

Hermes Creative Awards Marketing/Communications Plan Entry

Transforming the Buyer Experience

IBM Systems' Journey from Product Centric to Buyer Centric Marketing

From product-centric to buyer-centric



Shift belief so that IT leaders recognize that IBM Systems addresses their challenges of today and opprotunities of tomorrow.



Enable advocacy of clients to share their experience, continuing the cycle of shifting belief and allowing others to engage with IBM Systems.



Cause prospects and clients to act by engaging in any channel, resulting in purchase of multiple products.

Background

In January 2015, two IBM global business units - Systems & Technology Group (STG) and Software Group (SWG) – merged to form IBM Systems. The newly formed unit was tasked with bringing technology products and solutions to market that met the information technology (IT) infrastructure and business needs of our target client, the IT Executive. At the time of formation, IBM Systems executives assembled a portfolio marketing team to fully define our target buyer and assess the pain points of our clients so that IBM Systems could go to market globally with a fine-tuned buyer-centric (vs product-centric) approach. Prior to this time, STG and SWG marketing teams drove a majority of marketing campaigns through siloed, product-focused entry points. From this directive, the IBM Systems Point-of-View (POV) marketing team was born to turn product-centric marketing into client-centric marketing

Prior to developing our message, preliminary research was conducted to identify the business and technology challenges of our clients. Eleven of IBM's most experienced technical leaders, including business unit Chief Technology Officers (CTO), IBM Fellows and Vice Presidents throughout technical development, collaborated with the Systems POV marketing team to validate client challenges and how IBM serves those challenges through unique points of differentiation from our competitors.

We discovered that the business executives responsible for IT infrastructure were scrambling for market advantages. Enterprise IT leaders were in the midst of a role transformation from technologists, to strategists and on the path to being the trusted service provider for their organizations. To become service providers, they needed to innovate rapidly, deliver unique customer experiences, and leverage their knowledge of customers and the marketplace. Their individual success was dependent upon organizations rethinking their IT mindsets, including how they could best fund and finance technology, tap sources of innovation, and prepare for a rapidly evolving and uncertain future.

Marketing Strategy

Our strategy to launching a worldwide point-of-view (POV) for IBM Systems business was underpinned by three key principles: (1) a singular focus on driving business outcomes, (2) buyer-centric engagement along an individual's path to proficiency and (3) a data-driven approach that fuels continuous improvement. Putting these principles into practice, from crafting marketing strategy and program plans to dynamically executing and optimizing how our messages reach the market, the Systems POV marketing team aligned itself into two coverage areas – Portfolio marketing (Strategy-based: Research, Marketing Programs, Messaging and Content) and Performance marketing (Execution-based: Campaigns, Communications, Digital, Social, Events and Seller/Business Partner strategy).

By bringing together a multidisciplinary marketing team, we could focus on tailoring specific but integrated strategies for each channel, built upon a set of core messages and content that specifically builds proficiency for our primary target buyer, the IT executive. Portfolio teams handled the crafting of the message and developing a suite of core content. The message was developed and tested with analysts, a research community of IT leaders, and two CxO focus groups, which allowed us to update and refine our point of view while we built the rest of the marketing program. Client and analyst feedback to the near-final Systems POV messaging was overwhelmingly positive, but also inspired a few last minute updates to align us closer to our target buyer.



Our Target Buyer

The primary IBM Systems target buyer is an existing client in the role of VP of IT Operations and Infrastructure, or CIO or CTO within their organization. They oversee the entire IT organization to ensure that the correct technologies are in place to ensure business success. As technology's impact on the business has increased, their role has evolved from technical infrastructure expert to strategic leader responsible for delivering business value. As such, they are required to be knowledgeable in strategy, finance, communications, regulatory compliance and business innovaton—all at the same time—which may extend well beyond their comfort zone.

Goals & Objectives



Shift belief and establish awareness in the marketplace towards our point of view.



Establish buyer-centric messages vs. product-centric, with a focus on teaching and positioning IBM Systems as a partner to our clients.



Establish a worldwide point-ofview and brand identity for the IBM Systems business unit.

Delivery in Market

Bringing this message to market involved intense collaboration and finesse, given our requirement to build messaging and publish internal & external content in parallel (including brand guidelines, videos, client presentations, infographics and webcasts). Upfront, we needed to reflect the business and technology challenges, and the deep expertise and technologies from IBM, in a buyer-centric narrative – our POV. Our content strategy was anchored in this belief. The crux of our content strategy was built on 1) establishing internal identity & resources for >6,000 staff and 2) publishing a suite of 40+ external assets that effectively balanced how we engage our buyer (building belief, showing role models, and creating advocates), and utilized three persuasion techniques (ethos, logos, and pathos).

