



# **MANUFACTURING MARKETING STRATEGY**

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A real-world case study featuring  
RPM Mechanical, Inc.



## INTRODUCTION

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Developing a marketing strategy that gets results isn't easy, no matter what industry you're in. However, the manufacturing space poses a unique challenge.

At your average manufacturing company, the responsibility of lead generation has historically fallen on the shoulders of those in sales, with new deals often forming as the result of word-of-mouth referrals or mining the existing customer base.

Today is a different story. While referrals and sales-led lead generation strategies are still leveraged by many manufacturing brands, a robust, focused marketing strategy has become more of a necessity thanks to an increasingly competitive landscape. Of course, developing a holistic manufacturing marketing strategy that is perfectly tailored to a company's unique needs, goals, and challenges isn't easy.

Marketing in the manufacturing space successfully will involve stealing pages out of B2B and B2C playbooks. In fact, the most successful manufacturing marketing strategies are a purposeful blend of techniques and approaches: inbound marketing, paid media, ABM campaigns, and more.

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## RPM MECHANICAL, INC. MARKETING CHALLENGES

“We didn’t have a cohesive digital strategy before joining up with you guys. We were spending money on Google Ads, but we weren’t tracking those effectively,” says RPM Mechanical VP Mike McNeil, CSP. “We wrote a check to Google every month and were kind of crossing our fingers.”

The RPM team began working with BS+Co. in the summer of 2020, but they had worked with another agency previously in an attempt to better market themselves – unfortunately, they struggled to see the results they were looking for. Although they don’t have any dedicated resources in-house for marketing, they knew they needed to be doing more; they needed to define clear goals, as well as a specific strategy for getting in front of their target audience.

“That was one of the immediate dividends that paid off right away with BS+Co. We put a strategy on paper, we set clear goals, and we moved toward executing that,” notes McNeil. Working with RPM, however, presented a unique challenge – unlike many other manufacturing companies, they do not have an online store by choice.

# MANUFACTURING MARKETING WITHOUT ECOMMERCE



Ecommerce can be an extremely lucrative avenue for some manufacturers, but not all, so you need to be careful to challenge your assumptions and the reasoning behind particular marketing initiatives before committing.

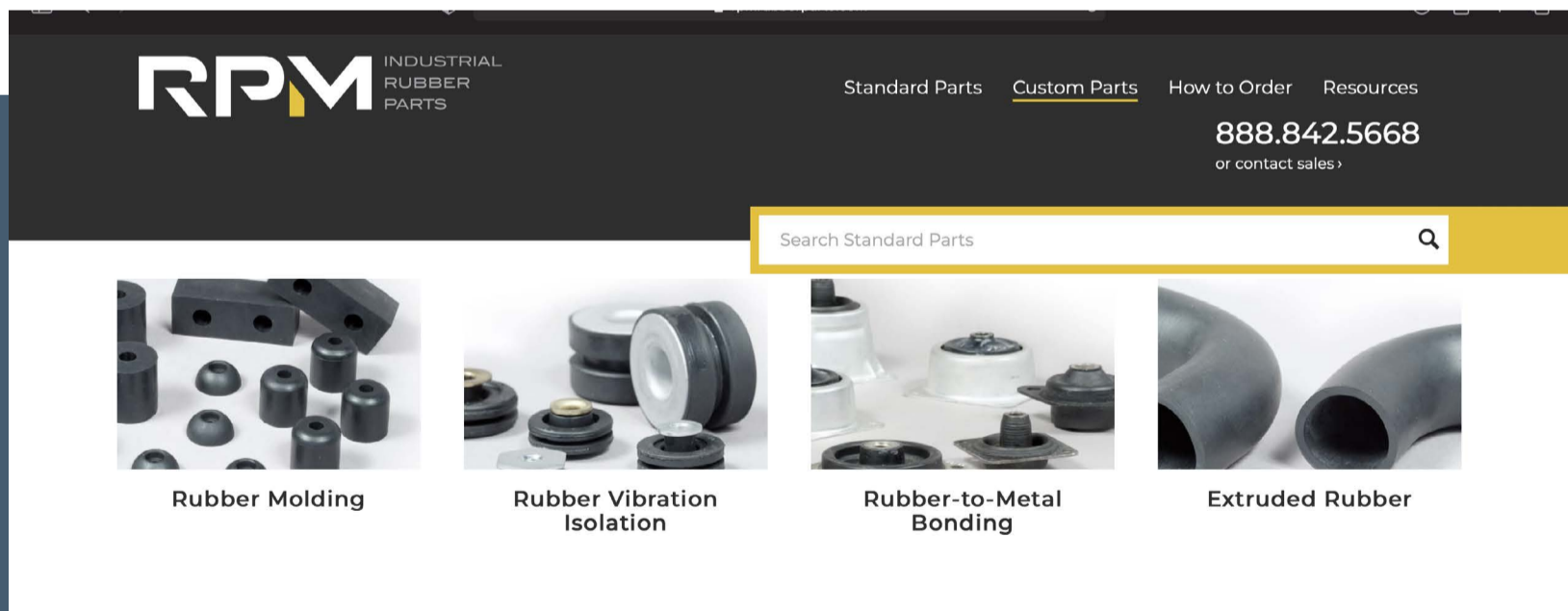
“One of the most common mistakes marketing teams make is funneling effort and resources and time into activities that will attract the wrong people,” says BS+Co. Executive Strategist Aimee Martin. For example, if your ideal customers aren’t on Instagram, it wouldn’t make sense to build out a social media strategy with a strong Instagram component.

