



CHIEF CONTENT OFFICER

AGILE MARKETING

MARKETERS' TECH OBSESSIONS

TRANSLATION & LOCALIZATION TOOLS

# IMMERSIVE CONTENT

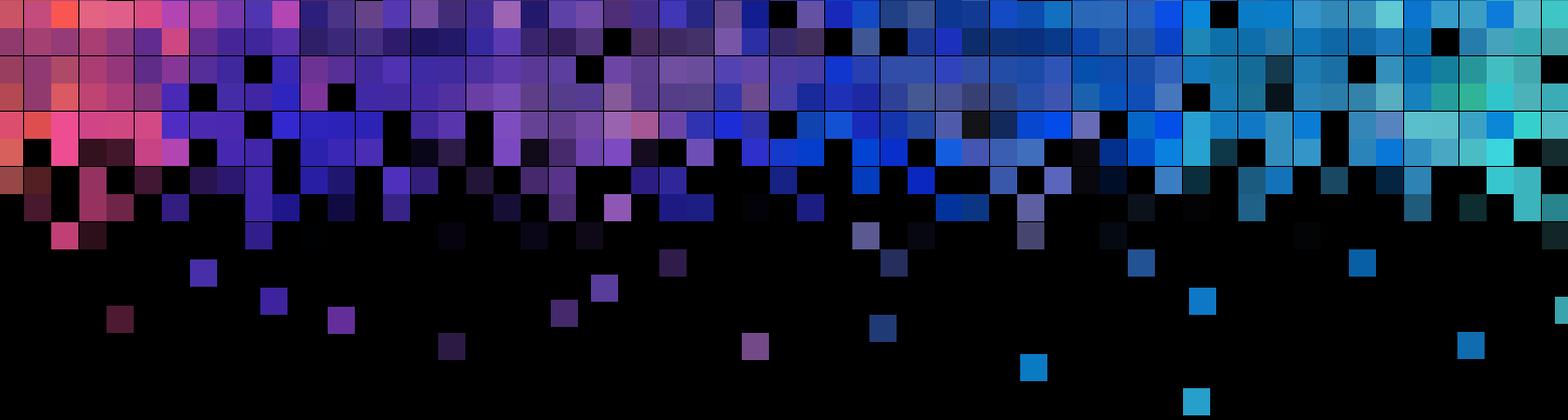
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# Write and Review

I've had the pleasure of speaking more than 400 times in 16 countries over the past nine years. While most of those speeches focused on content marketing, my most recent was about starting a business.

The audience? My son Adam and his eighth-grade class.

Adam was worried. I get it. I'm sure he was thinking that good ol' dad, who regularly speaks about content marketing, wouldn't know how to connect with his friends ... and would probably embarrass him.

I spent more than two hours preparing the PowerPoint presentation, and even inserted multiple images of Kanye West, PewDiePie and Bethany Mota (look the last two up if you don't know who they are).

After explaining my entrepreneurial journey for 30 minutes, I took questions. Do you know what they were most interested in? Creating a journal, writing down what they wanted most from life, and reviewing their goals regularly. Yep, they were fascinated by it.

I told the kids the story of Gail Matthews and her Dominican University study from almost a decade ago. Matthews and her team found that people who write down their goals, review them consistently, and share their goals with friends are 33 percent more successful in achieving their goals than those who just have goals.

I told the class, "You can accomplish anything in life, but you need to write down your goals and review them every day. That way, every day you'll be consciously and unconsciously making decisions that will positively impact your goals."

Funny thing is, the same is true for you and your content marketing strategy. Our annual content marketing research finds that marketers who document their content marketing strategy rate their organizations as more successful at content marketing than those who do not. It's so interesting to me that a fairly easy thing like creating and reviewing your strategy isn't done more frequently.

Now, as you are well into 2017, is the absolute best time for you to review your strategy. Review that strategy with your team not just once or every quarter but every week. That one little change in your process can and will make a more meaningful difference for your content marketing success than you can possibly imagine. ☺

Yours in content,



**Joe Pulizzi**  
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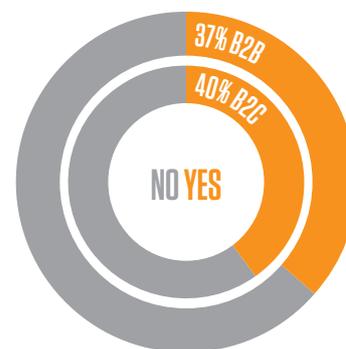
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**DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION HAVE A DOCUMENTED CONTENT MARKETING STRATEGY?**



Source: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs 2017 research. To learn more, go to [www.contentmarketing.com/research](http://www.contentmarketing.com/research)



CHIEF CONTENT OFFICER

FEBRUARY 2017

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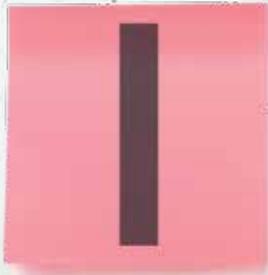
BACKLOG



# MARKETBALL

Content marketing groups of all sizes are using Agile principles to turn disconnected teams into high-performing units. Find out how it's done.

*Andrea Fryrear*



In his 2003 book *Moneyball*, Michael Lewis recounts how the management of the Oakland Athletics revolutionized baseball by relying on statistical analyses rather than intuition to choose new players. Before General Manager Billy Beane turned a single metric—on-base plus slugging (OPS)—into his North Star for every decision, team

managers preferred strategies that were unlikely to fail rather than those that seemed most efficient. “The pain of looking bad,” Lewis writes, “is worse than the gain of making the best move.”

As a content marketing manager tasked with delivering my quota of MQLs (marketing-qualified leads) and hitting publication dates, I get it. Picking an approach that seems unlikely to fail is safe. Proposing a radical new management system seems not only bad, but foolhardy. “Why,” managers the world over ask every day, “should we try to fix something that isn’t broken?”

Unfortunately for status-quo fans everywhere, visionaries and innovators understand that what counts as “broken” is constantly in flux. In 2001, before Beane began his quiet revolution inside Major League Baseball, no other team’s decision-making style appeared broken. Yet Beane would soon overtake them because his success depended on breaking things.

Likewise, in the increasingly noisy and densely populated online world, the success of our content relies on its ability to break things. We have to break through to audiences underwhelmed by mediocre marketing. We have to break the habits of consumers who have always used a competing product or read a competitor’s newsletter. And, most importantly, we have to break the way we manage and structure our content teams.

Although really, it’s just the last part, the management part, that we have to break—and by break, I mean teams must decide on their own structure without heavy-handed interference from management. Before the accusations of marketing communism begin to fly, let me be clear: I’m not advocating the dissolution of management altogether. I’m proposing that on a modern content marketing team (whose goals, obstacles, and workloads are typically so huge that it’s a wonder they don’t all sleep under their desks), a manager’s job is to hire amazing people, empower them using Agile principles and processes, and then work like hell to keep anyone else from interfering.

That’s a lot to do, so let’s start from the top.

*Continued on 10*

## AGILE MARKETING TEAM: WHAT IS IT EXACTLY?

Some teams are naturally adaptive and data-driven, and could technically be considered agile (lowercase “a”). To qualify as Agile (capital “A”), a marketing team needs a structure that enables it to adapt and iterate.

This structure could take various forms, including Scrum (the classic Agile process based around sprints), Kanban (a pull-based system that uses work-in-progress limits) or a hybrid of the team’s invention. Most Agile teams work in sprints—set periods during which team members aim to complete a set amount of work that’s connected to a long-term plan. Each sprint lasts between one week and one month, with two weeks being the most common duration.

