THE SIX POINTS OF B2B-MARKETING-PLANNING FOR 2026.

How B2B companies can remain capable of acting under budget pressure, AI hype, and new buyer journeys, and structure their marketing planning for 2026.

Uhura

Declining budgets, rising expectations—with structured marketing planning, you can master turbulent times and take the lead.

In 2026, B2B marketers will face a seemingly contradictory set of requirements: **budgets are under pressure**, while expectations for growth contributions, efficiency, and measurable revenue impact are rising. Buyers are **increasingly turning to digital sources** for information, increasingly via **AI-supported search systems** and platforms.

Marketing, sales, and customer success are moving closer together organizationally—at least in companies that are achieving their revenue goals.



Budget pressure and efficiency focus

In many B2B companies, three statements will apply simultaneously in 2026:

1. **The company's management expects marketing to make a visible contribution to growth.**
2. **Budgets are growing only moderately or not at all—in some cases, they are actually shrinking in real terms.**
3. **Marketing is expected to be more transparent and controllable.**

The result: instead of “more of everything,” what is needed is clearly focused planning that concentrates resources on the most effective segments, programs, and channels.

Changing buyer journey

The B2B buyer journey in 2026 will be:

1. **more digital – a large part of the research will be self-directed and take place online.**
2. **omnichannel – buyers will use search engines, AI assistants, specialist portals, social media, events, and personal conversations in parallel.**
3. **more anonymous – part of the journey will remain invisible to providers (dark social, peer recommendations, communities).**

Marketing needs to broaden its perspective: away from pure lead generation and toward buyer enablement – i.e., content, formats, and processes that facilitate purchasing decisions and reduce risk from the customer's perspective.

AI, automation, and revenue team

In 2026, artificial intelligence will no longer be “nice to have,” but part of the toolbox:

- **Automation of recurring tasks and progressive marketing automation (segmentation, scoring, reporting)**
- **Scaling of content (drafts, translations, variants, personalization) – implemented in a legally compliant manner**
- **Better use of existing data and structured collection of own data (e.g., churn prediction, next best action)**

The key point is that AI amplifies what is already there. Those who lack a clear strategy, have weak data, and unclear target groups will only produce more of the wrong thing faster. At the same time, many companies are developing revenue teams or RevOps structures in which marketing, sales, and customer success work together to set their plans – with shared goals and metrics.

Specifics in the DACH region

In German-speaking countries, there are a few additional factors:

- **Trade shows and events retain their traditionally strong role, but expectations for measurable ROI are rising—digital preparation is becoming more important.**
- **Trust, references, and long-term relationships are highly important in sales and marketing.**
- **Sustainability, ESG, transparency, and traceability are playing an increasingly important role as decision-making criteria.**
- **Silos between marketing and sales are still widespread, especially in industrial and technical sectors.**

The good news: a professional, data-driven marketing plan can make a visible difference, especially in such environments.

Six points of structured, sequential planning.

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In 2026, B2B marketers will face a seemingly contradictory set of requirements: budgets are under pressure, while expectations for growth contributions, efficiency, and measurable revenue impact are rising. Buyers are increasingly turning to digital sources for information, increasingly via AI-supported search systems and platforms. Marketing, sales, and customer success are moving closer together organizationally–at least where companies are achieving their revenue goals.

This white paper summarizes current study results and approaches and shows how B2B companies can develop a clearly focused, actionable marketing plan for 2026.

It also includes concrete examples, playbooks, and recommendations for action that you can incorporate directly into your annual planning.

1. **Defining corporate goals** – What the company wants to achieve by 2026

2. **Define marketing approach** – What approach should be used to achieve this?

3. **Defining marketing priorities –** What comes first when resources are limited

4. **Define marketing goals –** How do we actually measure whether marketing contributes to corporate goals?

5. **Define key measures –** Which programs and tactics really matter

6. **Dependencies & risks –** What factors determine success, and what risks exist?

1. Defining corporate goals – What the company wants to achieve by 2026

The company's goals—i.e., what the company wants to achieve in the new fiscal year—are the starting point for developing the marketing plan. A clear understanding of these goals and their consequences is crucial.

Key question: What does the company actually want to achieve in 2026–2028—and in which segments?

Typical approaches:

- Sales growth in specific regions, industries, or target group segments
- Expansion of recurring revenues (service, maintenance, SaaS, subscriptions)
- Market entry into new countries/ industries
- Improvement of profitability and margins
- Reduction of dependencies (e.g., on individual major customers or products)



Fictitious example

IndustrialTech AG (mechanical engineering, €300M. in revenue, DACH):

- +10 % revenue growth in 2026
- Increase in the share of recurring service revenue from 20 % to 30 %
- Market entry in two selected EU countries with a focus on retrofit solutions

Specific tasks:

- Hold intensive discussions with management, sales, product management, and customer success. Prepare an interview guide for this purpose if necessary.
- Compile company goals for the next 2–3 years in writing.
- Break down goals by segment (regions, industries, customer types, offerings).
- Clarify which goals marketing can significantly influence.