A new Systems website was launched to position our highest volume digital marketing channel with a focused, buyer-centric architecture (that also lets you short cut to the product!). Language, colors, positioning and SEO on the site were built and constantly updated based on testing with our target audience. Ultimately, all content delivered through the site served to take a viewer through our POV, progressing into a series of use cases that linked to products from the Systems portfolio.

IBM research identified several tier 1 channels that IT executives seek out for industry insight, including The Wall Street Journal (CIO Journal), Tech-Crunch, and Forbes (Technology). At launch, our social team led an earned media effort to publish blogs written by Systems executives on these sites. In addition, this strategy was complimented by our ownership over a fully redesigned Systems blog ("In The Making"), complete with a new layout, and new content that engages an IT leader with a buyer centric architecture that covers both strategy and technical content.

Prior to launch, we maintained focus on internal marketing, seller and business partner enablement. Over 30 education sessions were held around the world to present our POV launch roll out to regional and country teams, giving them the opportunity to ask questions, and giving us a transparent view into successes and areas of improvement in how the POV was being received locally.



Brand new IBM Systems website and blog optimized for mobile.

Selected Assets:



Executive Report: "New technology, new mindset."



Video: Become an IT Hero



Video: CTO Perspectives



Video: Animated Use Case



Video: IBV & Forrester Webcast

Spotlight on Social

The "social first" launch approach helped to amplify the Systems POV.

	Internal Audience	External Audience
Awareness & Belief Building	Internal Audience Organizes suggested social content in line with POV messaging pillars. Social Advocacy Channels Enables IBMers to amplify and engage with POV content on their own social channels.	Systems Social Accounts Reflects POV messaging and visual expressions at the cross-Systems level. Shared Social Assets Database of 30+ social assets reflecting POV messaging.
Thought Leadership & Engagement	Systems Social Transformers Program A first-of-its-kind program for IBMers that combines: • social media training and enablement • Systems POV education & hot topics • a gamified community with real-life rewards	Social VIP Program Leveraging earned media through a social influencer program, with monthly briefings on POV concepts. In The Making Blog Completely new blog with a client/solution focus on POV themes & messaging.

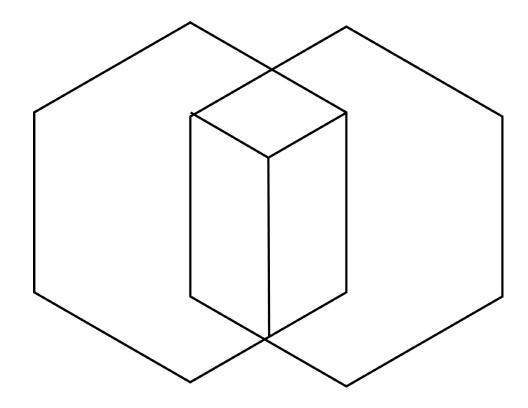
Icon Design Thinking

IBM Systems Primary Graphic

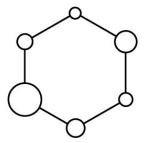
The IBM Systems POV primary graphic takes the traditional idea of a system server and incorporates the unique capabilities of IBM Systems power:

- Integration for Mobile Services
- Data for Immediate Insight
- Operations for Service Predictability

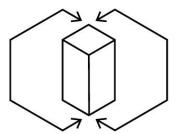
Light and open to a multitude of varied layouts, the graphic represents the ease and accessibility of the IBM Systems portfolio. Its core is strong, structured and secure while its outlying elements are able to scale upward and outward—evoking the essence of IBM Systems products and the unlimited possibilities for end users. The elements are always interconnected, symbolizing the connective power of Middleware. To emphasize the accessibility of IBM Systems technologies, each section can serve as a knockout for photography. This provides a window to the future and an invitation to join in on the journey of IBM Systems Story Point-of-View.



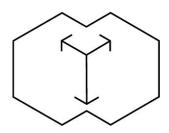
IBM Systems Secondary Graphics



Integration for Mobile Services: APIs, scalability, security



Data for Immediate Insight: capture, placement, compute

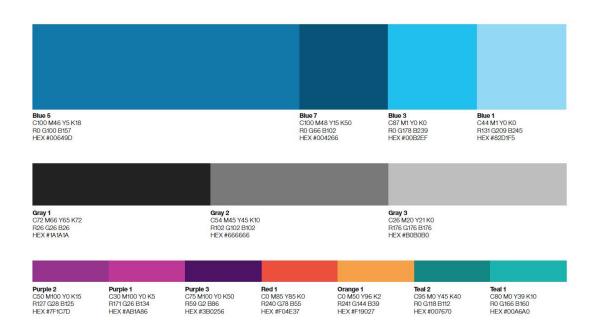


Operations for Service Predictability: systems design, management, availability

Color Palette & Typography

IBM Systems Color Palette

The IBM Systems color palette consists of colors from the IBM core palette. The blues will stand as the primary color, giving IBM Systems a feeling of lightness and energy. Neutral colors are derived from the natural color of servers and may be used to accentuate the primary blues. Secondary colors come from the existing color palettes of IBM Systems' brands. These colors will help emphasize certain differentiators, highlight different products, and will always be used with purpose.