A mainstay of the Agile approach is the stand-up—a 15-minute meeting, usually held at the beginning of every work day, during which team members stay on their feet. They take turns updating everyone on what they did yesterday, what they plan to do today and what obstacles they need help to overcome.

Whatever form the structure takes, some kind of systematic foundation is needed to keep an Agile team from descending into frenetic reactions disconnected from a long-term plan.

Changing your mind all the time does not make you Agile.



*The basics: Why Agile principles make sense for content marketing. <http://cmi.media/agilebasics>*



Much has been written (some of it in this magazine) about the growing talent crunch plaguing content marketing, so we don't need to go into a lot of depth on this topic. The harsh truth is, it's hard to find good content help these days. But the interviews, networking and early-morning coffee meetings more than pay off when you consider the impact that truly passionate and skilled content creators have on your organization.

In an interconnected, digital world, great marketing can spread at the speed of a click. It doesn't matter if it came from a team with a multimillion-dollar budget or a solopreneur doing it all on her own. The internet is nothing if not democratic.

That means finding—and retaining—creators who can consistently produce legitimately awesome work that gives you a regular shot at hitting the digital jackpot. There is no greater source of competitive advantage in content marketing than a talented team.

But those teams need the space and freedom to create or the legitimately awesome will rapidly devolve into lethargic and yawn-inducing.

Whether it's through an Agile iteration or work-in-progress limits (see definitions in sidebar on page 9), Agile teams are governed by limitations on their workflow. This isn't because they're lazy or can't handle the workload. It's because when people have a split focus, they do terrible work (and it takes them longer to do it).

For example, let's imagine that your current content plans include creating a new webinar, whose launch you will support with an e-book and a series of blog posts. You plan each piece, make assignments and send the team off to work. A week passes and you check on progress. It turns out that one person got derailed when sales asked for lead-generation collateral, another lost a day to responding to angry customer tweets and your CEO wanted a homepage rewrite that took precedence over the blog posts.

Now you've got three half-finished content items, which is like having none at all.

You can't give a webinar that ends abruptly halfway through. Nobody wants to download an e-book that's just an outline. And blog posts just don't work if they're composed entirely of headlines, header tags and target keywords.

An Agile content team, on the other hand, would have focused on finishing one piece before starting something else. Its members could have told sales and the CEO that their requests would be added to content's Agile backlog, not to the top of the list of immediate to-do's.

As a bonus, not only do Agile teams produce more content in less time, they also make team members happier and more engaged. And that means they stick around longer, are easier to recruit and help solve that thorny talent problem we talked about earlier.



Have more questions about Agile marketing?  
Get answers. <http://cmi.media/agilemarketing>



## KNOW YOUR AGILE TERMS

**Agile iteration:** A set length of time during which a team commits to producing a set amount of content. Sometimes called a Sprint.

**Work-in-progress (WIP) limit:** An inflexible limit on how much content can be in any given state (e.g., research, writing, editing, review) at one time.

**Backlog:** A prioritized to-do list that serves as the source of all work done by an Agile team.

**Daily stand-up:** A 15-minute daily meeting during which team members discuss what they did yesterday, what they plan to do today, and any blocks holding them back.



You might have expected me to close by telling you to get out of the way so your team can work their Agile magic, but that's not the final step. On our hypothetical content team, we had external requests being thrown in from all sides and derailing our content creators. Even on an Agile team, not everybody will happily chirp, "Nope," when an executive tries to interrupt their work.

Agile teams are empowered, but that doesn't mean they have super powers.

Managers need to act like an offensive line, getting in the way of people who are trying to disrupt their team while they're executing a beautiful play. They attend daily stand-up meetings, listening attentively and volunteering to help remove roadblocks (and then doing it). They genuinely value the creative force that their team can wield, and they actively work to create a situation where it can do its thing.

### Respect tradition ... or profit from it

Marketing, like baseball, has ways it's always been done. We can choose to adhere to traditional ways of managing and creating content, or we can look outside our own typical way of thinking to gain the upper hand. Someone in your niche will be using an Agile approach to start breaking things very soon. Imagine what would happen if it was you. ☞

**Andrea Fryrear** is a content strategist and the editor in chief of TheAgileMarketer.net. She tweets about content and agility @andrea Fryrear.

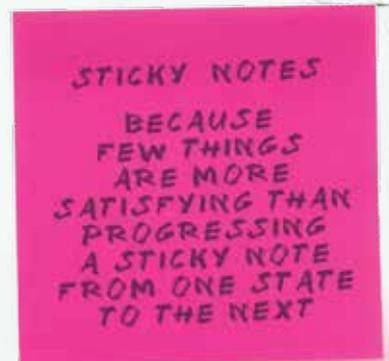


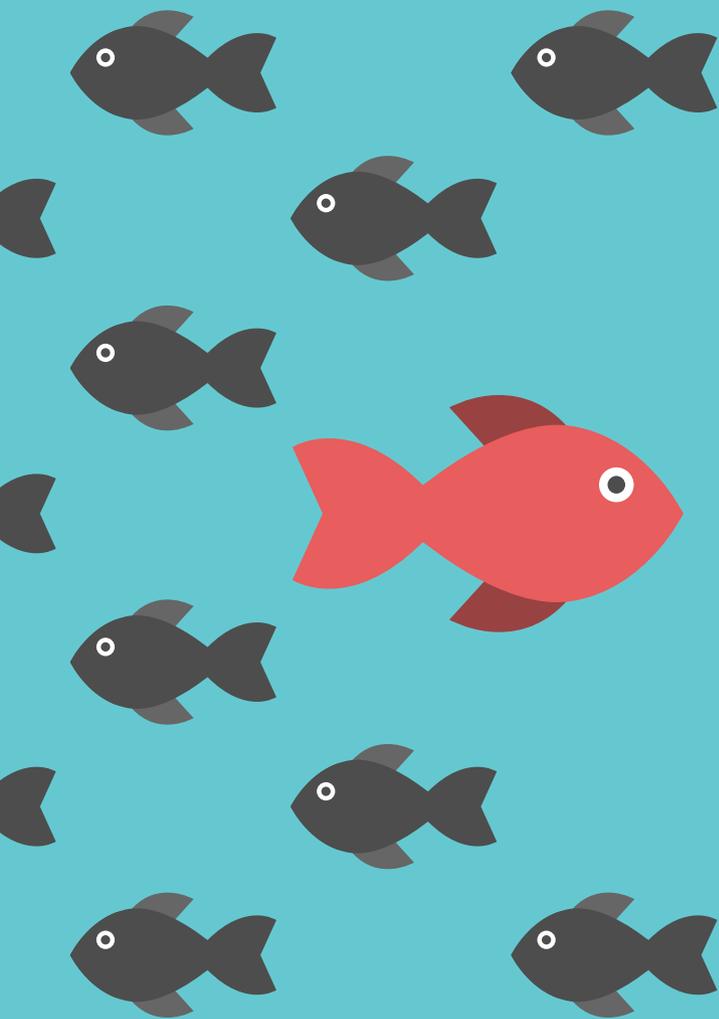
Hear Fryrear explain user story mapping at the Intelligent Content Conference in Las Vegas. <http://cmi.media/FryrearICC>

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## TOOLS AGILE MARKETERS USE

You don't need special tools, but if your team finds a tool that enhances communication and visibility, by all means, use it.





# Identity Matters

How content strategists can build trust and loyalty.

*Melissa Eggleston and Julie C. Lellis, Ph.D.*

In 2009, whether you were a golfer or not, you likely heard about Tiger Woods. Starting with a drama-filled Thanksgiving night with his wife and ending with a public apology the following February, the superstar’s wholesome image unraveled publicly as one mistress after another came forth with explicit details. With his marriage lost, sponsorships gone, and fans bewildered, we were left wondering: who was the real Tiger Woods anyway? Was everything we thought about him just a sham?