2. Finding a marketing approach – Which approach will help us achieve what?

Once the company's goals are known, the next step is to define the best way to achieve them. Which basic approach is most promising?

Key question: What growth strategy are we pursuing for each segment?

Proven framework based on three approaches:

Innovation and growth path: Should growth be generated through new offerings, services, business models, or forms of delivery? Will this appeal to new target groups? Should market share and new customers be gained and competitors be targeted?

Retention and harvesting: Retain or win back existing customers, accounts, and shares to secure revenue and turn customers into ambassadors. Stabilize customer relationships, reduce churn, and increase cross-selling and upselling to boost profitability–without heavy investment.

Pause or exit (divest): Temporarily suspend investments and wait for results. Shut down business areas and measures in an orderly manner and reallocate budgets in favor of a better impact contribution.



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Uhura can assist with the analysis and strategy sprint:

- Derivation of corporate goals into measurable marketing goals
- Analysis and audit of assets, content impact, and marketing KPIs
- Strategy workshop on initiative prioritization, governance, and/or tool orchestration



Let’s talk:
robin.waberzinek@uhura.de

Specific tasks:

- Define a specific approach for each segment. Do you want to quickly acquire new accounts and partners? Or increase sales with existing customers using specific key account programs? Or grow in specific segments such as services and modernization?
- Define the marketing roles for each of these approaches. Business objective → Marketing approach → Role. Ensure that there is as little room for interpretation as possible.

3. Defining marketing priorities – What do we want to focus on?

Marketing resources are limited–without clear priorities, the impact will be minimal. Marketing managers must balance the needs of corporate management, sales, product management, and marketing. At the same time, they should prioritize measures according to when they will have an impact–both in the short term and the long term.

The key question: Which measures have the greatest impact in each segment–and are realistic to implement?

Proven grid and example priorities:

- Strengthening visibility and awareness through community events
- Establishment or expansion of ABM or key account frameworks
- Strengthening SEO, content marketing, and digital touchpoints along the buyer journey
- Professionalization of events and webinars with a clear follow-up process
- Introduction or optimization of marketing automation and lead nurturing
- AI-supported content and campaign processes to increase efficiency
- Establishment of revenue reporting along the entire pipeline

Three tips for this:

1. **In 2026, adjust the actual buying journey, not wishful thinking.** Priorities lie in the critical gaps in this journey–such as better comparison content, demo videos, or ABM initiatives.
2. **Use a simple impact/effort matrix:** collect initiatives, rate them on a scale, and visualize them in a 2×2 matrix.
3. **Building brand awareness and trust is a must, not an option.** (40 % is a good benchmark for awareness and mid-funnel measures.)

Specific tasks:

- Classify all ongoing initiatives in an impact/effort matrix.
- Define a maximum of 3–5 marketing priorities for 2026.
- Identify clear “non-priorities” that you consciously choose to forego.

4. Defining marketing goals –

How do we measure whether marketing contributes to corporate goals?

Marketing objectives should be derived directly from corporate objectives and should be quantifiable and clearly defined in terms of time. They should also relate to business outcomes.

Key question: How do we measure specifically whether marketing supports the company's goals?

Typical target categories:

- Brand & Awareness (awareness in target segments, share of voice, direct access)
- Demand & Pipeline (number and volume of qualified opportunities, conversion rates)
- Customer & Lifecycle (net revenue retention, contract renewals, cross-sell and up-sell rates)
- Efficiency & ROI (cost per opportunity or customer, time-to-value)
- Establish a digital marketing framework and benchmark data from real campaign sets



Example and principle

Principle:

Business objective → Marketing contribution → KPI

- **Company objective:**
  10 % sales growth in segment X
- **Marketing contribution:**
  More qualified opportunities from this segment
- **Resulting KPI set:**
  - Qualified opportunities from the segment per month
  - Pipeline volume of the segment
  - Win rate and revenue from marketing opportunities

The same principle can be applied to all priority categories.

Specific tasks:

- Define at least one marketing objective for each business objective.
- Define 3–5 core KPIs per goal.
- Collect baselines from previous years in order to set realistic targets.
- Define a set of key performance indicators and, if necessary, implement a dashboard to demonstrate that marketing contributes measurably to the company's goals.

5. Define key measures – Which programs and tactics really matter

Key measures clearly show how the marketing plan is being implemented. This involves both adapting existing activities to the new approach, priorities, and goals, and deciding which new activities need to be added.

Key question: What programs, campaigns, and tactics lead us to the marketing goals?

Four categories for existing and new measures help with this:

1. **Drop:** Activities that no longer fit the goals and priorities and should be discontinued.
2. **Keep:** Activities that continue to fit well with the new plan.
3. **Fix:** Existing activities that can support the new goals and priorities with adjustments.
4. **Create:** New activities that are really necessary – ideally in limited numbers.

