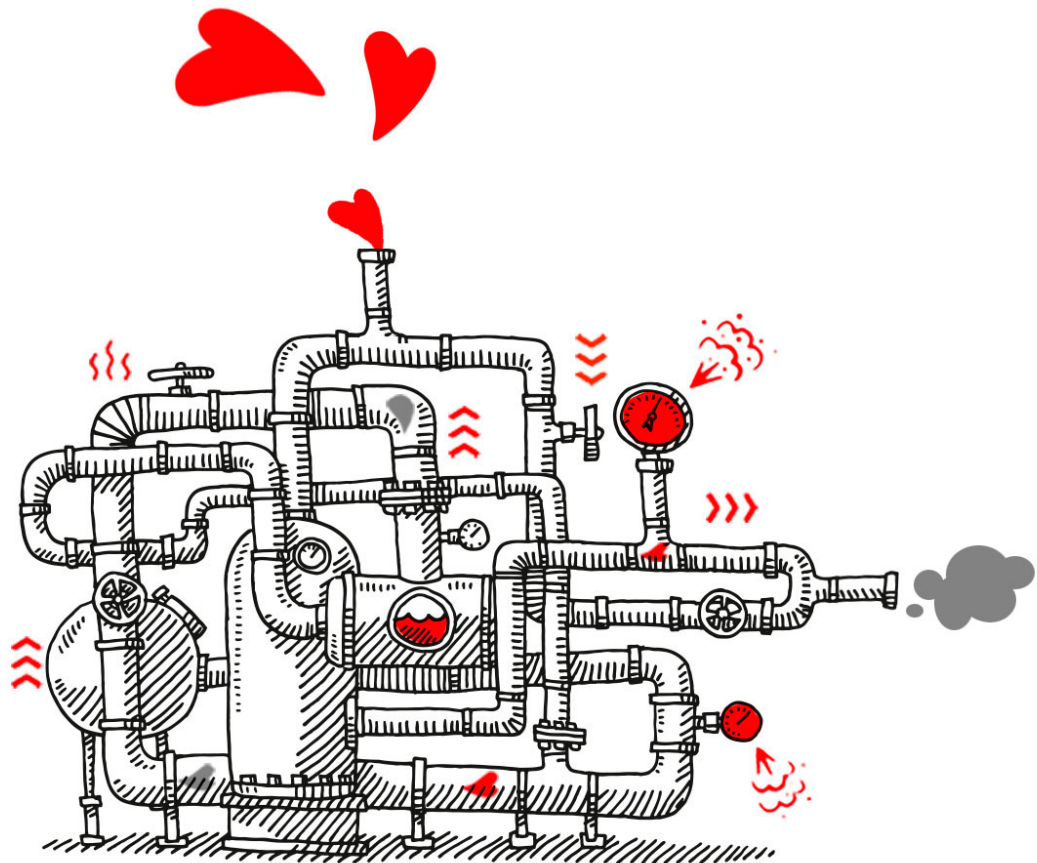


EMOTIONS AND THE INDUSTRY



The world of industry is challenging. But why do B2B brands find it so hard to differentiate? Industry-buzzwords and phrases sound all the same. We hear about “quality”, “innovation”, “efficiency” and “reliability”. We see facts, figures and sometimes even formulae. But all this mostly fails to engage with the target audience. And the common remedy of adding qualifiers such as “unmatched”, “leading”, “cutting edge” or “disruptive” rather makes it worse. The aim of this paper is to look at how we can engage with B2B customers on an emotional level – and lift our industrial marketing out of the mediocre by storytelling techniques.

IT'S NOT WHAT YOU SAY, BUT ...

If you are dealing with B2B marketing & communications, you know that you need to get a number of characteristics of your brand across. Most likely, you want to demonstrate superior technology, quality, innovation, reliability, because these are the qualities that your buyers will be looking for. But the difference in your success lies not in what you say – but how you say it. This is because your buyers are not businesses – they are people, and they respond to emotional characteristics as well as rational ones. This means that your job is not only to communicate facts – but to engage and inspire. You need people to remember you, to understand and trust you, and – ultimately – to desire you. These are human responses, and you will achieve them most effectively if you can communicate on an emotional level.

