



## *How Marketing Can Accelerate Cloud Adoption:*

### *Three Strategies to Turn Buzz into Buyers*



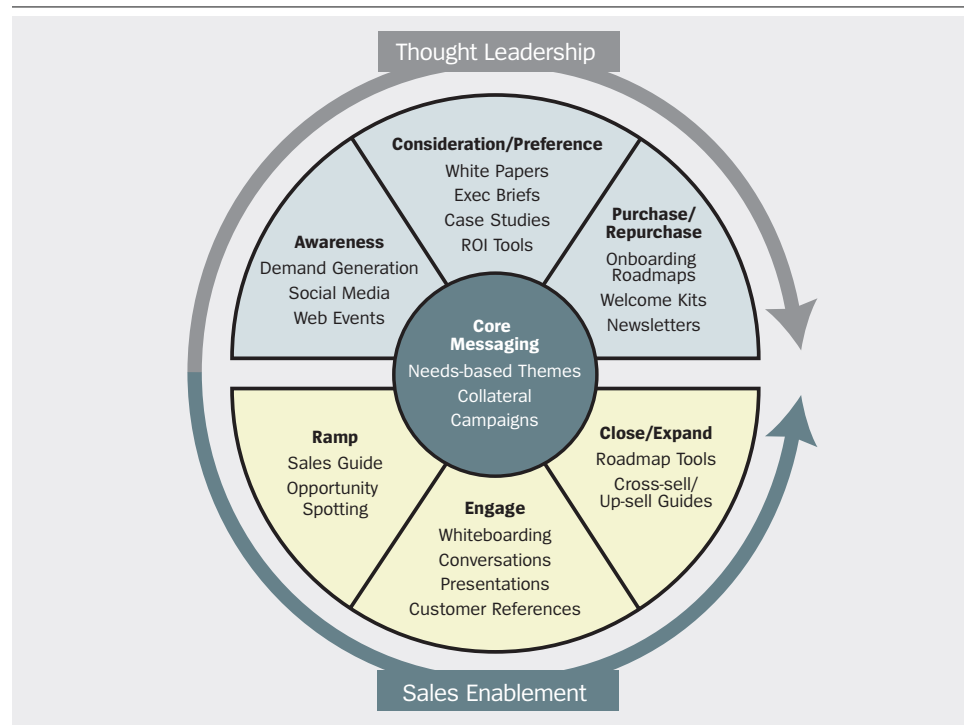
Cloud is a contradiction. No concept in today's IT world is generating as many conversations or creating as much confusion. And with a steady stream of new products and services covering infrastructure, applications, security, platform, network services and management being introduced, the cloud ecosystem has grown in complexity – creating a dizzying array of value propositions for prospects to consume.

For prospects and customers, the cloud brings hopes of on-demand computing at a lower total cost of ownership; but for others, it breeds doubts around security, stability of service and governance. There's also the challenge to prove its value as a business enabler instead of simply the latest IT upgrade. Bottom line: the name “cloud” might be simple, but its acceptance and varying degrees of adoption are anything but.

As a cloud marketer, you're in a unique position of having to perform the kind of double-duty marketing often seen in early adopter climates. First, you have to educate your prospects on the greater cloud vision and how the journey makes sound business sense. Second, you have to prove to potential buyers why your company is best equipped to help them make that journey.

Compounding these challenges is the fact that we live in a search-engine-based society in which your prospects have been doing their own cloud homework. In fact, they may have already studied you – and if they're an early cloud adopter, they may have already studied your solutions and moved you into the consideration stage of a selling process – without you even knowing, and likely without even having spoken to a salesperson. To marketers, this means two important things: it's time to take a fresh look at your awareness activities, and whatever content you're sending into the digital universe better be on message and targeted.

**Figure 1:** Mapping Messages to Buying and Selling Cycles



A simple buying and selling ecosystem, where brand- and theme-based messages serve as the foundation for content for both buying (along the top) and selling (along the bottom) processes.