Example measures package for an Industrie-Tech AG

Brand & Storytelling:
- Developing a clear positioning around energy efficiency and sustainability.
- Building a storyline with reference projects, business cases, and ROI examples.

Demand Generation:
- Topic hub "Energy efficiency in existing systems" with guide, checklist, and webinar series.
- Performance campaigns for core solutions in defined industries.

Account-Based Marketing:
- Focus on 30 target accounts in three core industries.
- Individual account plans, personalized content, and coordinated contact sequences with sales.

AI Measures Program:
- SEO/GEO Program: Increase and optimize visibility in ChatGPT, Gemini, and others.
- Implement hyper-personalization programs for digital experiences, such as on the website.

Download our GEO checklist for better AI visibility:
uhura.digital/geo-checklist-b2b-en/

Specific tasks:

- For every business goal, define at least one marketing goal.
- For each goal, establish 3–5 core KPIs.
- Establish baselines from previous years to set realistic targets.
- Define a set of key performance indicators and, if necessary, implement a dashboard to demonstrate that marketing contributes to company goals in a measurable way.

6. Document dependencies and risks – What does success depend on, and what are the risks?

Dependencies and risks are factors that must be addressed in order for the marketing plan to work. This includes the budget, team skills, technological capabilities, the degree of internal coordination, and existing products. Hold the assumptions made during the planning process so they can be reviewed during finalization.

Key question: What must be given? What do we assume in order for the plan to work?

Review four categories for existing and new measures:

- **Data –** quality and completeness of CRM data, tracking, consents.
- **Technology –** actual use of existing tools, integrations, and reporting.
- **Skills –** skills in content, data analysis, automation, AI.
- **Processes –** coordinated lead definitions, responsibilities, and handovers between marketing and sales.
- **Budget & Capacities –** available funds and FTE for prioritized initiatives.

Examples of risks and countermeasures:

- **Campaigns cannot be cleanly measured** → Unify reporting setup and define standard dashboards.
- **AI projects generate legally risky or trademark-contravening content** → Establish guardrails and guidelines for AI use, maintain the approval process.
- **Sales does not utilize marketing leads** → Agree on a common lead definition and SLAs for processing, establish regular feedback loops.

Specific tasks:

- Define dependencies such as budget reliability, tool implementation, or process steps in advance.
- Additionally, define dependencies that build on each other, such as the timely redesign and completion of a service website.
- Be aware of the risks and document them, such as certificates not issued or test series pending.

Conclusion & Roadmaps: What the company wants to achieve in 2026

A clearly structured, building-on-each-other planning framework helps make the contribution of marketing to the company's success transparent – and directs budgets to where they have the greatest impact.

Take the following steps to develop your 2026 marketing plan:

Phase 1: Analysis & Alignment

- Clarify company goals and segment strategy.
- Analyze the marketing performance of the past 12–24 months.
- Conduct conversations with sales, product management, and customer success.

Phase 2: Define planning steps

- Develop the six elements for each segment.
- Consolidate priorities and goals at the company level.

Phase 3: Plan the implementation

- Create annual campaigns and content roadmaps.
- Assign budget and capacities to priorities.
- Define the reporting and review structure.

Phase 4: Iteration & Learning (ongoing)

- Regular check-ins with sales and management.
- Successful pilots scale up, and stop measures that don't work early.
- Test new technologies in a targeted manner, not by unstructured rollout.

About Uhura Digital

Uhura Digital is a multi-award-winning digital experience agency with an international footprint for the specific needs of B2B companies and institutions. We act quickly, smartly, and creatively.

How Uhura can help your B2B company implement and achieve its strategy and goals in 2026:

- Strategy sprints, as well as technology and marketing audits.
- Platform and website design and implementation of relaunches to B2B eCommerce.
- Activation – data-driven awareness and lead generation campaigns that make brands visible and measurably boost sales.
- Individual implementation of AI solutions such as AI agents, automation, or creative AI.

Uhura

What our clients say about us.



BERLIN

"Agency services are useful for our international campaigns when, in addition to impeccable technical expertise, they also have the specialist depth we require. That's why we continue to work very successfully with Uhura."

Michael Stamm
Head of ICT at Berlin Partner for Business and Technology GmbH



LEDVANCE

"Adaptability, creativity, and a relentless focus on client-satisfaction: this is why Uhura was the right choice for our global brand repositioning strategy, why they won the pitch for our new brand image film immediately afterwards and why I'd be happy to work with them again in the future."

Vivian Lee-Lauss
Head of Global Branding and Communications at LEDVANCE



WITHINGS

"As an international brand, it is not only important to localize our global themes and content, but also to develop our local footprint with tailored content. With this in mind, we appreciate Uhura's flexibility, creativity and ability to lead community management in one of our key markets."

Rudy Jacques
Brand Manager at Withings

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