Woods didn’t need a consultant to help him with his brand. He needed a therapist, which he stated himself in a somewhat bizarre 14-minute public apology. He also could have benefited from a crisis communications expert. But most importantly, Woods needed to figure out his identity—who he was and who he wanted to be. Identity is the foundation for authentic living.

Many companies need to refocus on identity as well. When companies don’t have a clear sense of identity, they often act to some degree like Woods. We call this “going zombie” since, just like zombies, companies are often confused about their identities, haphazard in behaviors and sometimes downright scary. This leaves customers wondering who these companies really are, and rebranding isn’t a solid fix.

## **A solid foundation built on identity**

Here’s how we describe identity in our recent book, *The Zombie Business Cure*, and how it differs from brand:

Identity is constructed from core values, and it is the foundation that informs both an organization’s culture and

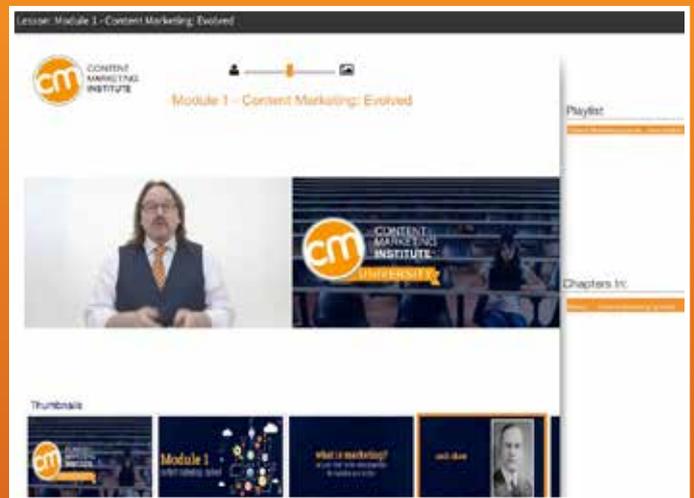


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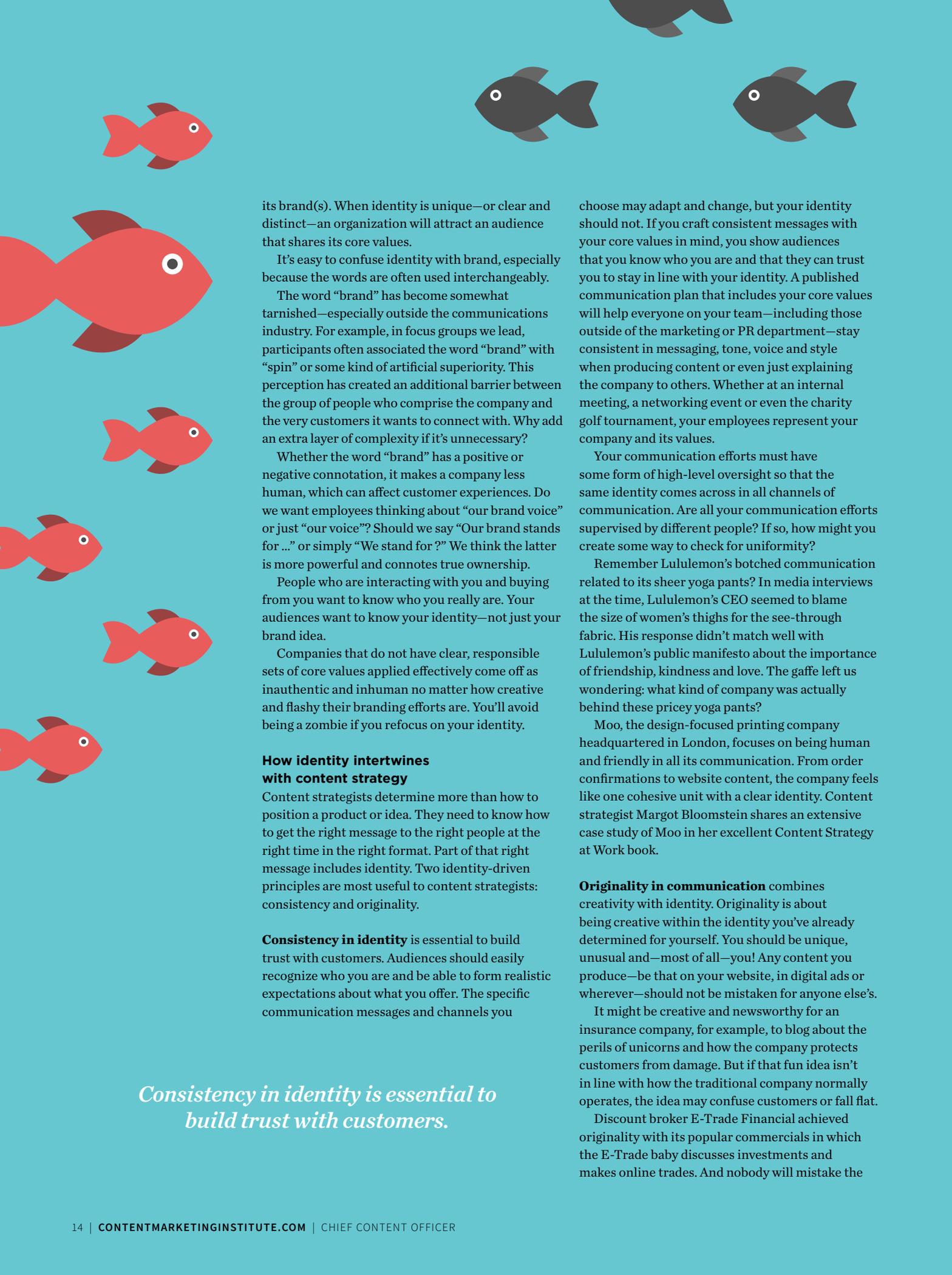
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its brand(s). When identity is unique—or clear and distinct—an organization will attract an audience that shares its core values.

It's easy to confuse identity with brand, especially because the words are often used interchangeably.

The word “brand” has become somewhat tarnished—especially outside the communications industry. For example, in focus groups we lead, participants often associated the word “brand” with “spin” or some kind of artificial superiority. This perception has created an additional barrier between the group of people who comprise the company and the very customers it wants to connect with. Why add an extra layer of complexity if it's unnecessary?

Whether the word “brand” has a positive or negative connotation, it makes a company less human, which can affect customer experiences. Do we want employees thinking about “our brand voice” or just “our voice”? Should we say “Our brand stands for ...” or simply “We stand for?” We think the latter is more powerful and connotes true ownership.

People who are interacting with you and buying from you want to know who you really are. Your audiences want to know your identity—not just your brand idea.

Companies that do not have clear, responsible sets of core values applied effectively come off as inauthentic and inhuman no matter how creative and flashy their branding efforts are. You'll avoid being a zombie if you refocus on your identity.

### **How identity intertwines with content strategy**

Content strategists determine more than how to position a product or idea. They need to know how to get the right message to the right people at the right time in the right format. Part of that right message includes identity. Two identity-driven principles are most useful to content strategists: consistency and originality.

**Consistency in identity** is essential to build trust with customers. Audiences should easily recognize who you are and be able to form realistic expectations about what you offer. The specific communication messages and channels you

choose may adapt and change, but your identity should not. If you craft consistent messages with your core values in mind, you show audiences that you know who you are and that they can trust you to stay in line with your identity. A published communication plan that includes your core values will help everyone on your team—including those outside of the marketing or PR department—stay consistent in messaging, tone, voice and style when producing content or even just explaining the company to others. Whether at an internal meeting, a networking event or even the charity golf tournament, your employees represent your company and its values.

