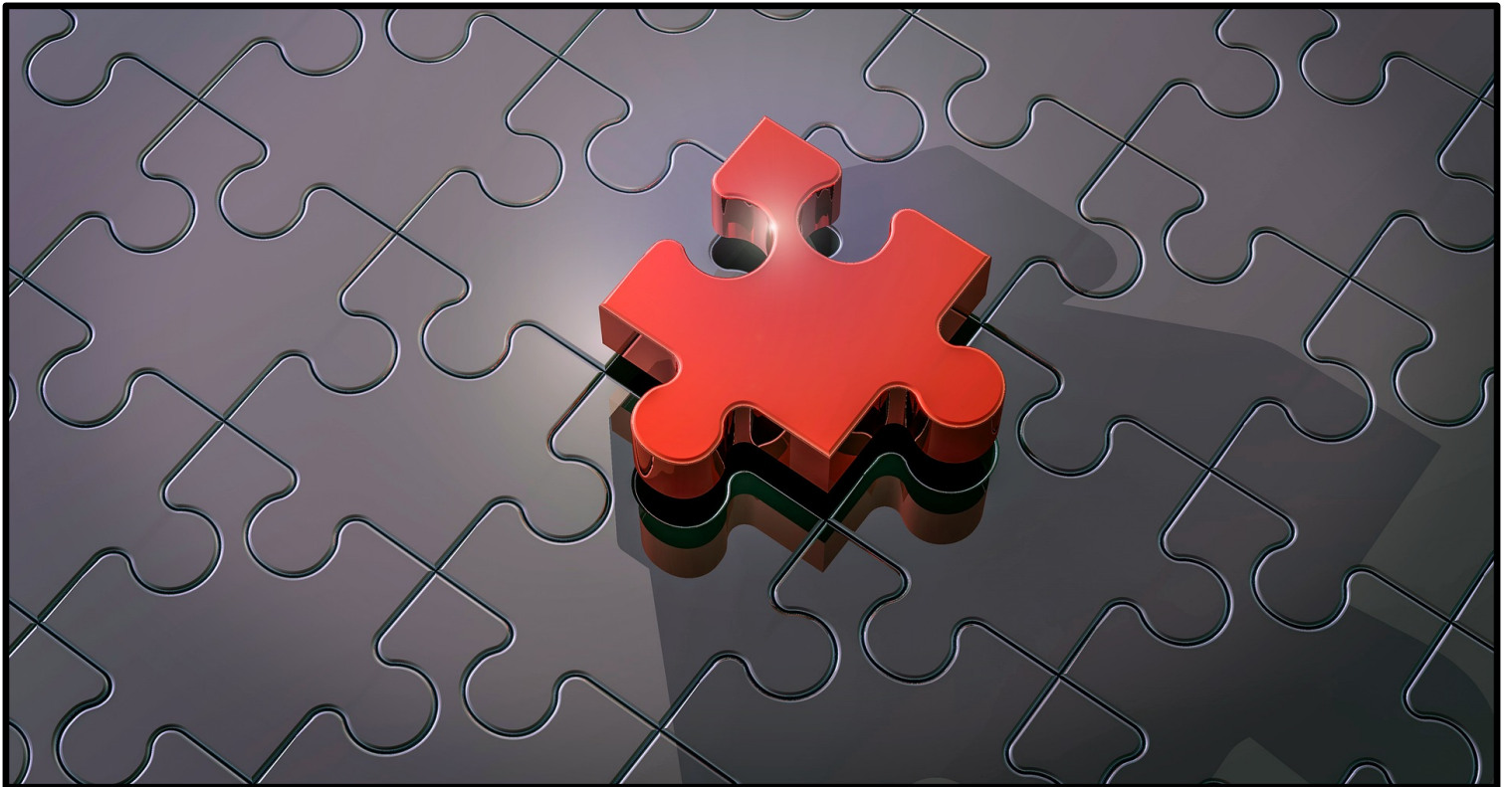


# TECH TALK SIMPLIFIED

HOW TO PRESENT B2B TECH SOLUTIONS TO MAINSTREAM CLIENTS



A MARKETING GUIDE FOR TECHIE ENTREPRENEURS WITH A NONTECHNICAL USERBASE.

