keynotes
- E-newsletters from trade publications
- Podcasts, videos

# Persona #3:
# Plant Manager, End-User Manufacturer

The plant manager knows every detail of the plant – who works on what and how. Constantly moving throughout the day (not sitting at a desk), reacting to and solving problems, they know what works and what doesn't, with hands-on experience in manufacturing operations, manufacturing engineering and team building. Over the past few years, their plants have implemented new programs to increase quality and performance by introducing dashboards, metrics and continuous improvement initiatives.

**Their critical challenges include:**

- Downtime due to unplanned maintenance
- Availability of spare parts
- Controlling operating costs
- Learning curve and adoption of updated technology
- Recruiting and maintaining a skilled workforce
- Data analysis skill sets

They get their information from trade publications (online), conferences (1-2 per year), supplier websites, training guides/ webinars and personal interactions on-site with distributors and suppliers. Long-form articles for key content, but mostly prefers short-form content.

**The content they prefer includes:**

- Product demo videos
- In-person training (if possible)
- Supplier emails
- Conference presentations
- Sales presentations/leave-behinds

# Persona #4:
# Supply Chain Manager

The automation and control industry are now fully aware of the critical role supply chain management plays in modern manufacturing. Supply chain managers need to be savvy negotiators who analyze and manage supply chain risk by staying on top of the sources of the supplies their operations need, to avoid disruption, downtime and angry customers. They focus on ensuring manufacturing continuity and production at their facilities while meeting cost-savings goals.

**Their critical challenges include:**

- Suppliers who are slow or can't meet the delivery and quality scorecards
- Supplier consolidation while meeting internal stakeholder desires
- Balancing internal requests/expectations with company business goals
- Exploring how AI tools can be woven into planning and forecasting processes

The information resources they consult most frequently include industry websites and forums, internal teams, sales reps and professional organizations.

**The content they prefer includes:**

- Total cost of ownership analysis
- Product spec sheets
- Product samples
- Case studies

# YOU CAN START BUILDING YOUR OWN AUDIENCE PERSONAS

VIDEO:

**How To Improve The Current State Of Persona Marketing**

At Godfrey's FWD:B2B Conference, Katie Martell, Founder and CMO at Cintell, talked about how modern digital tools can make the creation of marketing personas less painful than ever.

If you know where to look, this kind of knowledge is always within reach. You can leverage a number of accessible resources and experiences to gain insight into the factors that affect purchasing behavior.

**These include:**

- Secondary research, like studies completed by major professional organizations and publications
- Institutional knowledge gained from decades of experience in marketing to these professionals
- Client perceptions, including success stories or anecdotes from sales and customer service personnel
- Review of published articles appearing in trade and professional journals
- New AI tools that can now streamline research and guide the formulation of specific personas more efficiently
- Monitoring online activity, like social media and even the customer's own website
- Primary research, which could include surveys as well as in-depth interviews conducted with customers and prospects

The automation and controls engineer can make an elusive buyer. But when you listen in the right places, you'll learn a lot about what these professionals most appreciate – and what they most dread.

# WHAT ENGINEERS LIKE TO TALK ABOUT

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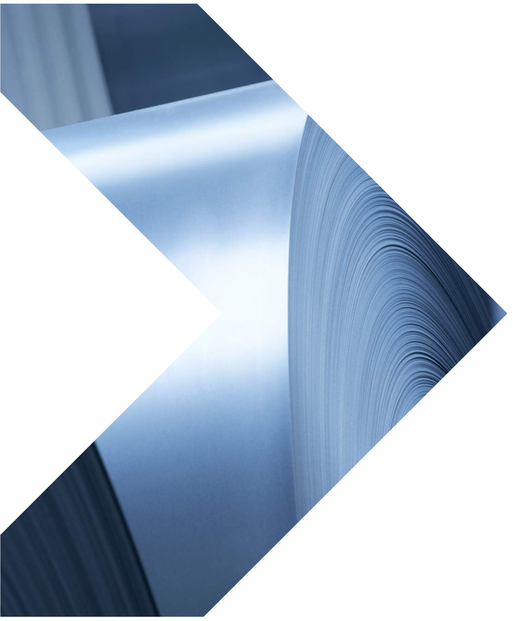


# Marketing to automation and controls engineers is always a sophisticated conversation

This industry is driven by technological change and business demands for cost reduction, increased productivity and better return on investment. It's fair to say your target audience is "bombarded" with content that promises the perfect solution to every problem they face. But that's not a conversation, let alone a sophisticated one.

The engineering audience needs – and will pay much greater attention to – in-depth content about the issues that really matter to them. Understanding those values is the first step toward fostering a robust and ongoing conversation.

BLOG:

**Digital Transformation in Automation: From Factory Floor to the Enterprise Cloud**

For many years, the automation community was focused on Industry 4.0, the Factory of the Future, the Industrial Internet of Things – all shorthand for exploring and encouraging the wholesale integration and adoption of smart, digital automation components, production systems and complete lines.

Now simply called digital transformation, it defines the wholesale change in the technology of factory automation, transforming how manufacturers use and connect smart sensors, actuators, control devices and machine controls to manage their machines in real time. Equally important is capturing, aggregating and analyzing the data from all these smart components to plan their business, operate with greater flexibility and plan future advances in their platforms.

Goals in automation have consistently centered around cost reduction and improved productivity, efficiency and uptime, which are now being driven by digital transformation initiatives. So as marketers, we are being asked to evolve the industry perception of some companies, highlight how their business and technology offerings align with a digital future and encourage creating user experiences that let their customers know they get it and are investing in it themselves.

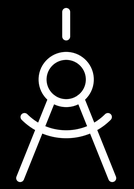
**READ THE FULL BLOG →**

# Where to start the conversation

Before you start creating content for the automation and control engineer, make sure it falls into one of these categories.

### IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

When and how to expand the smart technologies their systems utilize



### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Insights into resources and organizations that can help keep them abreast of developments in their field

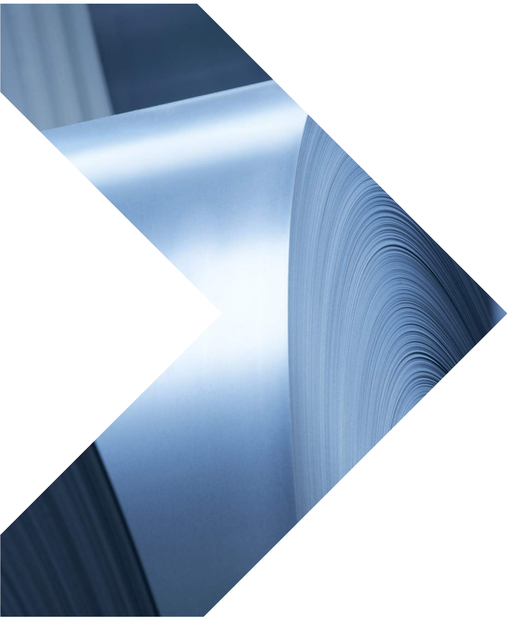
### TECHNICAL ADVICE

Tips about technology selection – bus architectures, intelligent components, manufacturing workflows, etc.

### EVERYDAY TIPS

Working with suppliers, planning for new technologies, managing the next generation of engineers – anything to help them handle each day's work

# The Five Most Popular Topics of Discussion



Our experience and studies indicate that automation and controls audiences are especially drawn to conversations around five perennial topics:

**1. Advancing Implementation of Digital Transformation Technology**
Understanding what kinds of technologies they need to begin integrating into their systems. What kind of functionality do they need to deploy? How do they utilize new concepts such as embedded sensors and more autonomous control systems to further the integration of people and machines? How to easily connect older technologies with legacy protocols into a seamless enterprisewide industrial data system?

**2. Updating Legacy Infrastructure**
What's needed to make today's automation and manufacturing systems smart factory-ready? There's increasing interest in deploying robotics and other increasingly automated systems, but what's the best way to do this without completely ripping out and discarding existing, highly valuable production systems?

**3. Cybersecurity in the Age of the Industrial Internet**
When embedding sensors and intelligent technology in their machines, what risks are there that these digital devices can be hacked? Can wireless communications be built into the factory floor and still be kept secure? What are the requirements of industry standards? Building confidence in the newest generations of machine with billions of devices and communication channels interacting with each other is crucial.

**4. The Impact of Big Data**
Data-rich manufacturing environments generate vastly greater amounts of data than in the past; how do they optimize how this data is aggregated, processed and shared across the plant and the entire company? How can AI help streamline and advance data mining and analysis? How can that data and those insights be provided to end users to be of greatest value at the machine level, on the factory floor and across the enterprise?

**5. Expanding Use of Simulation and Virtual Modeling**
How can advances in simulation technology be used to shorten machine development time frames and gain insight into system behavior early in the design cycle to prevent costly redesigns? These are powerful capabilities, but what changes in the OEM's engineering culture and processes are needed to make the best use of these advances?

# WHAT **WE KNOW** FOR SURE

Our list of topics is not comprehensive, but it does cover the vital issues that remain “top of mind” for automation and controls audiences. Regardless of the topic, however, engineers share a focus on the applicable and the practical: a recognition that digital transformation is no longer a revolution, but the way automation moves forward in the 21st century.

They seek concrete, usable advice and insight, backed up by proof in the form of case histories, focused webinars and demonstrations of working systems that apply the latest capabilities to actual production challenges.

# HOW ENGINEERS MAKE A PURCHASE

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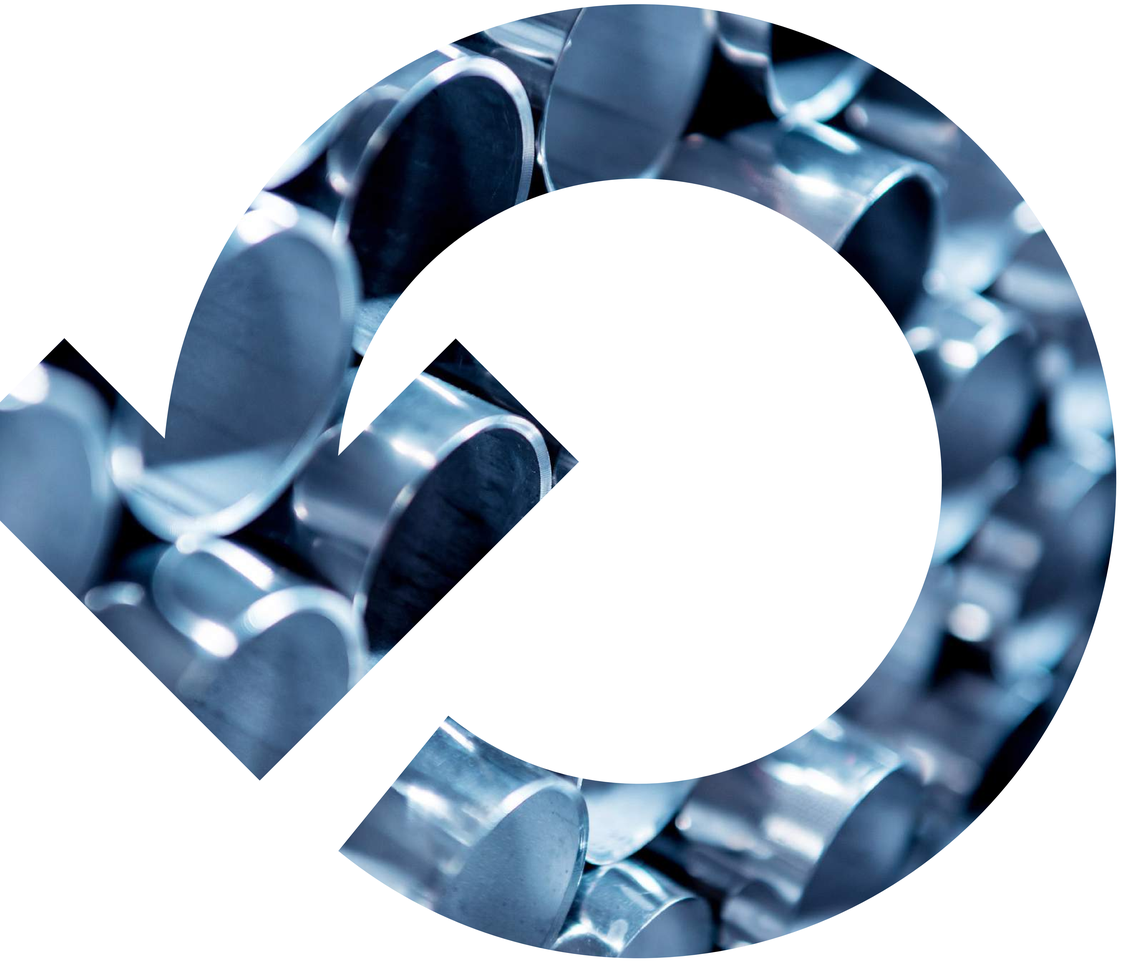


# It’s probably time for a quick recap

We have identified the audience and what they care about before making a purchase. But how exactly do they go about making that purchase? How do engineers buy?