Your communication efforts must have some form of high-level oversight so that the same identity comes across in all channels of communication. Are all your communication efforts supervised by different people? If so, how might you create some way to check for uniformity?

Remember Lululemon's botched communication related to its sheer yoga pants? In media interviews at the time, Lululemon's CEO seemed to blame the size of women's thighs for the see-through fabric. His response didn't match well with Lululemon's public manifesto about the importance of friendship, kindness and love. The gaffe left us wondering: what kind of company was actually behind these pricey yoga pants?

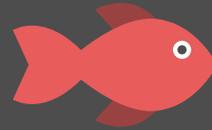
Moo, the design-focused printing company headquartered in London, focuses on being human and friendly in all its communication. From order confirmations to website content, the company feels like one cohesive unit with a clear identity. Content strategist Margot Bloomstein shares an extensive case study of Moo in her excellent *Content Strategy at Work* book.

**Originality in communication** combines creativity with identity. Originality is about being creative within the identity you've already determined for yourself. You should be unique, unusual and—most of all—you! Any content you produce—be that on your website, in digital ads or wherever—should not be mistaken for anyone else's.

It might be creative and newsworthy for an insurance company, for example, to blog about the perils of unicorns and how the company protects customers from damage. But if that fun idea isn't in line with how the traditional company normally operates, the idea may confuse customers or fall flat.

Discount broker E-Trade Financial achieved originality with its popular commercials in which the E-Trade baby discusses investments and makes online trades. And nobody will mistake the

*Consistency in identity is essential to build trust with customers.*



billboards touting spelling-challenged cows for any business but Chick-Fil-A. Both companies use distinct strategies and can be easily recognized.

Original communication is unusual—either in its style or by offering a new idea. Babies trading stocks ... cows trying to convince us to eat more chicken ... these are absurd ideas that don't quite match reality, so of course we will remember them.

### Being mindful of identity in content strategy

To be mindful of identity in your content strategy, consider these questions as you are creating and evaluating content:

1. Are our company's core values reflected in all our content? If not, why not?
2. Do customers know who we are and what we stand for? Do customers trust us? How do we know?
3. Is our communication consistent? Do we look and sound the same in all our channels? Whose responsibility is this at our company?
4. Do we have something original to say? Or do we just sound like our competitors?
5. Do we use both qualitative and quantitative measures to see if our communication is accurately portraying who we are? Or are we just guessing?

Your answers to these questions will show how well you've wrapped your identity and content together. In addition to understanding audience needs, take the time to consider your identity in all communications for lasting success and customer loyalty. As we've seen with Tiger Woods, after you go zombie, it can be hard to get back on track. But it's better to step up to the challenge than live among the undead. 

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*The book excerpt and Charles Schwab case (right) are adapted and reprinted, with permission of the publisher, from THE ZOMBIE BUSINESS CURE © 2017 Julie C. Lellis, PhD, and Melissa Eggleston. Published by Career Press, Wayne, NJ. 800-227-3371. All rights reserved.*

## MINDFULNESS OF IDENTITY PAYS OFF

Charles Schwab, the San Francisco-based financial services firm, stands out by challenging the norms of its industry. Since he began the company more than 40 years ago, founder Charles “Chuck” Schwab and his employees have served investors big and small by prioritizing customer needs and keeping costs low. Over the decades, the communications teams at Schwab have worked to support and market the business as it has expanded throughout the globe. The company now has more than 330 branches worldwide and more than 16,000 employees. As we interviewed Schwab CMO Jonathan Craig, he struck us as uncommonly dedicated to stay true both to Schwab's identity and continuous improvement. His suggestions for success include:

**Keep everyone aligned on core values.** In a small company, employees may easily be on the same page, but a firm of Schwab's size requires more attention. With Schwab onboarding new employees every day, the company has developed specific training to help its recent hires understand Schwab's purpose, story and values. For example, employees participate in workshops in which they discuss how they personally define Schwab's values. They also practice how they might explain Schwab to outsiders.

**Consolidate for consistency and oversight.** In 2015, the company consolidated all its communications departments—such as marketing, public relations, employee communications and executive communications—into one large group. They were spread out, but Craig and others believe that being in one physical space facilitates stronger cooperation.

**Innovate and change even in good times.** Schwab's memorable “Talk to Chuck” campaign performed well for many years. But knowing it was time for a change, in 2012 Craig said he “looked again to our core values to see how could connect with our audience.”

Crispin Porter + Bogusky, an advertising agency based in Boulder, Colo., helped Schwab develop the marketing theme “Own Your Tomorrow,” which launched in 2013. The language came straight from the mouth of Chuck in the 1970s. The new theme focuses on the power of engagement in life and in investing, encouraging customers to ask more questions about how their wealth is managed.

Emphasizing Schwab's values of transparency and low cost, the Own Your Tomorrow communication platform has raised awareness and consideration of Schwab by prospective customers to the highest levels in the history of the company. The company reported mid-year results in 2016 that indicated it was on pace to gain \$100 billion in net new client assets for the fifth year in a row.



## TECH GUIDE

# Translation, Localization and Transcreation

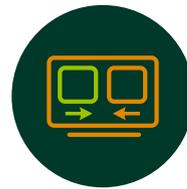
While often used interchangeably, translation and localization describe two distinct ways to make your content understandable across countries and markets. Translation is simply the act of changing words from one language to another, while localization ensures the words you choose are culturally appropriate, engaging and relevant. Localization can involve refining word choice so that something is humorous in another language, choosing photos that reflect the local country and people, or ensuring local values are reflected in the text.

A third tactic used to make content more relevant in local markets is called transcreation. Think of it as localization's more ambitious cousin. Transcreation means that rather than translate text and tweak wording to ensure it's appropriate in a market, the creative team translates a *concept* to the local market. The benefit is that given more creative license, the local content teams are more likely to hit the right notes—even while hewing to the creative brief provided by the global brand team.

The market is bursting with translation and localization services and tools, but for larger companies, you need a solution that will manage vendors, oversee projects and integrate with your existing tech ecosystem. [COO](#)

### FEATURES TO CONSIDER



You may not require each of these in the platform you use, but these types of features are what the largest vendors may include in their services.



Access to a wide range of time-tested companies for both translation and localization, and the ability to access dozens at once to scale your efforts



Integration with your CMS, marketing automation tools, DAM tools, source control systems and CRM

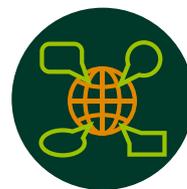
Machine translation, used when decoding quickly and automatically is of highest importance.

Interpreter services when live support is required (e.g., app development support)



Analytics engines that ensure your content is not just correct in each language, but readable (reading level, tone, etc.) and adhering to local style guides

Project management trackers and dashboards



Ability to plan and manage multi-language global campaigns in one place

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 ADVERTISINGWEEK



# Andy Weir Shares His Creative Process

Before he was the best-selling author of *The Martian*, **Andy Weir** was a computer programmer who wrote short stories as a hobby. In his words, “I thought I was writing for a tiny niche audience of hard-core science dorks.” Now working on his second manuscript with Random House, Weir reflects on the journey he took to get here.

*Clare McDermott*

**CCO: You had a short-story blog for a long time before *The Martian* came out. Did the experience of getting immediate feedback from an audience help you develop your craft?**

I started the website because I wanted a creative outlet. I wanted a place to put my creative stuff. I had tried earlier in life to be a full-time writer but couldn't break into the industry. So I was a computer programmer for 25 years. I just used it as a place to dump my short stories.

