

# Challenges of marketing industrial products

By [Marc Ashton](#)

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The marketing of industrial products presents its own unique bunch of challenges. After all – there's only so much you can do when trying to market the widget that's attached to the thingymajig via the hose attached to the whatchamacallit...

Maybe if you're marketing an industrial IT application you can throw in some pretty screen shots and invite customers and the press around to sit through a flashy Power Point presentation now and then. But, it doesn't work quite so well when you're trying to market the latest in air compressor technology or an industrial pump or valve or an obscure piece of laboratory equipment.

Key things to consider when marketing industrial products are:

- **Brand reinforcement:** As a marketer for these kinds of industrial applications or products, a lot of focus needs to be placed on reinforcing the brand name. Sounds simple – but a number of PR and marketing professionals go off on a tangent promoting this benefit or that feature and forget to focus on pushing the strongest feature an industrial product has – its brand name. When a widget breaks, the engineer doesn't go onto the internet and type in that he is looking for an a widget that does XYZ – he types in the brand name of the widget that's damaged and then tries to find who his closest local supplier of the same widget is. It's not particularly exciting from a marketer's point of view – but imperative if you want the brand to be found.
- **Think like an engineer:** If you're planning to sell to an engineer – then think like an engineer. If you're planning to sell to a quality assurance job title, then think like a QA person. It sounds obvious but as they say – to catch a criminal you have to think like one. Blanket PR coverage in any publication that might have an industrial slant isn't going to necessarily reach your audience. The PR agency might look good for a bit, showing you all their press clippings they've achieved but you also need to be realistic – online media ferociously consumes new content, so take a hard look at your return on this investment. If your keywords and brand name are coming up consistently well in search engines and you are getting referrals and website traffic, this means the strategy is paying off.

Branding industrial-type products takes a lot of time and specialised skills. It's not just a case of applying a standard PR model or branding model and hoping for the best. Even straightforward aspects such as article preparation can be tricky if the account manager can't articulate what the technology does and where it is utilised.

If your agency or marketing manager can put a well-presented case study in front of 20 of the right consumers, presented in a format and language that is easy to understand, you may find your return on investment is better than if it were simply blanket editorial in any publication which might consider using your article as a space filler.

Marketing industrial-type products invariably comes with a “dull” image, but the right team with the right understanding of your product and industry can provide a good return and make sure your product is always in the client’s mind.

## ABOUT MARC ASHTON

Marc Ashton (marc@rival.co.za) is managing editor of local manufacturing publication - ManufacturingHub.co.za ([www.manufacturinghub.co.za](http://www.manufacturinghub.co.za)), which is aimed at the South African food, pharmaceutical, chemical and cosmetic manufacturing industries. The company also assists business with strategies for marketing of industrial type applications, particularly in the small to medium enterprise sector.

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