**They Move in Packs**

We’ve discussed that B2B purchasing has increasingly become a team sport, with lots of different players joining in at various stages of the process. For example, an OEM purchase of a new component or technology may involve representatives from purchasing, sales, product management, operations and even marketing. If it involves a significant capital investment, approval by senior management or ownership may be needed.

**They’re Doing More Research Than Ever Before**

Making the process more challenging, the B2B buying journey is more self-directed. Long gone are the days when a sales rep controlled the process and fed customers the information he or she thought they needed, when they needed it. Buyers want to conduct their own initial research, often before sales and marketing even know they are interested.

Our digital age and the tools at our disposal (including AI) make this so much easier. According to Forrester, a staggering 68% of business buyers conduct more than half of their research online before making an offline purchase.

# Case Study:

# Driving Brand Awareness to a New Audience

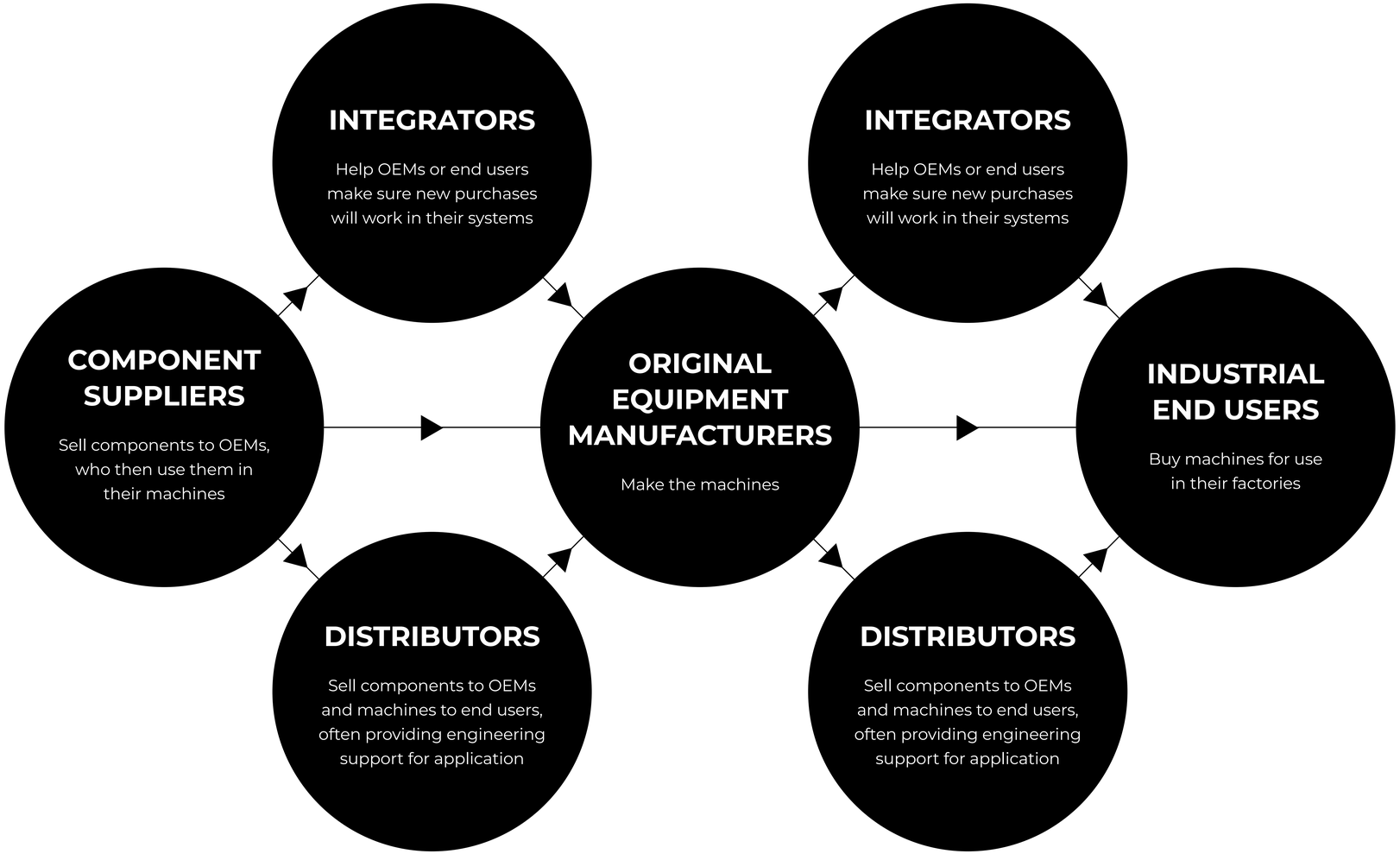
As one of the world's leading suppliers of drive and control technologies, Bosch Rexroth manufactures components and technology solutions from a number of business units that comprise Factory Automation solutions. But, while customers may know them for linear motion or assembly technology, there was limited awareness of their complete, integrated product and service offering to support full factory automation needs.

To raise that awareness, Godfrey conducted a robust research plan, which included a brand study, internal stakeholder interviews, customer and prospects survey, and industry and competitive landscape reviews. We developed new assets aligned with themes targeted to address key audience requirements, including a robust microsite, multiple white paper and lead gen materials, and an extensive digital B2B promotional campaign and targeted PR program. This content was used as a strong call to action for tactics and to populate the campaign microsite with general and vertical-specific information.

