Content Curation & Conversation Tools: An Analysis of 12 Technology Solutions in a Disruptive Marketplace

A SPECIAL CONTENT MARKETING INSTITUTE TECHNOLOGY REPORT
http://contentmarketinginstitute.com
This report covers the following technology solutions:

- Atomic Reach
- Categorical
- Curata
- FeedMagnet
- FlashIssue
- MassRelevance
- NextWorks
- Percolate
- PublishThis
- Scoop.it
- ScribbleLive
- Spundge

This is an incredibly dynamic space. Even during the time we spent preparing for this report and interviewing these companies, half a dozen new entrants came online, and at least as many were either acquired or stopped doing business.

We will certainly add and remove companies from this report in subsequent versions. But these, from our perspective, are the solutions that we at CMI are presently seeing most frequently in the marketplace.

Note: Among the vendors featured here, there was quite a bit of overlap between capabilities and features as they pertain to the spectrum we mention above. To be fair to the solutions, we didn’t explicitly break them out or assign each vendor a category; however, we hope their strengths in each area will come through as you read the profiles. As with any other purchase decision, a solid understanding of your pressing and future needs, as well as your strategy moving forward, will be key to selecting the right technology vendor.

How to Read this Report

The following profiles of each vendor are based on hour-long briefings conducted by CMI during the summer of 2013. We have purposely not ranked any of the solutions as “better” than another because we are not looking to “grade” the solutions. Rather, our goal here is to provide a clear sense of what each solution provides, and assemble a coherent stratification of the market for purchasers, investors, and those generally interested in understanding this space.

Nothing in the profiles should be read as a tacit endorsement or particularly pointed critique of any particular solution. Our aim is to provide an unbiased examination of the tools without making any particular judgment as to their overall value.

For each profile, we cover an overview of the solution, the specific challenge that each attempts to solve, and its pricing structure. Then, we cover the vendor’s approach to this challenge as it pertains to how a customer might utilize the solution. Finally, we provide a short history of the company, any interesting or unique features that we noted, and contact information.
Content Marketing Institute’s Take on this Space

Unlike the Content Collaboration space that we covered in the first report in this series, the Content Curation & Conversation space has extraordinary diversity in differentiating technology. While some are, quite literally, just using basic web searches to aggregate content based on themes, some of the solutions here have incredibly sophisticated semantic and indexing technologies that could ultimately provide true differentiating value to the business or an acquiring company.

Additionally, these companies tend to take much different, and more niche, approaches to their solutions than do the Content Collaboration providers. Some are purely focused on aggregating thematic content in some kind of easy-to-use interface for teams to more efficiently manage a process (“taming the firehose”). Others are providing everything from the ability to set up promotions and contests across social channels, to managing content in mini “content management” systems, and even creating microsites in some cases.

As such, it’s difficult to get an apples-to-apples comparison in this space. Content marketers looking to add curation and conversation management to their approach will do well to truly understand what they are trying to achieve before going shopping. Certainly, the “shiny object syndrome” holds here. Many of these vendors do vastly different things. It is easy to be distracted by the first sexy “demo” and then (unfortunately) compare every subsequent demonstration to the shiny object that captured the buyer’s initial attention.

Thus, we recommend developing (either internally or through consultation) a more thorough version of what benefits (as we outlined above) a curation and conversation management process will achieve. Then, consider the vendors who can solve that particular process most effectively.

From a marketplace standpoint, this space is moving extraordinarily quickly. We expect that, within the next year (very much like the content collaboration space), most of these vendors will have been acquired or more fully funded by venture capital.

From the perspective of enterprise buyers of technology, the space is also moving quickly. As internal teams begin to de-silo in organizations and as content becomes more central to the marketing approach, we expect there to be opportunity for the space to consolidate quickly. Web content management and marketing automation solutions have the opportunity to become an optimal spot for this aspect of the process (as illustrated by LiveFyre’s September 2013 acquisition of Storify).

(Note: We had originally intended to include Storify for this report, but excluded it because it does not offer a “business-oriented” solution. This will almost certainly change now that it is part of the LiveFyre suite of solutions.) We expect that one or more of the enterprise companies that are focused on the full marketing stack (e.g., Oracle, Adobe, Microsoft, and Salesforce.com) will acquire one or more of these solutions within the next year.
ABOUT THIS SERIES OF REPORTS

This is the second in a series of reports highlighting disruptive content marketing technologies. These reports cover solutions that fit in the “overlap” spaces between the four steps of an internal content marketing process, as outlined by Robert Rose and Joe Pulizzi in their book, Managing Content Marketing:

► Create, Edit & Manage
► Aggregate, Curate & Optimize
► Promote, Converse & Listen
► Measure, Analyze & Learn

Disruptive solutions fit somewhere “in between”—in the spaces where the “classic,” enterprise-focused tools (web content management systems, content optimization, marketing automation, and analytics tools) aren’t flexible, fast, or robust enough to meet the demands of new, adaptive content marketing processes.

These reports group these newer solutions as follows:

**Content Collaboration Tools**—*where Create, Edit & Manage overlaps with Aggregate, Curate & Optimize*. These tools facilitate content editorial workflow, empower the enterprise to manage teams (either external or internal), and enable collaboration on content for content marketing purposes.

**Content Curation & Conversation Tools**—*where Aggregate, Curate & Optimize overlaps with Promote, Converse & Listen*. These tools help marketers promote, publish, and aggregate content in meaningful ways; in many cases, they also help manage the content optimization process by using social signals, and even facilitate some level of unified content conversation.

**Content Discovery & Promotion Tools**—*are related, but separate from Content Curation & Conversation Tools*. These solutions focus primarily on promoting owned media across external networks. They are sometimes called “native advertising” solutions.

**Social Content Analytics Tools**—*where Promote, Converse & Listen meets Measure, Analyze & Learn*. These tools help marketers maintain relevance in conversation, while also providing insight into what they should be talking about—from specific niche social channel analytics, to semantic processing of social media conversations.

**Engagement Automation Tools**—*where Measure, Analyze & Learn comes back around to overlap with Create, Edit & Manage*. More than the classic marketing automation, many of these tools have the ability to not only manage some form of content, but they do so from the point of view of helping the marketer “optimize” the content for engagement and conversion purposes.

Watch for the next report, Content Discovery & Promotion Tools, in late 2013. The two final reports in the series—on Social Content Analytics Tools and Engagement Automation Tools—will be released in 2014.

IN THE MEANTIME, ON WITH THE CONTENT MARKETING REVOLUTION...
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The Content Marketing Institute is the leading global content marketing education and training organization. CMI teaches enterprise brands how to attract and retain customers through compelling, multi-channel storytelling. CMI’s Content Marketing World event, the largest content marketing-focused event, is held every September, and Content Marketing World Sydney, every March. CMI also produces the quarterly magazine Chief Content Officer, and provides strategic consulting and content marketing research for some of the best-known brands in the world. CMI is a 2012 and 2013 Inc. 500 company.

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