



# THE REAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN B2B & B2C

*B2B Writing Institute*



**B2B**  
WRITING INSTITUTE

## How do you capture the attention of B2B readers?

B2B marketing content is read by humans, just like B2C content. But B2B humans are at work, not home. And they're motivated by completely different things.

While B2C companies can pull on the levers of sex, status, and safety, B2B companies have other priorities at stake: risk, praise, and profit.

This quick lesson introduces you to two conceptual models that reveal the real difference between B2B and B2C. After reading, you'll be able to quickly identify when the premise or angle of a piece of content is appropriate for a B2B audience and, if it isn't, identify a more compelling approach.

The end result? **Better B2B writing.**



**B2C**



# MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

**B2C**

## Maslow's Hierarchy of Personal Needs

- Self-actualization
- Esteem
- Love/Belonging
- Safety needs
- Physiological needs

The best B2C marketing content speaks to [Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs](#).

Content that resonates with a B2C audience speaks to their basic personal, social, and human requirements, such as self-actualization, esteem, love and belonging needs (like sex and status), safety, and physiological needs (like hunger and tiredness).

While it may loosely tie back to their connection with other people (such as with love and belonging), the focus is on how the content will have a positive impact on their quality of life.

**B2B**



# **SETH GODIN'S HIERARCHY OF BUSINESS NEEDS**

**B2B**

## **Godin's Hierarchy of Business Needs**

- Avoiding risk
- Avoiding hassle
- Gaining praise
- Gaining power
- Having fun
- Making a profit

**The best B2B marketing content speaks to Seth Godin's [Hierarchy of Business to Business Needs](#).**

Content that resonates with a B2B audience speaks to what their business will gain by engaging with the content.

While it may loosely tie back to the person reading (gaining praise or power or having fun), the focus is on what they will achieve on behalf of their company, such as avoiding risk, avoiding hassle, or making a profit.

# **B2B AND B2C BACK-TO-BACK**

**Let's look at two examples of companies that have both a B2C side of the business (serving consumers) and a B2B side of the business (serving other businesses).**

How might we see the use of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Seth Godin's Hierarchy of Business to Business Needs played out in the messaging?

# B2B AND B2C BACK-TO-BACK

## Example 1:



Let's say we're writing marketing content for Coursera, the massive open online course provider (MOOC) founded in 2012.

Coursera connects directly with consumers to provide access to educational opportunities (B2C).

The company also partners with other companies and institutions to provide learning opportunities to the employees and students at those companies (B2B).

# **B2B AND B2C BACK-TO-BACK**

## **Example 1 continued:**

### **On the B2C side...**

The most effective content might be pay-per-click ads that emphasize how Coursera allows students to learn new things, advance their career, connect with other people and professors, check their grades quickly, etc.

### **On the B2B side...**

The most effective content might be a white paper about how Coursera allows companies and institutions to easily provide excellent educational benefits, attract and retain employees, upskill their staff to become more productive and profitable, etc.

# B2B AND B2C BACK-TO-BACK

## Example 2:



Let's say we're writing marketing content for Johns Hopkins Hospital and Health System, the famous hospital system in Baltimore, Maryland.

Johns Hopkins Hospital and Health System serves healthcare patients by providing medical care (B2C).

The healthcare system also partners with for-profit companies and other institutions for strategic business alliances related to the healthcare industry (B2B).

# B2B AND B2C BACK-TO-BACK

## Example 2 continued:

### On the B2C side...

The most effective content might be print ads that emphasize the quality and safety of care within the Johns Hopkins Hospital and Health System, or notable doctors or research taking place within the system to build authority among prospective patients.

### On the B2B side...

The most effective content might be a series of webinars about how companies have partnered with the health system. For example, a collaboration with the national pharmacy brand Walgreens to speed up and remove risk from the pharmacy's healthcare-related processes, or a for-profit company enrolling its employees in Johns Hopkins's Employer Health Programs to save on benefits costs.

# ONE EASY EXERCISE

## Are you ready for more practice?

The best way to get familiar with the context and motivations that drive great B2B content is by reading great B2B content. Here are three B2B publications that regularly put out excellent work for a B2B reader audience:

- [SmartBrief](https://www.smartbrief.com/originals)  
(<https://www.smartbrief.com/originals>)
- [Industry Dive](https://www.industrydive.com/industries/)  
(<https://www.industrydive.com/industries/>)
- [Morning Brew](https://www.morningbrew.com/daily/stories)  
(<https://www.morningbrew.com/daily/stories>)

Explore one of these websites for 15 minutes (or about three articles), reading whatever catches your eye. Then ask yourself... what level of Seth Godin's Hierarchy of Business Needs did the article focus on?

You'll be amazed to start seeing this structure everywhere you look in the B2B landscape!

## Have any questions?

Ask – or overhear – exactly what you want to know at the monthly [B2BWI Open House](#).

## Liked this mini-training?

You'll LOVE the forever free Foundations of B2B Writing course – [enroll today](#) to learn the very basics of writing marketing content like...

- Thought leadership articles
- Case studies
- White papers

And what you can be doing to practice your B2B writing skills!



*Sarah Greesonbach  
Founder, B2B Writing Institute*



## Where B2B writers go to grow

The B2B Writing Institute helps writers, marketers, and analysts learn how to write excellent B2B content – then we help you stay at the top of your game with courses, lectures, and live trainings.