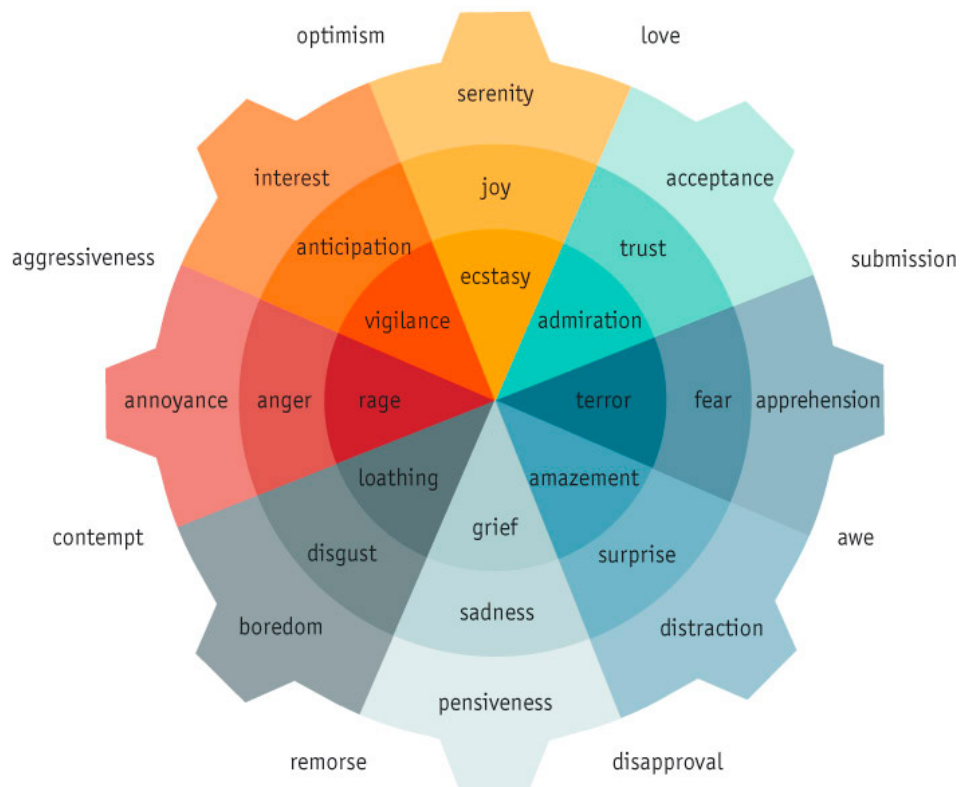
Emotions are recognized as a powerful mechanism to reach and engage the defined audience. Studies show that in our brains, emotion plays a key role in the decision-making process. Reason and emotion go together.

But how do emotions work in the world of B2B decision-making?

A RATIONAL LOOK AT EMOTIONS

■ Emotions? Which one?

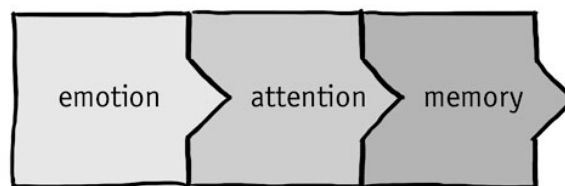
To understand the role of emotion in industrial marketing, it helps to look at some of the psychology that goes into it. Emotions are manifold but not all are relevant for marketing, of course. Robert Plutchik's well-known "Wheel of Emotions" categorizes primary emotions into pairs of polar opposites: joy versus sadness; anger versus fear; trust versus disgust; and surprise versus anticipation. The intensity of emotion increases as you move towards the center of the wheel and decreases if you move outward. For B2B markets, as an example, 'trust' is an emotional buying factor. At its least level of intensity is 'acceptance' but becomes 'admiration' at its highest level.



■ Emotions enhance memory

Emotion and memory are closely entwined. We have all experienced that our most vivid autobiographical memories are emotional events. More generally speaking, the encoding of information is influenced by emotion through different mechanisms, for example attention: high emotional arousal sparks attention and thus facilitates memorization. Many other mechanisms that link memory to emotion exist.