**READ THE FULL CASE STUDY →**

# THE JOURNEY IS LONG AND UNPREDICTABLE

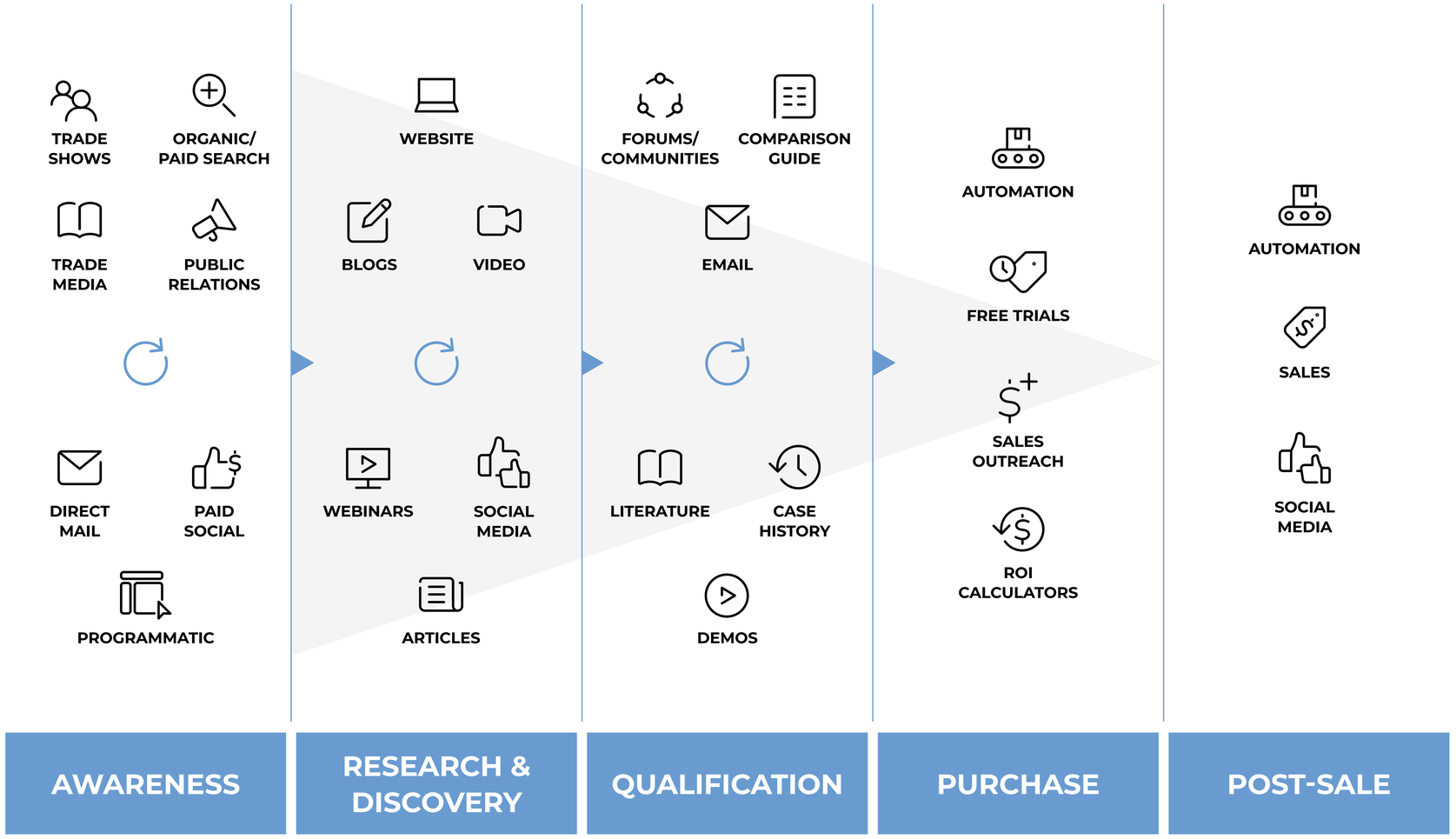
In the “considered purchase” environment of B2B, the buying process can take longer – up to two years in some cases. All of these players have their own information needs and learning styles. So the process has become more complicated than ever. But maybe the big picture will make things a bit more manageable.




# The customer journey at a glance

**THE PLAYERS**

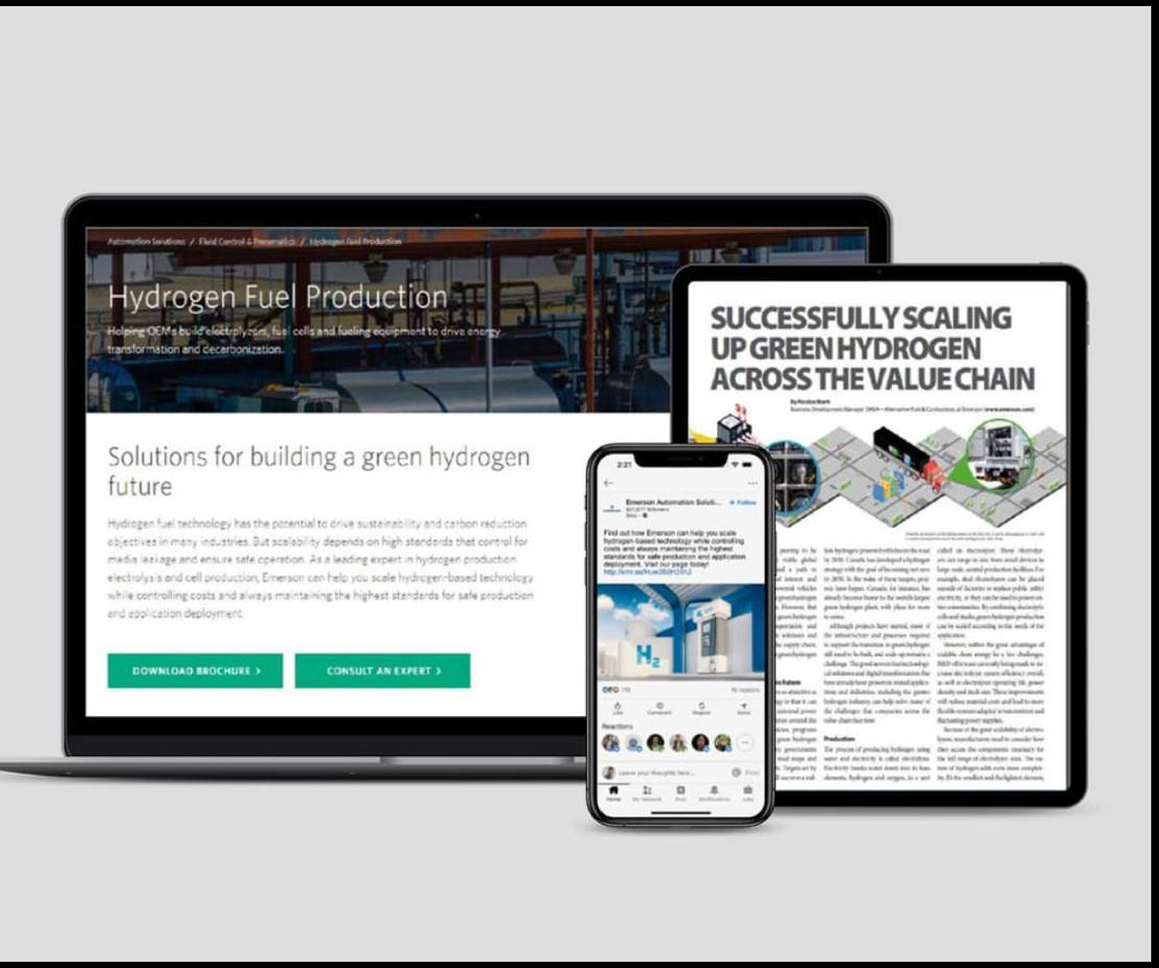
This chart shows the key players in the buying process at the institutional level. On the individual level, each of these “players” may contain multiple players of their own – like the sales, product management and manufacturing professionals that make up the OEM team.