In the case of RPM, establishing an online storefront for the sake of “keeping up with the competition” was dismissed as an idea because it didn’t make sense for their ideal customer profile, even though many of their competitors do have one.

For example, if you’re a manufacturing company where self-service part sales make up a meaningful part of your business, an ecommerce storefront may make sense. In RPM’s case, however, part sales only make up 10% of sales. Moreover, one-off part sales are not part of their overall business plan.

Still, RPM – along with BS+Co. – continues to periodically gut-check their assumptions and previous strategic choices against their ideal customer profiles, in case something may have changed. This is particularly important now, given the volatility of certain aspects of the manufacturing industry.

“Look at the upheaval we’re seeing with supply chains currently,” Aimee points out. “This level of change makes it so critical to always be checking in at different points to make sure, ‘Hey, we made this decision six months ago, but is it still true today?’”



## BRAND MESSAGING + MANUFACTURING

One of the most essential components of every successful marketing strategy is being fully aligned on clear and concise brand messaging. But while it's equally important for manufacturing companies to consider and clarify how they communicate what problems they solve, who they solve them for, and why, the messaging in the manufacturing space is somewhat different than you may find elsewhere.

For example, prior to joining BS+Co., Martin had deep B2B marketing experience, particularly in the healthcare space. "Having come from a healthcare background, manufacturing messaging was a shift from what I was used to," she says.

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**"In healthcare, for instance, messaging is more outcome-led, rather than product-led – How does this healthcare solution make you productive or efficient? How will this solution help you improve patient outcomes? You're leading more with emotions in your messaging, trying to convince a target audience why they need something. Whereas with manufacturing, your customers already know what they need. Now they're coming to you and telling you what they want."**

So, instead of leaning into messaging around how RPM products may make your life easier, the messaging strategy that has worked the best is much more direct and product/service-focused – speaking to quicker turnaround times, avoiding supply chain delays, RPM's "White Glove" service, and more.

In this way, RPM makes manufacturing marketing easy because they're ahead of the trends and conversations, and they deliver personalized, white-glove customer service. For example, when supply chain issues were on the horizon, we released a statement about how RPM is prepared and built to endure those unknown times. That's great customer service and awareness of how product slowdowns affect the entire production timeline and setting customer expectations.



## RPM'S FIRST 90-DAY MARKETING STRATEGY

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One of the first initiatives BS+Co. helped the RPM team with was migrating their website to HubSpot. Not only did this provide RPM with a new, more sophisticated online presence, it also expanded their marketing and reporting capabilities.