Once you can prove yourself to be a trusted advisor along a complex path, you'll keep customers for life. After all, cloud adopters know they're making long-haul decisions, so they're going to make them with companies/individuals they believe and trust. That requires synchronization between all prospect and customer touch points, from the various digital outlets to the salespeople who meet them.

Cloud marketers need to engage a strategy that supports both early adoption buying and sustained relationship building. That means tracking buying cycle behavior and mapping strategies against each stage (see Figure 1). Some of these actions might include:

- Investing more heavily in non-traditional awareness activities, such as social and digital media, that push thought leadership content in smaller bites. This type of ongoing education is critical for long-term visibility.
- Ensuring thought leadership content is dripped across awareness, consideration and preference stages, so your prospects and customers are hearing your message loud and clear – even when salespeople are not directly involved.
- Providing salespeople with conversation tools and collateral that build and sustain prospect interaction to continue moving an opportunity forward.
- Building out marketing and sales support programs to drive continued investment beyond “early adopter/limited liability” purchases.

In the following sections, we'll dive more deeply into these ideas and offer three strategies you can use to focus your message, establish yourself as a thought leader and arm your salespeople with the right tools – all of which will help you differentiate yourself and rise above the noise of bandwagon jumpers and “me too” cloud providers.

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*IDC reports that by 2013, cloud spending will see a compound annual growth rate of 26 percent and will represent 10 percent of total IT spend<sup>1</sup>. Cloud marketers need to focus their messaging now if they hope to take advantage of this growth later.*

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## Strategy #1: Show customers step by step how you'll guide them on their journeys to the cloud

Cloud technology is not as complicated as it seems. We know that because the core components of cloud – consolidation, virtualization, automation, shared resources – are ones that we've all been talking about and actively marketing for some time. But for many prospects and customers, these common components are often overshadowed by the pure concept of cloud – or even the word “cloud” itself – and they have trouble bridging the gap between their in-house infrastructure and one that seems to exist somewhere out in the ether.

Bridging that gap, however, is not their job – it's yours. As marketers of a nascent technology, you need to create focused messaging that clearly educates prospects and illustrates how you will carry them from where they are now into and through the cloud. The journey to cloud has many stops along the way, beginning with consolidation and virtualization and ending with shared resources in the cloud. Each one of these stages is an opportunity for you to tell – and sell – your side of that story.

And make no mistake, the opportunity is immense. According to an analyst who presented at a May, 2010 Forrester IT Forum, only five percent of enterprises are positioned to immediately pursue the adoption of their own private or hybrid clouds<sup>2</sup>. That leaves a startling 95 percent in need of serious education and guidance on how to get from point A to point B.

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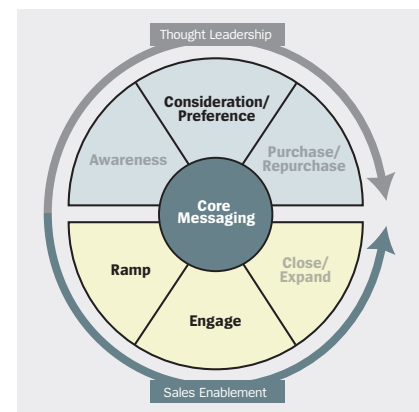
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Their education can't begin, though, until you get your story straight. You need to crystallize and articulate a cloud message that details the unique value and benefits your company brings to the table. And you must weave that message through thought leadership and sales enablement resources, such as messaging guides and white papers, creating a thread of information that gently guides customers and prospects through the sales cycle.

### Two Paths to Success

When a leading global hardware, software and services company was launching a new, holistic strategy for uniting its many granular solution offerings, it was challenged to deliver this new messaging in a way that illustrated a path to the future of computing without confusing its customers and prospects.