I slowly accumulated readers; I got about 3,000 regular readers over the course of 10 years. That sounds like a lot ... but 10 years was also a very long time. It was just a hobby of mine.

Absolutely, the readers helped with the storytelling. I would get feedback immediately when I was posting short stories, which was really cool. And I was getting feedback on every chapter when I was publishing *The Martian's* chapters on my website. My audience was pretty much nerds like me and so they would point out any technical, scientific or mathematical errors in the text immediately. It was like having 3,000 fact checkers.

**What was their reaction when suddenly, this guy who they'd been following rocketed into the stratosphere of fame with the book?**

They were really thrilled. Lots of people sent congratulatory emails. The original readers are like Andy Weir hipsters; they would say “I read Andy Weir before he was popular!”

**Along the way, especially over a decade, there must have been moments of doubt.**

I actually didn't have those moments of deep doubt because I wasn't trying to do anything other than what I was doing. I wasn't thinking it was all a means to an end to get published. It was just me writing stuff and posting it on my site; what I got out of it was the feedback and fan mail from my regular readers. I had no idea it would ever become popular outside of my tiny little audience.

**What were your sources of inspiration? What genres inspired as a writer?**

The main one would be Apollo 13. Both the real-world events and the movie. There's that one scene

*Andy Weir was the keynote speaker last year at Intelligent Content Conference, the content strategy event for marketers. Book your spot now for ICC 2017, March 28 to 30 in Las Vegas. <http://cmi.media/icc>*

in the movie where they have to make an oxygen scrubber and a CO2 filtration system from the lunar module work, and they have to make this contraption that will run the air through it. They're all floating around in space with duct tape, stuffing a sock in this one spot. I thought that was so cool. It was very MacGyver-in-space. I thought, I want to write a whole book about that.

**The Martian is so scientifically dense. Did you ever worry that you were going to lose people?**

Absolutely. That was a constant balancing act for me. On the one hand, it was an immutable requirement to me that it be scientifically accurate. That means I needed to exposition all this deep scientific crap to the reader, but I also didn't want it to read like a Wikipedia article. That's why we have the smart-ass narrator; that's why there's a joke every paragraph or two ... to keep it funny.

I've gotten a lot of feedback from readers after the book got big and they would say stuff like, "I'm not really into science and it's not even that interesting to me. I love the book, but I skimmed those paragraphs that described it." For me, that is awesome. There's this relationship that forms

between author and reader. The reader has to trust you. If you get to the point where the reader is willing to just say that he trusts that everything is correct, and that he can skim that paragraph because he doesn't need it to be proven to him—that's rare and great.

I didn't have any idea that non-scientific people would ever like the book. I thought I was writing for a tiny niche audience of hard-core science dorks, but it's great that it worked out this way.

**You've talked about the challenge of just sitting down and writing ... how grueling the process can be. Do you have any habits or rituals that make it easier?**

Of course! First thing I do every morning is make sure I'm properly caffeinated, and usually that's with Diet Coke. Now that I made a bunch of money off a book, I get to do stupid, eccentric things, right? I have a restaurant-style soda fountain in my house now. That's the wild, partying kind of guy I am ... I've got Diet Coke on tap.

After caffeinating, I'll spend 30 minutes to an hour answering fan mail in the morning. It's a nice

*Continued on 20*



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warm-up because I'm writing, but I'm not straight into the book. I also like to take a walk every day. Other than that, I try to set myself a word count. I try to get 1,000 words done a day. Sometimes I do, sometimes I don't. Sometimes I blow right past it when I'm really motivated. Another writer (I don't remember who it was, unfortunately) once told me: Sometimes you're very very motivated, and you're cranking out words. Other times, it's a complete slog, and each sentence is torture. You're lucky if you get 300 words done across the whole day. But if you look back on your work months later, you can't tell the difference between what were your motivated days and what were your slog days. That's really encouraging when I'm having a rough day.

**If you think of story archetypes, one popular archetype is the so-called hero's journey. In it, the hero encounters a monster—that monster sometimes is of the physical world, but sometimes it's a psychological monster. On your hero's journey, what is your monster?**

It's definitely a man-vs.-himself plot. There are the four classic plots: man vs. nature, man vs. society, man vs. man, and man vs. himself. Well, mine's the last one. I have a bunch of anxieties. I struggled with depression when I was younger. Later in life, I had severe anxiety problems, to the point where I was dramatically reducing the quality of my life. Now, I have therapy and meds, which help a lot. That's my monster. It's just me.

**Do you think that struggle makes its way into your writing? Does it inform your writing in some way?**

I don't know. I've put thought into that. I'm just not sure. The whole time I wrote *The Martian*, I was still suffering from pretty severe anxiety issues. Anxiety make you paranoid about the way the world is going

to screw you over. Did that help me write a story about a guy who's on a world that's literally trying to kill him at every turn? I don't know, maybe. I honestly don't know the answer to that.

The hardest thing to analyze is yourself. It's so much easier to look at someone else and notice a particular problem and point it out to them. It's very easy to do that. But it's very hard to do it to yourself. So I honestly don't know.

**One thing I see marketers struggle with is taking on more ambitious projects. It's easier to do a little 3-minute video to get an audience's attention. It's much harder to take on more complex projects, be they long form content, documentaries—topics and projects with more depth and subtlety. Can you offer words of inspiration?**

The most important thing is to find the interesting part. I think marketers are very message-focused. They know what they want people to hear. They have to work backwards from there to figure out how to make that happen. What they should do is find the thing that's unique or interesting that captures people's attention. Figure out what that thing is; don't worry about the message right now. Just find the interesting part, and then figure out how to link that to the message.

One of the most successful content marketing projects I ever saw was a documentary about FedEx way back in the late 1980s. Back then everything went to their central airport in Tennessee. If you FedExed a package to your next door neighbor, it would go to Tennessee and then come back. It was the most efficient way on average for dealing with shipping. The documentary showed the whole process in detail. This was in the '80s, when we were used to the U.S. Postal Service, which could take six to eight weeks to deliver a package. With FedEx, you could order something by phone today, and it would be at our houses by tomorrow. It was a complete disruption in the delivery system. The documentary lets you see the inner workings at FedEx.

Audiences are extremely aware of preachiness, especially in the modern era. Hollywood has decided that everything has to have some freaking political message, which drives me crazy. *The Martian*, by the way, had no political message. Dude didn't want to die ... that's it. People quickly, even if they don't do it consciously, identify the message, get mildly annoyed at it and then start ignoring the parts of the movie that push that. That's why I try to avoid it.

Instead, find the interesting part of your story and then work towards the message, rather than desperately starting with the message and trying to work towards the interesting part. ∞





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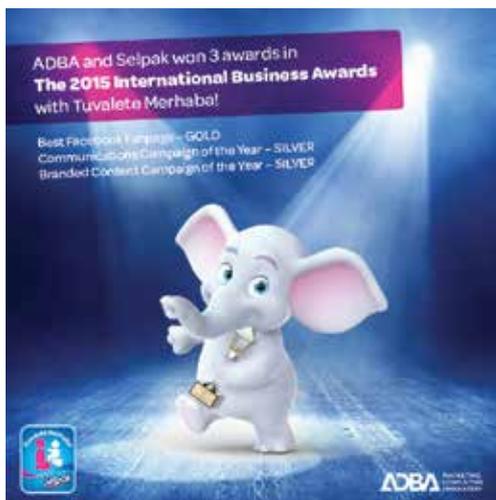
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# Going Potty for Facebook

With the right strategy and the right content, any brand or product can find a loyal and active audience in social. If a toilet paper brand can do it, so can you.