BY MARC “SCOTT” SUMMERS | HELLO, SUMMERS

A NOTE FROM AUTHOR MARC “SCOTT” SUMMERS

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So, you've finally made it.

You've built the app. You've developed the product. You've written the software. It's sure to be an overnight success . . . just as soon as people understand exactly what it does.

Just one problem: The clients that match your innovation don't really understand how it works or why they should use it. They don't know enough about coding languages, cloud computing, machine learning, SEO, digital currencies, or e-commerce to grasp how it can solve their problems and help them achieve their goals.

Integrating your newest creation with your target market in a unique and meaningful way is essential to your financial success. Here's how to do it:

## **1. Determine Your Client's Technical Level**

Let's imagine that you've built **Invoice & Go**, an invoicing and payment app that uses cloud integration to sync across multiple users and devices. For our purposes, we'll assume that the company plans to follow a software-as-a-service (SaaS) subscription model. The client pays a fee and has access to the service, its features, and its storage options each month.

You've just put the finishing touches on the product and uploaded the latest and final iteration of the logo. You're ready to launch. It's time to figure out how to market your product to your ideal user.

But who is that individual?

If you've ever done anything with marketing, you've probably heard something about creating buyer profiles -- those fictional characterizations of ideal clients in your target industry:

Ted is 42 and runs a small landscaping company. He's got three kids, attends soccer games on the weekends, and goes out Wednesday evening for a beer with his high school buddies. He's a small-town guy running a small-town business. As his business has grown, he's run into trouble with documentation. The spec sheets, invoices, and receipts that he uses for each client account are beginning to overwhelm his small office, and he's spending hours each night searching for lost paperwork before his morning appointments. He'd like to crack open a cold one and spend more time with his kids on weeknights, and he needs a solution that allows him to do that.

Profiles like this are great for marketers and copywriters because they help identify the ideal buyers that the company has in mind. For your tech startup, though, you need to take it one step further when you consider your ideal customer and how your product can help them.

Ask yourself this: What is Ted's level of technical expertise?

Probably negligible, right? Ted doesn't read like the most technically-inclined individual, but it's hard to make that assumption without actually making that clarification. Let's do that now:

Ted has checked around on some search engines to see if he can find a good solution to his problem, but everything he sees talks about "the cloud" and requires some sort of monthly subscription. He also needs some kind of connected device, like a tablet or a smartphone. Ted doesn't want to use his phone. It's too small for his eyes to focus on and he makes mistakes when he types. He's never used a tablet before. He knows a service like this is valuable, but he worries that he won't understand how to use it.

Okay, now we've got a great understanding of exactly what Ted does and doesn't know. We also have a good idea of where Ted is going to run into roadblocks when he finally arrives at your solution.

It's true that profiles are fictional, but Ted's story is the story of thousands of small business owners in the 40-50 age demographic. If Ted sounds like your ideal customer, defining Ted's likely struggles will help you anticipate his needs.

## **Multiple Clients? Multiple Strategies.**

If Ted is your ideal client, that's great. But what if Ted isn't your *only* ideal client? What if you're targeting a broader market with a wide range of technical savvy? Say hello to Shannon:

Shannon is a sales manager for Sunshine Inc., a window washing service. She knows her way around filing and computation, but right now the company runs on an email system. Agents in the field show up with paper invoices, fill them out, take a photo of them with their smartphones and send them in.

That's a lot of emails.

Shannon really wants a solution that allows each user to self-serve. She'd like administrator access and the ability to assign each user profile to a specific team leader so that she knows where the invoices are coming from and how to track them. She's okay with cloud integrations beyond the service and also plans to cache her files offline.

We'll skip out on the personal details for Shannon right now to save time, but just by comparing Ted and Shannon's technical savvy, you may see both of them as ideal clients

for your company -- but their technical understanding is entirely different, as are their needs.

In a case like this, implementing multiple acquisition strategies is a great way to capture both ends of the market. We'll talk about how to do that a little farther down, so let's keep these two client profiles in mind.

Now that we know who needs our product, let's turn to our product and figure out exactly what it does (and how to sell it).