In order to avoid that confusion, Launch helped the company develop a comprehensive **messaging guide** that explained the themes of the strategy, detailed its individual components and listed resources salespeople could use to supplement their knowledge on the subjects. We also worked with them on customer-facing thought leadership pieces, such as **white papers** and **presentations**, which leveraged the themes in the messaging guide to both tell the complete story of the strategy and map out the journey to adoption.

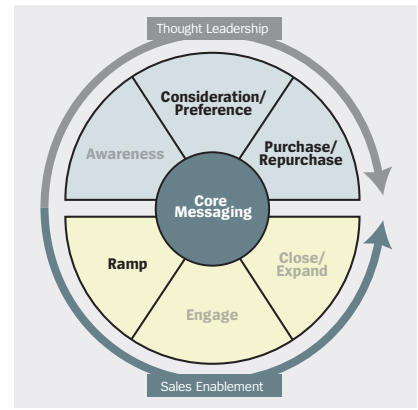


*Client #1:* Focus on messaging, thought leadership and sales enablement.

These pieces helped create traction within its customer base because they showed step by step how organizations could transition from their existing infrastructures to this improved one. They also provided proof points of the types of benefits they would receive when they got there. Going to market with a unifying message – and backing it up with high-value content and proof of performance – enabled the company to reinforce its market superiority and win business from both existing and new customers.

When another organization – a provider of software and processing solutions for financial services, higher education and the public sector – was developing a new Software as a Service (SaaS) platform, the marketing department faced a dual challenge. They needed to educate external customers, while simultaneously promoting the capabilities and benefits of the new delivery model across the company itself.

In order to overcome these challenges, Launch worked with the company to develop a variety of resources, including **sales guides** that helped salespeople understand – and be able to discuss – the new technology. Launch also created internal **newsletter success stories**, **white papers** and **case studies** that worked to establish credibility for the technology, demonstrate customer benefits and promote the company as an influential thought leader.



*Client #2:* Focus on messaging, thought leadership and sales enablement.

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### *The Step-by-step Journey*

**Q:** How can you best help prospects and customers understand your unique view of cloud, the technology that powers it and the many steps to adoption?

**A:** Create themes that tell your unique cloud story, and back them up with content assets that deliver your messages in bites and guide customers through the adoption process step by step.

#### **Questions to ask yourself:**

- How are we educating our customers about cloud?
  - What is our unifying cloud message that paints a clear before and after picture for customers?
  - What bite-sized and reusable assets have we created to step customers through the stages of adoption?
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## Strategy #2: Create a social network of thought leadership that combats FUD

It's common knowledge that human beings fear the unknown. We also tend to be skeptical about things that we don't quite understand – especially when they gain a sort of viral popularity that has them turning up everywhere you look. It is both a blessing and a curse to marketers that cloud falls into both of these camps.

On one hand, cloud's popularity has created a healthy amount of curiosity about it in the IT world, so many organizations will be drawn to it simply to be proactive and informed. On the other hand though, fear, uncertainty and doubt (FUD) about the technology's level of maturity can act as roadblocks for customers who are slow to adopt. As marketers, the cloud climate (no pun intended) provides an opportunity for us to add value to our organizations by aligning our content assets to the needs, wants and fears of our many audiences.

When you speak to prospects about cloud, what are some of the fears or doubts that make them hesitant about the technology? Do they worry about the security of data stored in a cloud? Or maybe they're concerned with bandwidth, performance or availability issues? According to IDC, organizations are also expressing concern about interoperability standards, integration and customization and the long-term costs of on-demand payment models<sup>3</sup>.