IBM Systems Typography

Lubalin for IBM

Primary headline typeface

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

HelvNeue for IBM

Primary body copy typeface

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

Stock Photography



















Outcome

Goal 1: Shift belief and establish awareness in the marketplace towards our point of view



Potential Business Impact: The Systems' sellers, business partners, brands and local marketing teams use our global marketing assets as an entry point to engage in a conversation with new and current clients. We targeted an early awareness and belief building strategy to serve as the foundation for deeper technical conversations and derivative campaigns throughout the world. Without our point-of-view (POV), they would not have that guiding architecture under which they can build progression and deeper localized messages.

Outcome: After 4 months of testing, IBM Systems introduced our POV worldwide on Oct 15, 2015. The POV is structured with a single client-oriented mission statement, three client-centric business needs, delivered by nine IBM capabilities (1-3-9). As a business unit, we aim to help IT infrastructure leaders master hybrid cloud so that they can become their organization's trusted service provider. Because this is a global, multi-brand, and multi-channel awareness campaign, channel metrics are supplemented by direct feedback from IT research communities, analysts, and executive stakeholders within our geography teams.

Goal 2: Establish buyer-centric messages vs. product-centric messaging, with a focus on teaching and positioning IBM Systems as a partner to our clients.



Potential Business Impact: A client-centric marketing strategy appeals to the target buyer as an individual, by showing him 'w understand what you are up against' as a means of persuasion to purchase solutions and products from IBM Systems.

Outcome: All messaging & content was developed with a laser focus on enabling the IT leader by offering solutions not tethered to a single product. This became the lead message in client presentations, at major IBM events, and as the entry point for deeper technology and product discussions further down the buyer'ss journey.

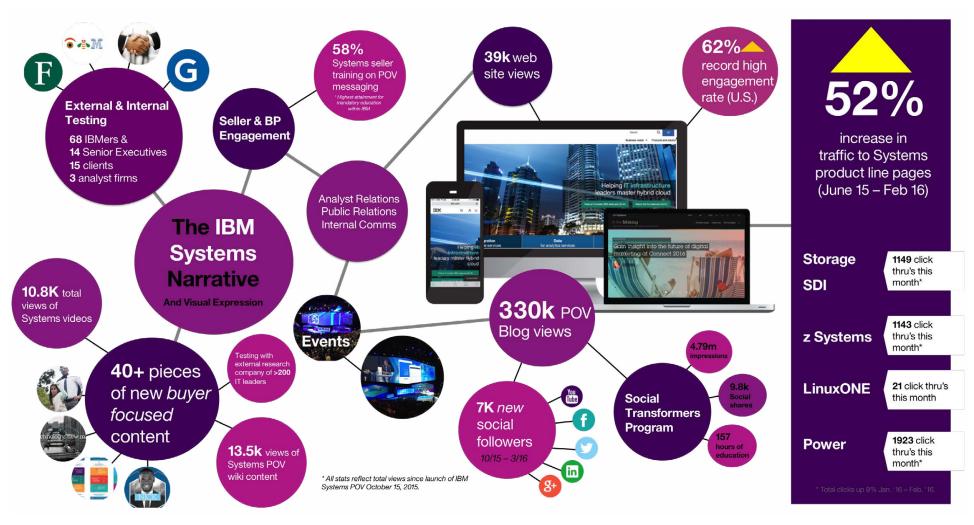
Goal 3: Establish a worldwide point of view and brand identity for the IBM Systems business unit



Potential Business Impact: As a newly formed business unit, IBM Systems did not have a unified identity or messaging architecture, both for internal employees and externally in the market. The launch of our point of view and visual identity informed every aspect of our global marketing strategy: portfolio messaging, web presence, social narrative, campaign frameworks, global and local events, seller & business partner engagement, cross-portfolio solutions, and press/analyst activities.

Outcome: IBM Systems worked daily with a partner agency to establish our Brand and Visual Expression. Guidance included tone for all communications, color palette & typography recommendations, as well as a new logo, now adopted across IBM Systems.

Notable Metrics



Through collaboration between the portfolio and performance marketing teams, IBM Systems has established a defined narrative in just six short months since launch. The narrative was crafted through input from over 80 IBMers, 15 clients, and 3 analyst firms. That internal and external testing influenced the creation of over 40 pieces of buyer-focused content to be used during Systems seller and business partner (BP) education, featured during Systems sponsored events, highlighted on the brand-new, mobile optimized Systems-level website and blog, and the basis for the creation of 100+ social assets. Ultimately, the combination of portfolio and performance efforts led to a substantial 52% increase in web traffic to the IBM Systems' brand pages (Power, z, and Storage), creating a strategic, cross-channel lead generation and revenue funnel.