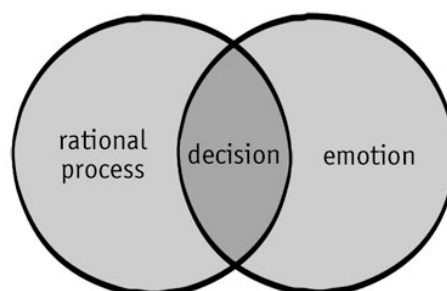
If B2B marketing can succeed in engaging emotionally, it will not only reach people more effectively, it will also become memorized more easily. And memory is an efficient filter that continuously segregates important information from useless “waste”. Emotion-based communications thus helps to get essential information memorized more easily and for a longer time.



■ Emotions spur decision-making

A common preconception is that decision-making is a rational mental process without emotion, and that emotions disrupt and jeopardize the rational process. However, evidence is accumulating that this conception is false. Without emotional involvement, decision-making might not even be possible or might be far from optimal. Furthermore, neuroscience suggests that at the level of brain structure and functioning, a clear distinction between areas for cognition and emotion cannot be made.

Hence, the opposition of irrational emotion and rational cognition turns out to be dubious and the common view seems to be wrong: any decision needs some kind of emotional involvement. Even more so, we shall admit that intuition sometimes leads us to our most sustainable decisions.



■ Emotions are carried by images

Nature has trained our brain to decode images in a fraction of a second, involving deep and ancient layers of conscience, directly linked to **emotions**. The meaning of words, in contrast, needs first to be understood before they can trigger **emotions**.

This is where the best communicators turn from the written word and consider the power of images and storytelling. Imagery in all its forms, whether photographic or illustrated, can connect on a different level and give a brand a clear edge over the competition.

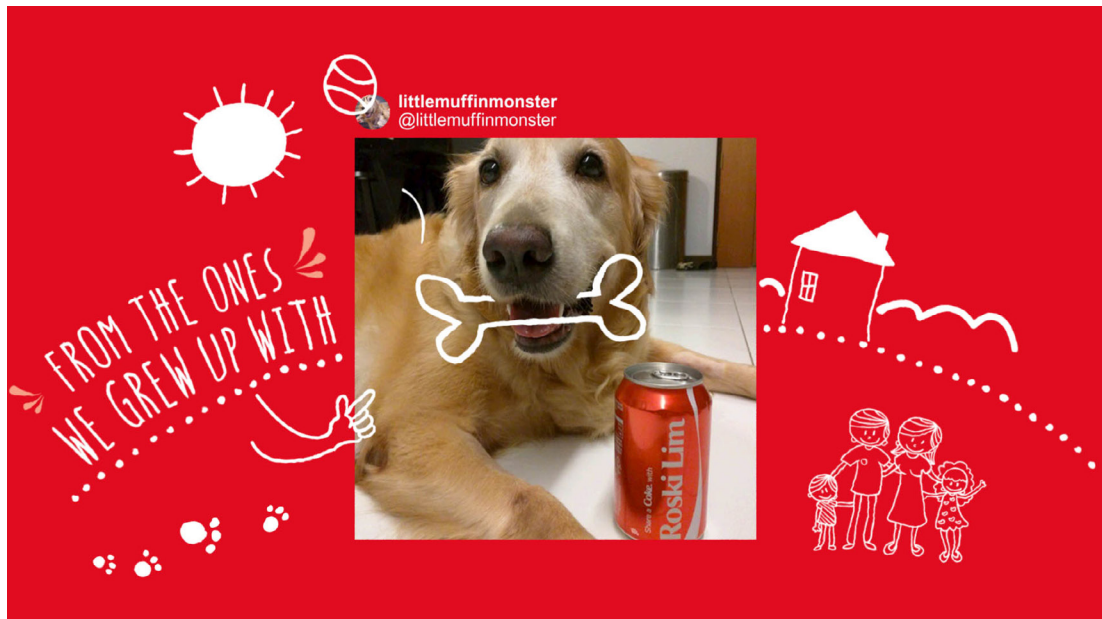
Imagery can help industrial brands to communicate more effectively in different ways. Not only does it help a brand to explain the human impact (and personal value) of a product or service, it is also a more immediate and memorable medium. A picture is worth a thousand words; but few B2B prospects are going to keep reading that long.