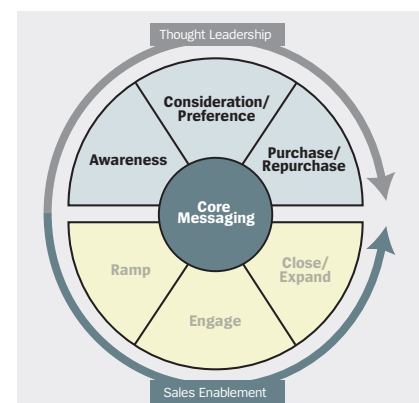
Next, reassess your most valuable marketing content, from blogs through white papers and sales tools. Do you directly combat and contain the FUD surrounding these topics in everything you publish?

Since the majority of cloud engagements are going to be long-haul purchases, it's critical to show knowledge and thought leadership continually to prospects – and to reinforce it with social media and other drip marketing tactics that work to stamp out FUD over time. For example, posting your messages on high-traffic sites, such as YouTube, is bound to increase your reach. And, you can gain traction through blog posts that start conversations and tweets that get re-tweeted by developing copy that elevates what is already out there and gives it a new twist.

### Two Paths to Success

When a recent piece of healthcare legislation created FUD within its customer base, a leading healthcare IT provider was challenged to replace that fear and doubt with feelings of opportunity and success. The company engaged Launch to develop a **campaign** around a theme of helping customers not only navigate the complexities of the legislation, but treat them as baseline requirements for creating exceptional environments. In short, we helped the company show their customers and prospects that instead of trying to catch up to their peers, they could move around them and reset the standard for performance.

The campaign demonstrated through **visuals** and **taglines** how the company would help them along their journey; extended into a **thought leadership series** that showed how customers

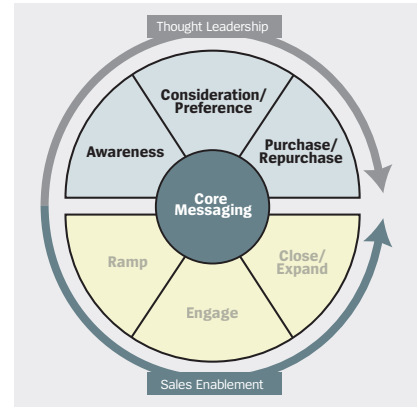


**Client #3:** Focus on messaging and thought leadership.

could use the legislation to their advantage; and continued by disseminating the company's messages through **print and online ads, newsletters, podcasts** and **Twitter campaigns**. To this day, the campaign has been a resounding success. In fact, it led to the healthcare IT provider receiving an award from a marketing association in May of 2010.

When another of Launch's clients – a midsize IT services and technology vendor – decided to take on the challenge of displacing FUD around its own cloud offerings, it began by having its in-house subject matter experts (SMEs) publish informative **YouTube videos** about cloud and promote them via **Twitter**, which helped position them as thought leaders.

In addition, the company worked with Launch on **newsletters** and **white papers** that took the expertise provided by its SMEs and dove more deeply into certain topics, while still reinforcing the overarching cloud messages contained in the YouTube videos. By pushing its message through various resources, channels and formats, the company has shown existing and prospective customers that cloud is nothing to fear and positioned itself as a trusted and knowledgeable partner when it comes to cloud adoption.



**Client #4:** Focus on messaging and thought leadership.

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These “create once/use many” thought leadership campaigns are effective because they begin with an authoritative and unified message that can be broken down and dripped across the buying cycle – creating awareness through social media, consideration with white papers and collateral and ultimately preference as being an expert on cloud.

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### *Thought Leadership Versus FUD*

**Q:** How do you deal with concerns over security, availability, long-term costs and other cloud criticisms, which have created an aura of FUD around cloud and caused some organizations to be skeptical of its benefits?

**A:** Authoritative thought leadership delivered in traditional and innovative ways, including white papers, blogs and social media, can counteract FUD when dripped across buying and selling cycles over time.