# The customer journey at a glance

**THE PATH**

The typical customer journey is rarely a straight line. Instead, you must help customers navigate a winding path as our buyers bounce back and forth throughout the process.




# Case Study: Emerson's PR program goes global

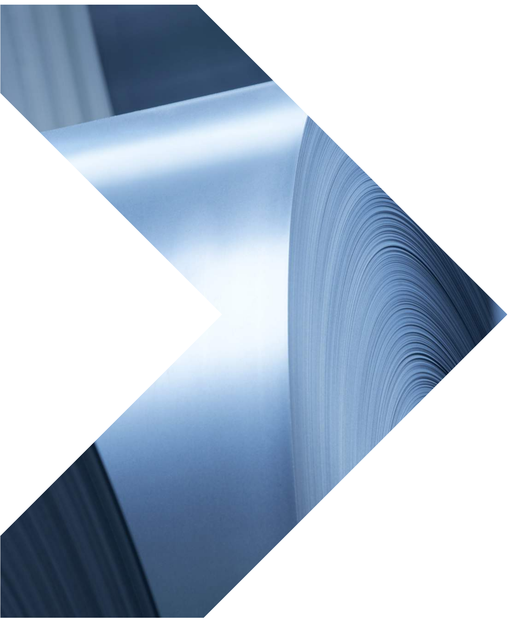
Emerson, a global leader in the technology, software and engineering sectors, sought to expand its worldwide thought leadership position by building upon the success of its North American public relations program globally. The company was particularly interested in highlighting its innovative Discrete Automation portfolio.

Emerson turned to Godfrey's technical expertise and deep industry knowledge to help develop content, including insightful technical articles, executive viewpoints and case studies. The overall goal was to position Emerson as a thought leader in a wide range of industries and develop technical articles that could be published and repurposed globally.

Godfrey collaborated with Emerson subject matter experts to develop 66 technical articles in 2022. The articles resulted in 46 North American trade publication placements, with a potential audience reach of 1,488,153. Nearly 20% of those articles (13) were repurposed for global placement.

**READ THE FULL CASE STUDY →**

# How the journey plays out



In any significant automation purchase, the journey is influenced by the technical complexity of the products and solutions being considered. Suppose a bottle manufacturer needs to expand their plant and improve both throughput and flexibility. Here's a breakdown of the typical steps they might take.

So, in the **awareness phase**, plant management and design engineers will do searches on latest developments in this kind of bottle-making systems. They will probably start with articles from broad design engineering websites with ads, conduct targeted web searches and schedule trade show visits.

Engineers collaborate with operations teams and other stakeholders to clearly define the technical requirements and develop insights on what the whole team wants. In the **research and discovery phase**, they may visit some industry forums where they can see how other engineers are tackling these problems. They may visit the websites of a few likely suppliers, download related articles, case studies or white papers and look for and attend webinars.

In the **qualification phase**, the team will start deepening their knowledge of available system options to sketch out the outlines of a solution. Engineers compare different solutions based on several criteria, including technical fit, compatibility with existing systems, scalability and long-term support. They may reach out to vendors for detailed technical specifications or product demonstrations and to ask specific questions related to their needs. As they get closer to a solution, they may access suppliers' CAD files to experiment with how different solutions fit an existing plant or machine footprint.

And when they finally get to the **purchase phase**, only then will they be entertaining sales reps' presentations and collaborating with them on procurement requirements. The decision often hinges on the vendor's ability to provide not just the product but also technical support, training and long-term partnership.

**THE MARKETER HAS A ROLE**

So that's the way things happen. Except that they happen differently for every buyer. Marketers must be thinking constantly about the buyer's journey, considering all the possible places that prospects and customers may go for answers, and developing the materials they need to advance through the process.