BUSINESS BUYING

■ B2C builds on emotion

Emotional marketing is a standard in B2C markets. Major consumer brands frequently disregard the product itself and focus on brand experiences – i.e. emotions. Some of the powerful drivers in decision-making can be based, for example, on the desire to stand out, or to be accepted by others. When there is little physical difference between products – for example some soft drinks – the main differentiator is to be found in the emotional experience attached to it.



■ Will B2B turn to emotions, too?

Beyond theory, the power of emotional motives on business buyers has been proven by statistics – a rational reason for considering the use of emotion in marketing. When Google and CEB surveyed 3,000 business buyers they were able to identify whether business value or personal value had the greatest impact on whether a product or brand was chosen: ‘Although B2B buying is often treated as a rational activity, all human decisions are driven by a complex mix of gut, emotion, post-rationalization, and reason’. A logical business value (such as price, functionality or performance) increased product adoption by 21%. If a product offered a personal value, however (such as pride, sense of accomplishment, peer approval) it made purchase 42% more likely. Rational, documented proof about the power of emotional B2B marketing.

SOME EXAMPLES

Emotional storytelling is possible in all kinds of markets, technologies and industries. Following are a few examples of how imagery has made the difference.

■ From clients to heroes

Most people don't think of fertilizers as emotional subjects. But the approach taken by agrochemical specialist Yara to its recent campaigns demonstrates how emotional imagery and storytelling can help a brand.

In order to create trust and confidence with the target audience of farmers, the brand made the farmer the central figure of most pictures. He is depicted as the strong and skilled 'hero' assigned to reconcile agricultural productivity and respect for the environment. He is trustworthy, knowledgeable and sincere. He is credible in solving problems, taking responsibility and preparing the future of upcoming generations. Hence, he becomes the person who takes care of one of our basic needs, food, he nourishes us.

The photographs used by Yara are authentic statements – an urgent, truthful and down-to-earth appeal to the farmer's emotions. The preference for high-contrast photos, using unusual framing and unexpected



viewing angles reinforces the eye-catching effect. Also, the straight look in the eye attracts the viewer’s attention. The person is becoming the center of attention instead of only the product.