As we worked with them to build their first 90-day manufacturing marketing strategy, we asked three specific questions to guarantee we were including the right mix of activities:

- “Will this help us stand out and differentiate from our competitors?”
- “Are we highlighting our strengths when it comes to topical/timely issues such as supply chain, increase in need in the medical space, direct communication with an expert human in a vastly automated world?”
- “Are we contributing something new regarding our products to the industries we serve or are we creating for the sake of creating?”

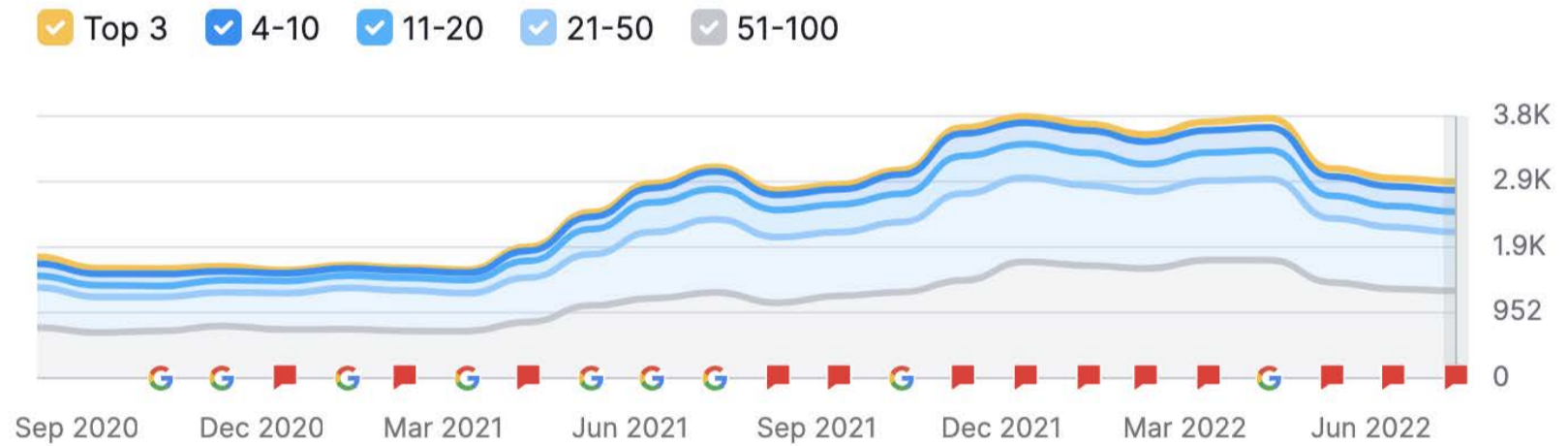
Ultimately, in addition to the migration of their website to HubSpot, RPM embraced an organic content approach in their strategy. While common in other industries (particularly B2B spaces), organic content marketing strategies were new to RPM.

# RPM'S ORGANIC RESULTS

Almost immediately, RPM saw substantial growth gains and business results from their organic content efforts.



RPM's organic traffic growth (by quarter) since the start of their engagement with BS+Co.



RPM's growth of keyword rankings since the start of their engagement with BS+Co.



# ULTIMATELY, IT'S THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RPM AND BS+CO. THAT MAKES THESE RESULTS POSSIBLE

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Although there are those who believe an outsourced agency can never feel truly in-house, that doesn't seem to be the case for RPM. "The relationship has developed to where I really consider you guys now an extension of our team," McNeil says.

"You are our marketing department, like you're sitting at a desk in the corner, you are our marketing team. We're at a point where we can say things and talk to you as if you're our employees. We have open, robust discussions. What I like is there's an honesty. No over-promising."

Of course, that feeling is mutual.

"My relationship with RPM is easy. It's easy because they know we'll get the job done and I know they'll be down for the ride, no matter where it might take us," Martin notes.



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