# WHAT YOU CAN DO TO REACH AN ENGINEER

05

# THE CONTENT THAT ENGINEERS LIKE THE MOST

**ACCURATE**

**VISUAL**

**CURRENT**

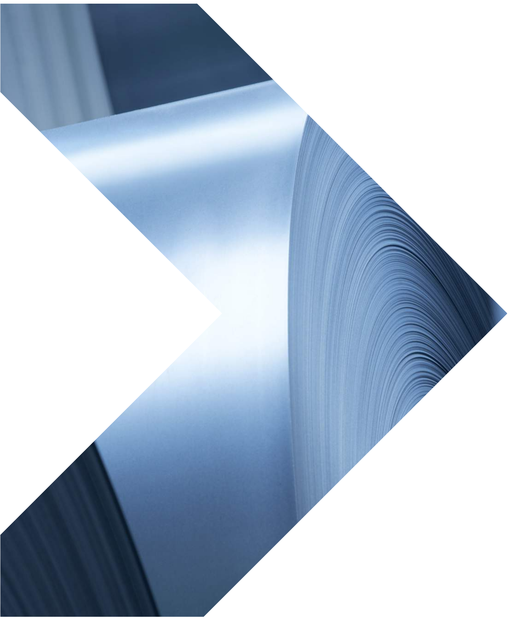
**EASY TO READ**

**PROFESSIONALLY DESIGNED**

**WELL-CITED**

**THEIR FAVORITE CONTENT TYPES**

- Product specs or reviews
- Case studies
- White papers
- Trade publication articles
- Application notes
- Webinars
- How-to videos and demos
- E-books



# In today's varied landscape of marketing tactics, which ones are best positioned to communicate your message?

And which channels will be the most effective at reaching your audience where they are? These are not easy questions. But you can put existing research and experience to work to help ensure your plan is based on the needs and interests of your audience.

A typical approach to developing an effective tactical plan is to consider three main factors: your marketing goals, how your audience engages with content, and where they go for information – especially as you consider the demographic of older vs. younger engineers.

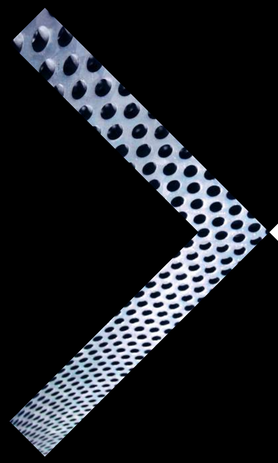
**KNOW YOUR OWN GOALS**

For example, do your company goals suggest a strategy to establish thought leadership? Or are you trying to build awareness around a major product launch? With your goal in mind, look at your messaging strategy and determine what you are trying to communicate – or what questions you are trying to answer for your audience – and align the tactics to those messages.

Thought leadership, for example, can be cultivated during the awareness or discovery phase of the buying process, and most valuable tactics here would be white papers, articles and case studies. For a product launch, where the audience is looking to understand features and benefits and qualify the purchase, your focus could be on product information, reviews, webinars, product demos, AI searches and how-to videos.

**KNOW THEIR HABITS**

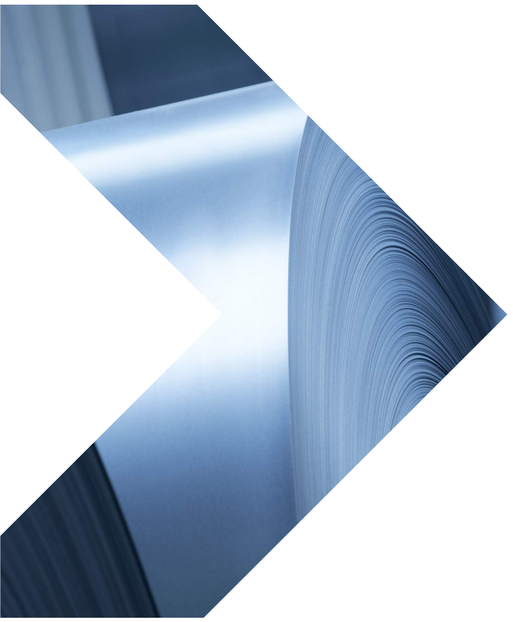
This is when you can't take anything for granted. For example, let's focus on the senior design engineer and the staff engineer (i.e., experienced vs. young). It's easy to assume the older engineers will prefer traditional channels while the younger engineers would tend to skew digital. But the difference isn't as great as you might think. One study found only minor variations (less than 5% in most cases) in social sharing among these groups.



# Whether experienced or new to the automation industry, your audience is now fully digital and online-engaged

**Here's some key proof points from a recent Marketing to Engineers survey:**

- On average, technical buyers spend 66% of the buying process online
- 41% of technical buyers turn to vendor websites for information on a regular basis, followed by 37% for online technical publications
- 63% of technical buyers use AI tools for work
- 90% of technical buyers listen to work-related podcasts, up from 73% in 2023
- Technical buyers find YouTube, LinkedIn and GitHub to be the most valuable social media platforms for work



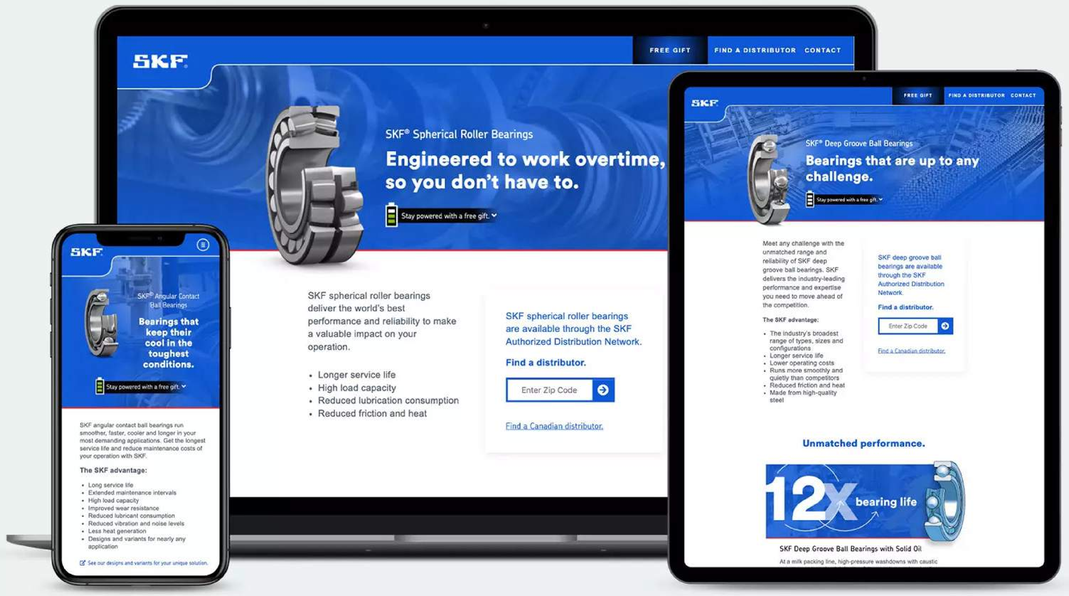
# Find their channels

Once you have determined your message and created the appropriate content pieces, you need to determine what channels to use to get your message in the right hands. The options are seemingly endless – but clearly digital takes the lead. First, use the techniques we've discussed to learn where your audience goes for information. Second, approach planning with flexibility and agility. Be willing to try something and then monitor results. If it's not working, move on to the next option. If it is working, think of how to expand your presence there.