## **2. Simplify Your Product**

Can you explain what your product does in one sentence? The best client solutions can often be distilled down to one or two sentence descriptions that address the use case and pain points for the client.

Some advice: Take a step *back* from your product and study it from a very high level. This can be difficult if you're very closely attached to your product.

Let's continue to use Invoice & Go as our example.

The Invoice & Go website is coded in HTML5 and supports responsive design. You're using Verisign to safeguard your transactions. Your servers utilize AES 256-bit encryption to keep data under lock and key. You've spent hours coding formulas into your pre-designed invoicing templates so that they work perfectly.

This is where marketing to your ideal clients gets a little tricky. Ted has no idea what 256-bit encryption even means. Shannon might care, but it could also be well out of her depth. And none of that information tells a client what your product actually does.

Step back and simplify, simplify, simplify. Determine how your product will be most useful to your ideal client and say it using the most straightforward language possible.

### **What does Invoice & Go do?**

Easy: Invoice & Go enables users in the field to invoice customers and collect payments before uploading documents in an easily-accessible digital archive.

That's it! Quick, easy, and to the point. Nobody ever has to see this simplified tagline for your product. When you're ready to start marketing, you can use this line as a compass to determine whether your content messaging is true to your product and your ideal client.

At this stage, we've determined who our clients might be, and we've simplified what our product actually does. Let's talk about how to combine those components with the product features to make your offering stand out.



### 3. Match Your Product Features to Client Benefits

Every product or service has bells and whistles designed to make it unique and interesting. For a lot of tech companies, these features are often highly technical and may involve a fair amount of expertise to implement properly.

However, there's a good chance that your nontechnical clients don't care about that at all.

Before we dive headfirst into a conversation about features and how to represent them, take a minute and think about a product that you use without fully understanding how it works. It can be another software or service, or something else entirely.

For me, it's a toaster.

I like toast. I'll probably have a slice of toast every day. But I have no idea how a toaster works. I don't particularly care, as long as it does what I need it to do: make toast. I have a vague idea of how it works, and I know how to use it, but I couldn't repair my toaster if it broke. Fortunately, toasters are cheap, so I'll probably never have to.

I'm a solid customer for the toaster industry, but they could spit facts at me all day about how a toaster uses 1500 watts of power or how the housing is made from aluminum, or how the internal mechanism comes equipped with a top of the line burnt-toast detector.

As a consumer, those design choices mean absolutely nothing to me *unless the company explains how they benefit me.*

When marketing your product or service, creating benefits from features can feel complicated -- but it doesn't have to be. Let's continue with Invoice & Go. We know our ideal market. We've simplified our product and we actually know about some of the features of the service. I listed them earlier, remember?

### **Invoice & Go Features**

- Website coded in HTML5 (and probably CSS)
- Website utilizes responsive design
- Verisign used for encryption
- AES-256 encryption for data storage
- Company uses cloud storage for account unity and synchronicity.

So how do you turn these features into client benefits? Imagine Ted and Shannon from our earlier example. Ted has no idea what HTML5 is. Shannon cares about security but doesn't really know anything about how encryption actually works. (You might not either, in fact, even though you understand that it's important.)

Explaining how these features actually benefit the client transforms them into key selling points. Here are a few examples:

**Invoice & Go Benefits:**

- The website utilizes modern programming standards for fast and efficient load times.
- Responsive web design means that the website is user-friendly and accessible from any device.
- Partnering with Verisign ensures that information provided by your clients and their customers is securely transmitted.
- State of the art encryption provides additional security for any payment information received and stored in your database.
- Online storage means you can safely and securely store and access your important documentation 24/7.

The key thing to remember about benefits is that they address client concerns and further convince them that your product will help them achieve their own goals. In the case of B2B clients, they might also provide some talking points that your business clients can pass onto their customers.

For example, Invoice & Go provides a solution that businesses need by delivering a secure, feature-rich infrastructure to their organization. If one of Shannon's clients

expresses concerns about providing payment information, Shannon can assure them that their information is secure *because of a feature your service provides to them*.

When addressed properly, benefits can become self-reinforcing points that help your clients earn new business by doing business with your company.