*Jonathan Crossfield*



Regular readers know I can be a tad disparaging of a lot of Facebook marketing. It's not that Facebook is lacking as a content platform—far from it. My cynicism derives more from the low-quality content and threadbare strategies I see every day in my newsfeed or, more often, in groups dedicated to ridiculing those brands merely chasing “likes” and (\*\*cough\*\*) “engagement.”

There's a PowerPoint slide that makes it into most of my workshop: “A Facebook page isn't a content marketing strategy in exactly the same way that a telephone isn't a sales strategy.” That slide is my cue to rant about how so many brands seem to be on Facebook simply because it's there or because everyone else is. Car insurance companies ask people to like a post if they're happy it's a long weekend. Airlines ask insultingly simple “brainteasers” (“Bet you can't guess this popular destination!” accompanied by a photo of Big Ben and the clue L\_N\_O\_). Toilet paper brands prefer to share funny memes instead of anything relevant to either their product or their potential customers.

“After all,” I would conclude, “why *should* a toilet paper brand be on Facebook? Who likes their favorite brand of toilet paper for their whole network to see? Who's even thinking about toilet paper when connecting with friends and family in social?” Cue laughter, nods of agreement and on to the next slide—usually a rant about corporate language and why the word “solution” should be banned from the marketer's lexicon.

Except I now need to revise my ridicule because Selpak—a leading brand in the Turkish tissue paper industry (as they discretely prefer to describe it)—recently became one of my favorite examples of how to use Facebook in content marketing.

A finalist in the Facebook distribution category of the 2016 Content Marketing Awards, Selpak was narrowly pipped to the post by Arby's. Selpak cleaned up at the International Business Awards in 2015, however, winning gold for Best Facebook Fanpage as well as silver for both Communications Campaign of the Year and Branded Content Campaign of the Year.

Here's why.

## Flushed away

How much do you really care—or even notice—the pretty patterns embossed onto your toilet paper when ripping off a couple of sheets to wipe where this sentence will politely choose not to follow? As long as it's not that cheap toilet paper I remember from primary school (you know the stuff, about as absorbent as tinfoil and nearly as scratchy), we're probably not thinking about which brand we prefer when sit on the throne.

Despite the many ways brands try to differentiate their products—bigger sheets, nicer fragrances, prettier patterns—toilet paper is pretty much a commodity. And just about the only place most of us even think about what we want or expect from a roll of flushable tissue is when forced to make a decision in the supermarket aisle.

"It is really hard to ensure the loyalty of your consumers for a toilet paper. At the end of the day there are lots of options to choose from," says Ipek Alkan, engagement manager at ADBA, the Turkish marketing agency behind Selpak's award-winning Facebook strategy.

While many toilet paper brands opt for memorable advertising campaigns full of cute puppies and jingles, Selpak achieves strong brand awareness in the local market through promoting awareness of personal hygiene issues.

## What problem does your content solve?

"Selpak, as a premium brand in the category, wanted us to come up with a clever solution to sustain its market share and increase customer engagement and, hence, loyalty," Alkan says. The ADBA team created a Facebook strategy that focused on solving a particular problem for a particular customer persona.

"We knew that we should target women because they are the decision-makers in (these) households," Alkan says. "Brands always forget that today's decision-makers are primarily Generation Y and Z. These women now use Facebook as source of information and socializing platform. So, we chose the platform where they were already living."

They knew why the brand should be on Facebook, but there still needed to be a clear reason for those Gen Y and Z women to care about a Facebook page about toilet paper.

"When you look at women, particularly mothers, the most important thing in their lives is their babies. With the child growing up, they have key 'moments' to be solved, such as sleeping, teaching how to eat, how to write, how to use the potty. Potty training is the one main topic that Selpak can associate with."

## Hello Potty

The Tuvalete Merhaba ("Hello Potty" in Turkish) Facebook page was a success almost from the moment it launched in February 2015. "We used promoted posts for a select target market and for a limited period. We knew where the mummies were on Facebook and we just wanted to make sure they saw our page. After that, we knew they would be following the content. Mothers need this kind of support and no other brand has tried to help."



By April 2016, the page had gathered 98,000 likes but, more importantly, had also received nearly 2,000 questions from moms seeking advice. Forget the usual meme-baiting tricks—this is genuine engagement. Selpak has become a trusted source of potty-related info.

"We have a KPI that 100 percent of the questions from mothers on the page have to be answered by our experts," says Alkan. "We had to reply to almost 2,000 questions, all personalized." For this strategy to succeed, these answers needed to deliver on the promise of genuine, detailed and expert advice. The page would lose all authority with the audience very quickly if those supplying the advice and information had no background in child development beyond a few scripted responses researched from Google.

"Raising a child isn't an easy task. You can't talk about it if you don't know the 'mathematics' behind it. We wanted to make sure we were telling them the right stuff to do," says Alkan. The agency needed to bring in the potty experts; to that end, it partnered with child psychologists from the Bengi Semerci Institute. "(They) know how to deal during the potty training phase and were able to support us (in) guiding the mothers," Alkan says.

This commitment to provide a genuine service, backed by qualified experts in the field, separates the Tuvalete Merhaba page from so many others I see. And it's working at a business level too. "The decision by Selpak to continue and even scale it further in 2017 and (beyond) is a clear sign the Tuvalete Merhaba initiative pays back to Selpak," says Alkan.

This isn't just a good use of Facebook. It's a content marketing lesson on how to target a niche customer problem and then totally own that space with valuable content. As Alkan says, "Once you find the right topic and right target market, it becomes a snowball effect." 

## DEPARTMENT EDITOR



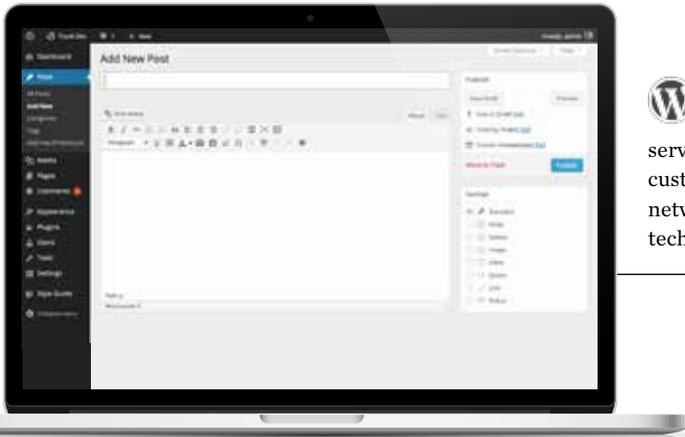
**Jonathan Crossfield** is an award-winning writer, blogger and journalist. Find him at @Kimota.

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# What are your favorite CMS tools?



## WORDPRESS (WORDPRESS.ORG)

WordPress is able to run on so many different server environments, has extensive plugins and allows for plug-and-play customization. It also can scale if simple caching and content delivery networks (CDNs) are used. It's simple enough for someone who isn't very technically oriented to easily add and edit content.

JOHN TURNER, QUIETKIT, @USABILITYGUYPGH



## OPENCMS (WWW.OPENCMS.ORG)

OpenCMS is the best. The user interface is simple but also dynamic enough to make all the changes and updates needed. Our development team also likes how flexible the system is and how well it interacts with our app pages.

NICK BRAUN, PETINSURANCEQUOTES.COM, @PETINSQUOTES



## ATOMIZED (WWW.ATOMIZED.COM)

ATOMIZED has changed the way we plan and optimize omni-channel marketing efforts. It saves time and provides visibility into the ad-planning process that previously would have required multiple spreadsheets, databases or other communication tools. The visual layout makes it an invaluable tool for both the creative team and the organization in how we visualize marketing efforts in action.