Be bold. The digital world is iterative – programs like organic & paid search, e-blasts, digital ads and other tactics can be updated based on your engagement metrics. Spending weeks or months working and reworking content to perfection will cost you momentum and opportunity. Post, launch, promote, see how you're doing against your goals, then update based on what you learn.

You can reach your existing audience by leveraging your owned platforms – your website, social media, e-newsletters, etc.

But to find a new audience, you'll have to deploy your content wherever their journey takes them. Typically, engineers prefer supplier websites, search engines, trade publications, printed and online catalogs, e-newsletters and sales reps.




# Case Study: Strengthening the core for SKF

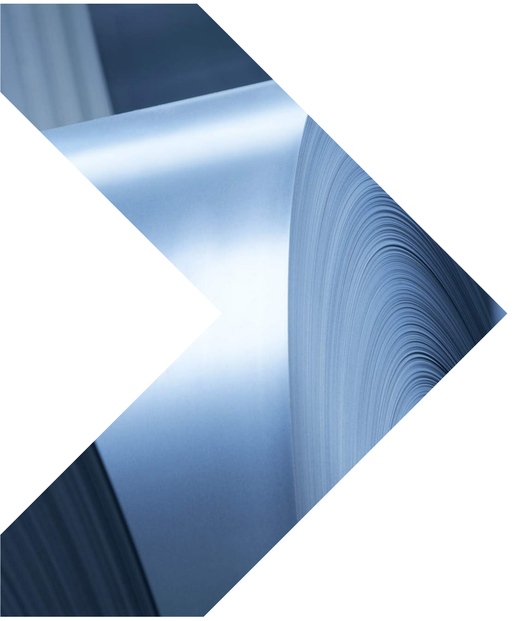
SKF is a global leader in the bearing market, and they want to keep it that way. Facing increasing competition, SKF wanted to boost brand preference and grow market share for three of their core products: spherical roller bearings, deep-groove ball bearings and angular-contact ball bearings. They turned to Godfrey to create a cohesive, integrated campaign that would take a targeted approach for each product.

To build awareness and drive preference for all three products in a single campaign, we focused on what's most important to OEMs and end users: machine performance and business impact. By highlighting performance gains and real customer results through data visualization, bite-sized case studies and application imagery, we showed potential customers that choosing SKF was a simple equation.

This concept also allowed for targeted messaging to educate potential customers about the specific application benefits of each product. This data-focused concept carried through all campaign elements, which included unique landing pages for each product, paid media and a social media program.

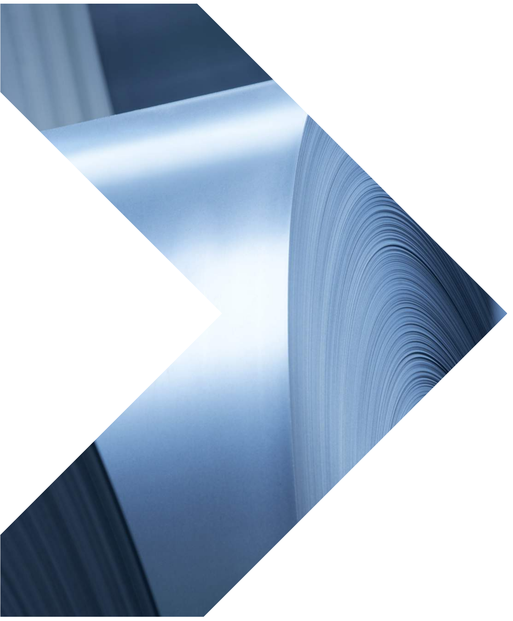
**READ THE FULL CASE STUDY →**

# Start your plan



There's a lot to consider. Here are a few of the ways that you can get started:

- **Check keyword rankings.** This will give a clear picture of how your competitors are ranking. Your analytics and webmaster tool reports will show exactly how you are performing on important keywords. If your search performance is low, you should consider an organic search engine optimization program. And if you're launching a critical campaign, a paid search program is the quickest way to ensure that your site gets listed.
- **Find the right channels and partners for your audience.** Horizontal publications like Design News and Machine Design are still valuable, but today's options reach further than ever. You can leverage with ad networks to serve targeted ads or with trade associations to build custom content programs. A paid and editorial relationship with targeted channels can achieve impressive results for awareness and credibility.
- **Identify social media platforms that your engineer audience frequents.** Growth in the use of YouTube, LinkedIn and Reddit is noted above. There are also targeted groups for engineers across many disciplines.
- **Listen to and engage in your audience's conversations.** Challenge your sales force to ask their customers about their preferred social networks, forums or blogs. Clean your first-party data to leverage CRM and marketing automation technology with accurate data. Have your internal teams find opportunities to engage on behalf of your company. This can be as easy as posting your branded content on social media or as involved as joining online discussions.



# Map your tactics to the journey

Creating a marketing mix that combines compelling messaging, engaging tactics and appropriate channels is a challenge that many automation and control marketers face. But it gets easier when you think about your tactics in terms of the customer journey. So based on what we know about the OEM design engineer and the end-user staff engineer, let's look at two examples of how your tactics could line up.

BLOG:

**Unveiling the Future: How AI Is Transforming B2B Manufacturing Sales**

In the ever-evolving landscape of B2B manufacturing sales, embracing technological advancements is not just an option — it's a necessity. One such groundbreaking technology that's reshaping the industry is artificial intelligence (AI). From improving efficiency to enhancing personalization, AI is revolutionizing the way B2B manufacturers approach sales.

Imagine a world where routine, time-consuming tasks like data entry, report generation and lead qualification are automated, freeing up your sales team's valuable time. This is the promise of AI in B2B manufacturing sales. With AI-powered tools, salespeople can focus on what they do best: building relationships and closing deals. By delegating repetitive tasks to AI, they can improve efficiency and productivity.