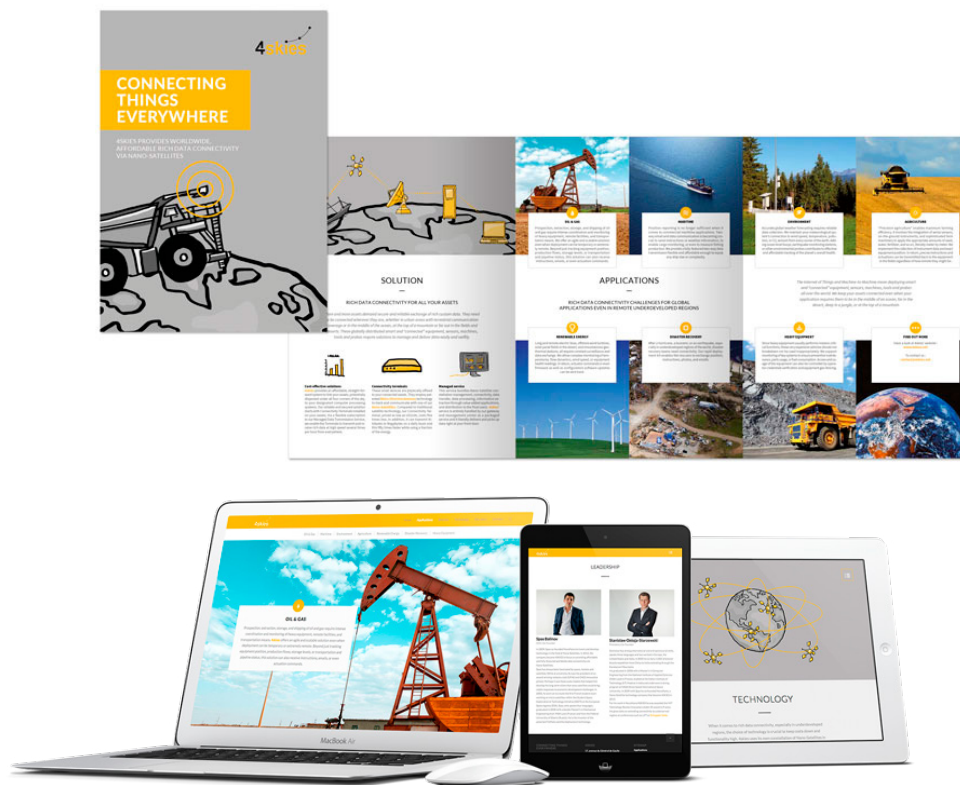
■ **Hand-drawn high-tech**

Even the most remote areas of industry can benefit from an emotional angle. At bb&b we even consider these as most inspiring as they offer the occasion for advanced storytelling.

Sometimes, the trick is to simplify things. Satellite technology company 4Skies has a great story to tell, but it is also a complex one. 4Skies offers a global satellite network that enables machine-to-machine connectivity which could deliver great business benefits – but 4Skies wanted to engage their audience on a more emotional level.

The response was to tell the story in a deliberately human format, by creating a 3-minute, hand-drawn animation film. The complexity of the technology was therefore presented as a story of how 4skies helped people with their work. The human element was symbolized by the artistic touch of the drawing, making the solution easier to understand, and it made the 4Skies brand easier to like....

Watch the video: [Here](#)



■ **Intrinsic motivation at work**

The best industrial organizations aim for a ‘zero accident’ safety record. To achieve this, they need rules and procedures – but they also need to engender a safety culture inside the company, shared and supported by everyone.

They need therefore to appeal to the emotions of their target audience, thinking about the intrinsic motivations of the stake holders, starting with the employees. The aim is to motivate rather than manipulate.

Conceived for Yara, the Norwegian chemical company, 'Safe by Choice' was an internal communications programme that combined rational elements (security and safety) with creative design stimulating emotion, enhancing trust, credibility, membership and affiliation, and feeling of pride. It is also about protection and taking care of each other.

On a rational level, the campaign was there to raise vigilance. But by putting the emphasis on "safe by choice" and "together we care" the story had a powerful emotional dimension too. It created motivation and momentum, by encouraging a transition from an 'individual' to a 'shared' approach to safety. It aroused pride, it emphasized the value of people, and helped employees to feel that it was their collective duty to take care of each other – a strong emotional message.

This global campaign has been endorsed by the top management and explained at every level amongst +12,000 employees. It has helped to bring about a change in company culture. 'Safe by Choice' is today in place in +50 countries around the world.



■ Ugly industry ?

It takes the eye of an experienced photographer to find emotion and beauty in industry. Norwegian photographer Ole Walter Jacobsen has turned industrial photography into an art form, with his innovative work used in a number of high-profile industrial marketing campaigns. He manages to create an intriguing aesthetic, even beauty. In each case he has used his photography to elevate the brand and capture the reader's attention, turning industrial images into a statement of the creativity, passion and engagement. Some examples of his art are captured in "Ugly Industry", a portfolio of his work jointly created with bb&b.

[Download pdf](#)



CONCLUSION

It may be called business-to-business, but B2B decisions are made by people. Neuroscience tells us that no decision – even the most 'rational' one – can be made without emotional engagement. So while we need to talk about features, technology and quality, we also need to connect emotionally with our audience. We may have a number of rational messages to get across, but the emotion we can raise has a tremendous impact on the acceptance of these messages. By the appropriate use of visual media and storytelling, we can ensure we are providing both the factual content they need and the emotional connection that, as humans, they instinctively notice, recognize, prefer and memorize.

OTHER PUBLICATIONS FROM US

■ **Read our white papers on:**

- > Content marketing
- > Digital transformation
- > Communicating credibility
- > Value propositions in industrial b2b markets
- > Employer branding
- > Communicating quality

All contents, concepts and ideas developed in this document are the exclusive intellectual property of bb&b Communication et Marketing Industriel SARL, Paris.