MIKE HIBBISON, THE HOME DEPOT, @HIBBISONMIKE



## BRANDCAST (BRANDCAST.COM)

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JEFF DAVIS, INTUIT, @DAVISJ80

## DEPARTMENT EDITOR



**Ann Gynn** trains others to create successful content marketing or works to get the job done on behalf of her clients. Follow her at @anngynn.



# MARKETERS LEARN ABOUT CONTENT STRATEGY AT ICC CONFERENCE

The Intelligent Content Conference--taking place March 28 through 30 in Las Vegas--will help demystify complex content infrastructure challenges such as governance, workflows, taxonomies and user experience. What can attendees look forward to?

## Inspiration from content-rich media and technology companies



**Pavan Arora**

As the director of content at IBM Watson--a powerhouse of AI technology--Pavan drives the group's innovative content strategy. In his spare time, Arora also invests in and advises tech startups, and consults to hedge funds and private equity firms on content technology opportunities.



**Sam Han**

Han is the director of big data & personalization at The Washington Post. In that role, he leads a team that is building an integrated Big Data platform to store all aspects of customer profiles and activities, metadata of content, and business data for the iconic media company. His expertise includes data mining, machine learning, information retrieval, and high-performance computing.



**Ben Cornelius**

Cornelius has 20 years of experience in content design, localization, globalization, business and management experience across start-ups, small business and large enterprise environments. In his current role Cornelius is responsible for the economics of PayPal's global content team, managing the business of communicating to the world of PayPal customers.



## A keynote address by Fran Lebowitz

With her signature mix of cultural satire and unapologetic opinions, author Fran Lebowitz plans to deliver a lesson on culture at the ICC conference--and how culture will impact the future of content and the media.



Book your spot now for ICC 2017, March 28 to 30 in Las Vegas. <http://cmi.media/icc>

*“We see qualities in VR/AR technology that can take this from niche-use case to a device as ubiquitous as the smartphone.”*

- Goldman Sachs' Virtual and Augmented Reality report, January 2016

A hand holding a smartphone on the right side of the frame. The phone's screen shows a cityscape. The background of the entire image is a cityscape with a large, curved banner across the middle. The banner contains the text 'IMMERSIVE CONTENT' in large, bold, black, sans-serif capital letters. The banner is slightly curved, following the top edge of the cityscape below it. The cityscape is a mix of modern and older buildings, with a hazy, golden light suggesting a sunrise or sunset.

# IMMERSIVE CONTENT

No longer the domains of ultra-early adopters and video gamers, virtual reality and augmented reality are poised to take off in the coming 24 months.

A look at the why, what and how of virtual reality for content marketing.

*Clare McDermott*



**Sarah Hill, StoryUP**

**S**arah Hill is the CEO and chief storyteller for StoryUP, one of the early pioneers in virtual reality for brands. She explains why VR is finally gaining a foothold, and what marketers should understand before they dive in.

**CCO: Describe what virtual reality applications look like today versus what they'll look like in the future? Where is the technology headed?**

**Hill:** Today we are in the “brick-cell-phone phase” of VR. Mobile VR is taking off—by that I mean you don’t need a heavy-gaming PC to view VR; all you need is your mobile device and Google Cardboard. Yet most VR experiences are seated right now.

The future is walk-around VR or what’s called “room-scale VR,” where you can move around a virtual room. Imagine walking around a Walmart virtual showroom in your bedroom and using hand controllers to add items to a virtual shopping cart or browsing virtual clothing racks at Target.

VR is predicted to disrupt nearly every industry, but in particular education, travel, journalism, health care, architecture and yes, even marketing. The world is no longer flat. The internet is fast-becoming a place you step inside. Just as you had to make your site responsive for mobile, so too will you have to make it responsive for VR.

**Marketers sometimes get excited about a new technology or new channel, and race to use it before figuring out fit or strategy. Can you offer pointers for those considering undertaking a virtual reality project?**

There are certain kinds of stories that naturally lend themselves to virtual reality. First and foremost in VR, location is a character so you want to choose stories that have immersive environments or create one.

You also want to choose a storyteller who’s experienced with crafting non-linear story arcs with immersive media. In an immersive story, the viewer is in control of the

*Continued on 28*

frame, not the storyteller—which means you need to use subtle techniques (e.g., visual cues and positional audio) to direct the audience where to look. It can be incredibly frustrating to the viewer if it's not clear where they should be directing their attention.

Be wary of including camera movements in your VR story. Movement in VR is something that can make the audience feel sick. Hire a professional company that's completed a lot of VR experiences as hiring inexperienced people might result in something that could put your customers on the vomit train.

Also, make sure to pair your VR experience with a Facebook 360, Littlestar or YouTube 360 campaign; without at least one of those, a limited number of people will see your content because not everyone owns a VR headset yet. (Those platforms offer a VR version of your content, which is meant to be viewed with goggles, but also offer a web version in which viewers can use their mouse to turn their perspective.)

Finally, learn about all the different forms of VR before embarking. Virtual reality is no longer just about video and audio anymore. We're seeing new projects using haptics, ambisonic audio, hand controls and even aromas as new storytelling "inputs."

### When considering a VR partner (e.g., studio), what questions should marketers ask?

1. How many experiences have they created? Many studios are new, but even new entrants should have at least a half-dozen immersive items on their sizzle reel to show you.
2. What kinds of cameras do they use? Most VR video shops use GoPro camera arrays. We also use proprietary 3D rigs when we can procure them. (Jaunt, Nokia's Ozo or Google's Jump cameras are all 3D rigs.)
3. Find out if the story will be monoscopic (2D) or stereoscopic (3D). (See sidebar at right for explanation of terms.) Not every 360-degree story has to have 3D or depth. 2D, 360 stories—when well

### VR BY THE NUMBERS



**\$80 BILLION**

Goldman Sachs' base-case (i.e., conservative) scenario for the size of the VR/AR market by 2025 (software and hardware).



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Industries first in line for disruption by VR technology, according to Goldman Sachs.



### MONOSCOPIC VS. STEREOSCOPIC

**Monoscopic VR** content is a 360 video presented in 2D. You stand at the center of a sphere and can look in all directions to see the world (real or imagined) around you. As you move, the camera moves with you. The image you see, however, resembles traditional video content.

See an example of monoscopic VR done well: Mythbusters' virtual reality tour of a shipwreck in shark-infested waters. <http://cmi.media/monoscopicvr>

**Stereoscopic VR** content is 360 video presented in 3D, meaning the images before you can be much more life-like and immersive. The problem, however, is that stereoscopic VR is much more challenging to produce, much less forgiving of errors, and worst of all, can cause severe nausea if done improperly.

See an example of stereoscopic VR done well: Projects from Felix and Paul Studios. <http://cmi.media/stereoscopicvr>



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told and produced—can rival any 3D experience. The problem with 3D is that people don't always know how to perceive depth. They see the 3D, 360 video and think, "That's blurry." It's not blurry. The viewer is perceiving depth, but doesn't always know how to process that kind of content. It's up to you: you can play it safe and go 2D, 360. Or if you have a bigger budget and the shop you hire can procure high-quality proprietary camera rigs, shoot for the moon.

**Can you give a ballpark cost of VR video compared to a normal video?**

A VR video costs at least three times that of a regular video because it requires multiple cameras and because you have to stitch together frames with multiple software programs, and lots of post-production and rendering. I always joke VR is like sausage. Everyone wants to consume it but no one wants to see it being made. It's a messy, complicated process that taxes your computers to the max. The exact cost really depends on the project, and whether you're hiring a company from the coasts or from the Midwest. In the Midwest, our experiences range anywhere from \$35,000 and up, not including travel. The camera rig we use also influences the price. Before I started my company, I got a quote on what it would cost to create a VR experience at the World War II Memorial; the bid came back at a half-million dollars!