### **Toning Down the Tech Talk**

Looking at the benefits, you'll notice one important thing: There's little to no technical jargon involved. There's definitely a time and place for it -- on a stats page or if you enjoy a highly-technical userbase, for example -- but you'll most likely want to keep those details away from your home and landing pages, and your initial sales collateral.

Make the technical information available for users who want to know more while speaking to the lowest common denominators inside your target market. If you're working with two separate markets, split them and speak to the lowest common denominator in each group on their specialized landing pages and inside their targeted content.

## **4. Giving Clients the Whole Picture**

As you're preparing to market your product, don't forget about everything surrounding it. Stats, studies, and social proof (like media endorsements or brand partnerships) can all go a long way to ensure that your brand is valuable and trustworthy in the eyes of your potential clients.

Let's take a look at a few of these items in turn:

- **Statistics:** People like numbers. If you post on your website that your clients have seen a 55% increase in overall efficiency (assuming you've got the data to back it up), you're telling your target market that if they sign up for your software, they can expect similar results. For clients whose pain points circulate around efficiency and organization, a stat like that is a godsend.
- **Endorsements:** Items like product reviews or customer satisfaction scores and active brand endorsements (mentioning that you work with recognizable brands) are great ways to bolster your authenticity in the eyes of your client.
- **Service & Support:** If you're offering to continually service and support your market, be sure to let clients know they don't have to go alone. Let them know that you're offering a complete solution to their problems and that, even if there's a learning curve, you're there to help them best figure out how to utilize your product.
- **How It Works:** A page explaining how the process works is a great way to inform nontechnical users. A page like this details (in layman's terms) how your software, service, or product works to improve their lives and enhance their ability to earn more money.

These are just a few examples of what you can do to solidify your product in your client's mind. Be sure to use any technique you can think of to help your brand stand out as a winner by providing your market with complete insight into their experience with your product.

## **5. Supplementing Your Solution**

Before you run off to market with your latest and greatest invention, pause for a moment and consider this: Particularly in the B2B market, your product or service isn't something that stands on its own. It's a solution to a client problem.

Your job as you market your brand is to position yourself as that final solution and help your prospective clients to understand that what you're offering is a perfect match for their business needs. Don't go live without a healthy and robust deployment strategy:

- Be sure that you've branded yourself in a properly recognizable and consistent way everywhere you plan to maintain a presence.
- Develop a content strategy and SEO for your blog, complete with keywords you want to shoot for and topical content aimed at your target audience. Be prepared to repost these articles to relevant social media channels.
- Create user guides, community forums, and anything else you can think of to help your clients better integrate with your product or service quickly. Self-serve

options like FAQs are a great starter, but eventually your client may need a way to contact you directly.

Developing and deploying a well-rounded solution is a lot of work, but it can make the difference between a disengaged user and a client promoter when it comes to word-of-mouth advertising. Put in the work and supplement your product or service with a complete solution, and you'll have clients singing your praises.

## **Wrapping Up**

There's no doubt that marketing is an entirely different beast than developing a service or designing a product. That's par for the course. It's the technical details and the need to distill that jargon into key selling points to your market that make tech marketing an even greater challenge.

As you begin the marketing process, do your best to simplify. Imagine your target customer, kick out the tech talk, and get down on their level. The ability to do that without overwhelming them with content they don't have the time or energy to understand can make the difference between success and failure.

## About the Author



Marc “Scott” Summers is a B2B freelance writer and content strategist who enjoys solving complicated problems. Origami, puzzle cubes, and strategy games all fit well in his repertoire of hobbies and dedicated pastimes.

Originally from the Alabama Gulf Coast, Scott worked for Apple for a number of years, specializing in small business and enterprise relationship development. He also worked as a senior technical advisor, helping clients understand the features of the products they were purchasing and making sure that it suited their needs.

Since then, Scott has partnered with a number of businesses and entrepreneurs across the US and Canada to develop their business presence. His creative copy and technical expertise have been used to create the following:

- New websites
- Revised sales processes
- Employee feedback surveys
- Content marketing strategies
- User guides & FAQs
- Catalog organization
- SEO strategies

If you need a writer and editor who can streamline your development process while creating powerful content to grow your business, contact Scott. He might even fold an origami crane for you.