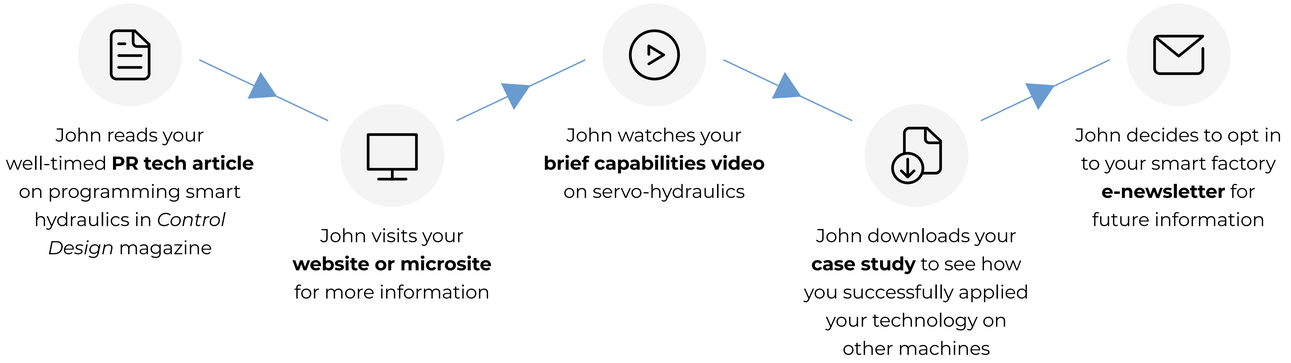
We've identified seven key ways AI is revolutionizing manufacturing sales.

**READ THE BLOG POST TO LEARN THEM ALL. →**

**Josh Albert - Senior Vice President, Business Development**

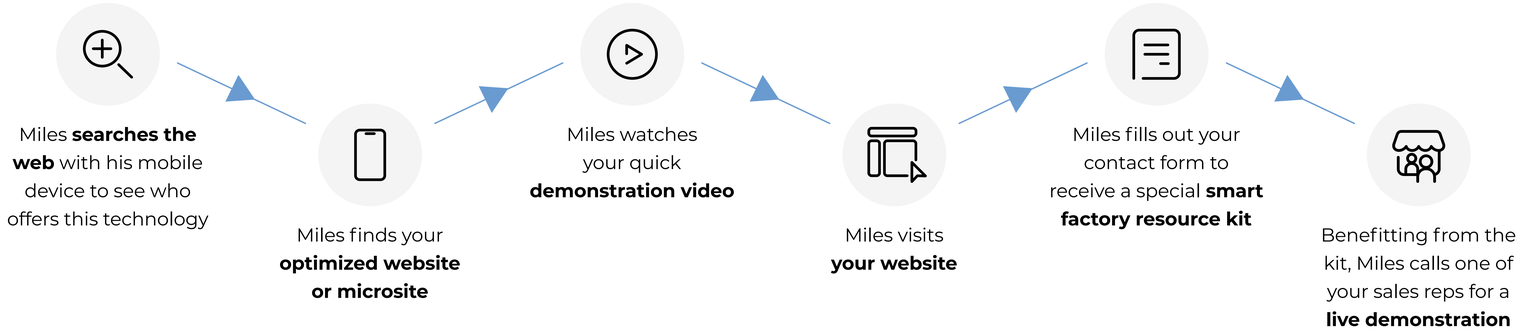
# WHAT YOU CAN DO TO REACH AN ENGINEER

Leveraging the Most Effective Marketing Tactics



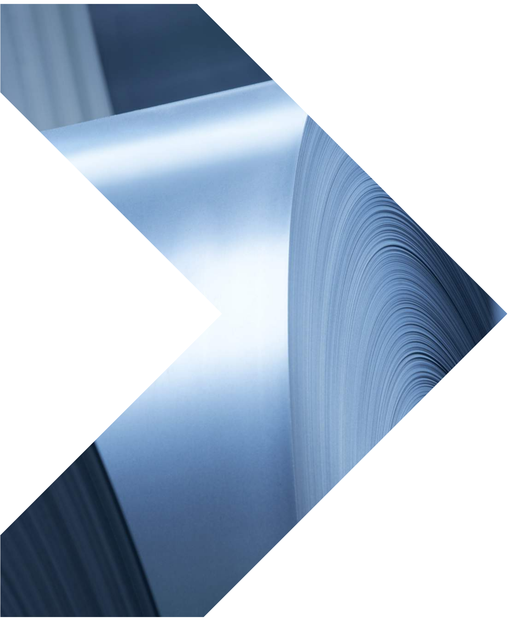

## The machine-building OEM

Senior design engineer “John” works for an extruder OEM and is in the awareness buying stage. He wants to know **how hydraulics can fit into the smart factory** concept.




## The end user

Miles is a staff engineer at a Tier 1 automotive manufacturer. He is in the discovery process seeking **RFID technology for a smart assembly line** that will reduce errors and speed product changeovers.



# Connecting with today's automation and controls audiences can be daunting and complex

Broader and less-defined sales funnels, rapidly evolving technology trends, changing demographics among engineers and a myriad of new digital marketing tactics – all these factors make the job of B2B marketers more challenging than ever.

**But here's the key to reaching this challenging audience: invest in strong content that responds to the engineer's most pressing needs.** To do this, it's important to maintain an up-to-date understanding of the automation and controls audience.

Stay on top of their interests and concerns. Establish and sustain real conversations about how you can help them solve their latest challenges, particularly those associated with the rapid, ongoing digital transformation of the automation landscape. New AI tools make it easier to conduct topical searches and get back insights and resources that point you to what challenges engineers are working to try and solve.

That's what engineers do: face complex challenges and craft solutions. They're passionate about the work they do and value new, useful, valid information. And they love a good, smart conversation. Which is great, because good marketing today works like a conversation. And a meaningful conversation can only happen when you really understand the other person. **So if you focus on what matters to these engineers and map your tactics to their journey, you're sure to make the right connection.**

# WORK WITH US

As a full-service B2B marketing agency, Godfrey offers industrial marketers everything from strategy through execution – so there's no risk of disconnected efforts between multiple groups. If you're a mid-market to enterprise B2B company with a technical audience and complex buying cycles, we can help expand and optimize all your marketing efforts.

**See if we're a good fit:**

**godfrey.com/contact/working-with-godfrey**

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