#### *Questions to ask yourself:*

- How does our content proactively dispel the specific FUD our customers express around cloud?
  - When does it make best sense to engage new media channels to create a consistent, critical mass of thought leadership that works to dispel FUD in and around our social network?
  - How are we teaching our salespeople to leverage the thought leadership efforts in their conversations and sales processes?
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### Strategy #3: Arm your salespeople with compelling conversation tools

In an environment where there is so much uncertainty, sales enablement becomes more important than ever. That's because your salespeople now are taking on the same double-duty efforts of presenting the possibilities of cloud capabilities, and then driving home your company's message and value proposition toward closing a sale.

When it comes to cloud, we've all read or discovered first-hand that the sales cycles are long. In fact, according to a recent Forrester survey of 1,200 IT decision makers in the US and Europe, 43 percent were interested in cloud technology but had no plans to adopt at this point in time<sup>4</sup>. Let's do the math on that: 43 percent of 1,200 is 516. That's 516 IT decision makers who found cloud technology fascinating enough to research but not enough to buy. Perhaps they've decided it wasn't a fit for them. Or, they haven't been shown the path, or engaged with someone who can help them get there.

Great conversations between salespeople and prospects/customers are borne from business-focused topics around solving problems. They come from vision and experience. They must parallel your thought leadership works and customer-facing media strategies because your messages need to be synchronized across every touch point in your company. And they must be presented by the people who will serve as their trusted advisers over time.

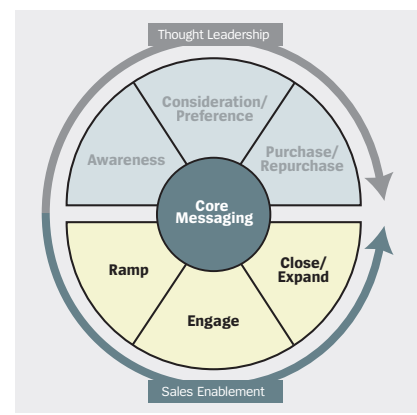
Interesting, though, that so many companies create great works of thought leadership to serve as fulfillment for demand gen campaigns or downloadable works from websites, yet fail to ever make them available to salespeople who need to carry the story forward.

Salespeople find whiteboarding tools and conversations particularly useful for presenting cloud vision. If using a conversation strategy, be sure your conversation tools carry prospects to a committed next step. Assessments, ROI analyses and peer reviews are great ways to keep opportunities moving forward.

#### Two Paths to Success

Launch has developed dozens of sales conversation tools. One of particular note was for a global information management company that was challenged to find a more compelling way for its salespeople to talk about an under-marketed suite of products and drive additional sales.

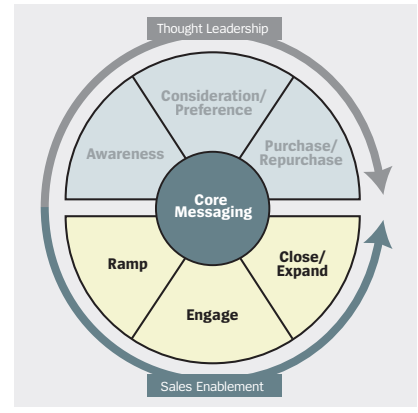
Launch helped the company develop a **sales whiteboard** to better illustrate how the suite of services could solve a series of specific customer business challenges. This was supplemented by a **quick reference card**, which helped guide a salesperson through the whiteboard conversation, and a **sales playbook** that included a CD containing collateral and other resources. The value of these tools is undeniable: since developing them, the company has been able to track approximately \$500,000 of net-new sales per quarter to engagements that leveraged the whiteboard and other complementary items.



*Client #5:* Focus on messaging and sales enablement.

Another of Launch's clients – a leading storage systems and software vendor – found itself faced with the challenge of how to best enable its channel partners to drive storage business, along with high-profit consulting and integration services. Launch worked with the company to design an integrated approach to partner enablement, from **selling tools and guides to webinars and customized workshops**. In addition to discussing the market opportunity and technology in question, the playbook includes critical sales conversation components, such as an elevator pitch, an assessment of the competitive landscape, qualifying questions, common objections and more.

These enablement programs have been recognized as a best practice approach to partner enablement – both within the company AND by competitors and alliance partners. By providing these sales enablement resources on its partner portal, the company has positioned itself to drive additional sales through the channel – as well as empower its partners to find success by leveraging comprehensive sales conversation tools.



**Client #6:** Focus on messaging and sales enablement.

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As technology companies focus their salespeople to sell “higher in the organization,” whiteboard conversations, playbooks and other selling tools can serve a critical role in ensuring early executive-level discussions are targeted and meaningful. But to be successful, these sales aids must be developed to consider the needs of both the presenter and the audience. And, like all marketing and enablement tools, they must be launched with instructions for use, monitored for acceptance, measured for results and modified as market needs dictate. Bottom line: people want to have conversations about cloud, and these are the tools to help you do just that.

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### ***A Better Sales Conversation***

**Q:** In a search-engine-based society in which prospects can know everything about your company before a sales engagement has even taken place, how do you bring value to a conversation without resorting to “death by presentation?”

**A:** With conversation tools, such as whiteboards and playbooks, that arm salespeople with dynamic visuals and scripts designed to get prospects involved and engaged, you can drive conversations that energize and accelerate the sales process.

#### ***Questions to ask yourself:***

- How have we enabled our salespeople to have valuable, dynamic and high-level conversations with customers and prospects?
  - What “next steps” marketing support/tools have we given salespeople to help them carry customers along a pre-defined path to a sale?
  - When we do provide these tools, how do we train salespeople to make the most of what they offer?
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## How Launch International can help

No other marketing services company can match Launch International's history and experience in cloud components or with cloud players. Our platform experience extends across all cloud technologies, including servers, storage, security, SaaS/ASP, virtualization and more. And, the clients we've worked with over the years represent many of the leaders in the cloud space.

When you're ready to pursue the strategies we've outlined in this paper, our best-practice-based Integrated Enablement Marketing™ (IEM) methodology can help you synchronize your marketing efforts to business goals. For example, we can help you:

- Build stronger messages that can guide customers step by step on their cloud journeys. That includes the creation of overarching themes that tell your complete story, which can then be broken down into bite-sized collateral that steps prospects through the cloud adoption process at their own speed.
- Produce authoritative thought leadership that combats FUD and can be dripped across the buying cycle via social marketing vehicles, such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and more.
- Arm your salespeople with conversation tools and supporting playbooks that create sustainable interaction between salespeople and prospects, and ultimately drive sales.

At the core of each of these strategies is high-value content – something which everyone needs, but few have the time or resources to create. Launch International can help you not only create this content, but also leverage it in ways that differentiate you from the pack and identify you as a thought leader and trusted partner to your customers and prospects for years to come.

**For more information about Launch International's services, please visit [www.launchinternational.com](http://www.launchinternational.com).**

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<sup>1</sup> IDC, Directions 2010, "Adapt or Vanish: The Impact of Cloud Computing on the IT Channel Ecosystem," March 4, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Sam Diaz, Forrester: The cloud is here to stay; *What's your strategy?*, <http://www.zdnet.com/blog/btl/forrester-the-cloud-is-here-to-stay-whats-your-strategy/35152> (May 2010).

<sup>3</sup> ARN Staff, *Cloud computing: Cloud facts and figures*, [http://www.arnnet.com.au/article/341263/cloud\\_computing\\_cloud\\_facts\\_figures/](http://www.arnnet.com.au/article/341263/cloud_computing_cloud_facts_figures/) (March 2010).

<sup>4</sup> ARN Staff, *Cloud computing: Cloud facts and figures*, [http://www.arnnet.com.au/article/341263/cloud\\_computing\\_cloud\\_facts\\_figures/](http://www.arnnet.com.au/article/341263/cloud_computing_cloud_facts_figures/) (March 2010).