**You're immersed in the world of VR. What excites you most about it?**

The ability to lift spirits with VR. We're doing research about how VR affects brain waves and how it has the ability to quiet the brain. We're categorizing our stories on the basis of brain reactions like hope, joy, motivation and empathy. People don't just watch a VR story; they feel it. As a storyteller, that's an incredibly useful piece of data. Story combined with VR is a powerful tool for calm, joy and empathy. 

**VR BY THE NUMBERS**



**62%**

Share of consumers who say they would feel more engaged with a brand that sponsors a VR experience. (Greenlight Insights, 2016)



**71%**

Share of consumers who think a brand is forward-thinking if it uses virtual reality. (Greenlight Insights, 2016)

**Virtual Reality vs. Augmented Reality**



Google Cardboard

**Virtual reality** immerses you in a world that's either make-believe (e.g., video games), meant to replicate real life (e.g., a flight simulation) or put you in the real world (e.g., scuba diving). The most common VR headsets are those which hold your mobile phone in front of you while blocking out light, such as Google Cardboard; more high-end options include Oculus Rift and HTC Vive.

**NOTE:** A VR viewer is opaque. You can't see through it.

**Augmented reality** combines digital elements and the real world ... in other words, it adds something to the real world.

**NOTE:** An AR viewer is transparent, whether literally (e.g. looking through your Google Glass) or digitally (e.g. seeing the world in front of you "through" your mobile screen when capturing Pokémon in Pokémon Go).



Pokémon Go



**Honor Everywhere** offers terminally ill veterans free virtual-reality "flights" to see the war memorials in Washington, D.C. StoryUP is currently looking for partners to grow the program, as well as volunteers with headsets willing to share VR at local veteran homes or assisted-living centers.

 See the VR video: <http://cmi.media/honor>



**Zenith Aircraft Company** sells kit planes and wants to give customers who can't travel to its facility for a demo flight the ability to experience it. StoryUP created a virtual-reality experience for Zenith as well as a social campaign. Not only was the video highly watched and shared, the CPM (cost per impression) was lower—meaning the project used advertising dollars more efficiently. Plus, Zenith saved on the cost of jet fuel for customers who ordinarily would request a demo flight.

 See the VR video: <http://cmi.media/zenith>



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# What App or Tool Are You Obsessed With?



## Headspace

Taking 10 minutes out of a busy afternoon for the Headspace app clears my cluttered mind and lets me be present in my writing or at a client meeting. In the midst of work chaos, meditation helps shift my focus and improve my productivity.

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**Monina Wagner, social media community manager, Content Marketing Institute**

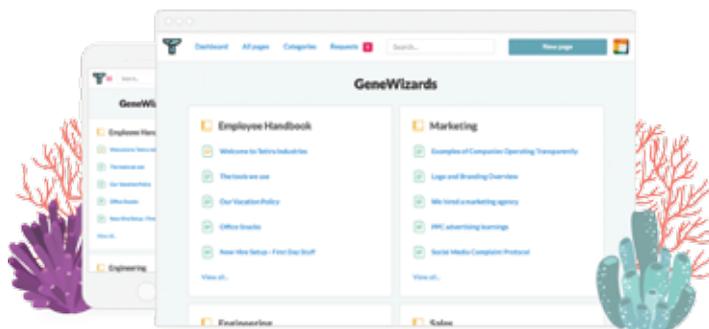


## Hemingway Editor (free version)

On so many projects, I recommend the free Hemingway Editor tool. Way too many websites have complex, long text that increases cognitive load and decreases readability. I love the simple way this tool guides you to smarter and tighter copy. The internet would be a much better place to read if everyone used Hemingway.

---

**Melissa Eggleston, content strategist, UX specialist**



## Tetra

Here's the deal: I host and write a highly produced, narrative-style podcast called Unthinkable about the creative side of content marketing. Making a single episode requires more moving pieces than can fit on this page, so if I don't document how to produce our episodes, we'd derail pretty quickly. Tetra is this really beautiful wiki software that integrates with Slack. I use it to document the show's rundown—the minute-by-minute structure of the podcast that's invisible to the audience (similar to what TV show writers use). I'm a huge fan, and huge believer that documented knowledge is the only way to grow and improve creative projects.

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**Jay Acunzo, founder and host, Unthinkable**



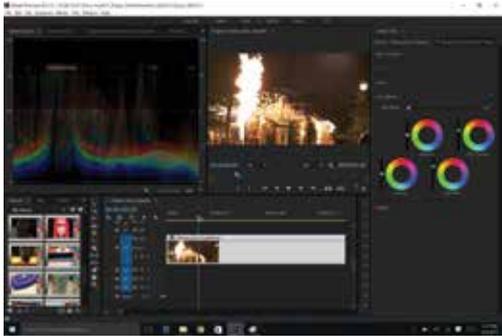
## Flipboard

I have found Flipboard to be one of the most valuable tools in my curator's cupboard. The intuitive interface makes it a breeze to find relevant, authoritative news and thought leadership content. I can save source materials, categorize my clippings by client or subject area, and call everything up in a snap—no matter what platform I'm working on. Not to mention the end result feels like I'm flipping through an attractively designed magazine of all the stories I've been meaning to read, which helps me spend more time immersed in content and less time searching for it.



---

**Jodi Harris, consulting director, editorial and curation, Content Marketing Institute**



### Adobe Premiere Pro

I'm obsessed with Adobe's Premiere Pro software tools for video editing. It has incredible 360-video plugins that allow us to edit wearing a headset so we can see what the audience is seeing. Before, we had to edit the video flat, then render it out to a headset so we could see whether our edits matched the areas of attention correctly.

**Sarah Hill, CEO and chief storyteller, StoryUP**

### CoSchedule

The tool I adore (and still regrettably don't use all of its potential) is CoSchedule. It's my editorial calendar, blog and social media planner ... and because it plugs straight into WordPress as well as integrates with Evernote, the workflow from initial idea to published blog post to social media distribution is so much easier. My only regret is that it makes these tasks so easy that I can only blame myself now for not posting on my own blog more regularly.

**Jonathan Crossfield, writer, blogger and journalist**

### Trello

I have tried many systems to keep myself organized, and nothing quite clicked until I found Trello. I use it for everything from managing my extensive to-do list to collaborating with other editors at CMI. I love that I can add items with ease from any device as well as easily organize tasks. For instance, I'll cull through my to-do's each day and pull out five things I want to accomplish. Trello is also the place where I centralize all of the random notes and processes I may need in the future. It's ideal to have one place to store everything I need instead of searching in multiple locations.

**Michele Linn, senior director of content, Content Marketing Institute**

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*A content smörgåsbord.*



# Be an Upstander, Not a Bystander

Upstander (n): a person who acts to make positive change.

**A**n ex-convict determined to keep other women from returning to prison has helped hundreds start new lives. A man who set out to help his autistic son find a job now runs a car wash where 85 percent of employees are on the autism spectrum. Residents of an historically impoverished town banded together to raise enough money to provide every student in the town with a college scholarship.

These inspiring stories and more are part of the Upstanders series from **Starbucks**. Upstanders is a collection of short stories, films and podcasts that shares the experiences of ordinary people doing extraordinary things to create positive change in their communities. Written and produced by Starbucks chairman and CEO Howard Schultz and executive producer Rajiv Chandrasekaran, a former senior editor

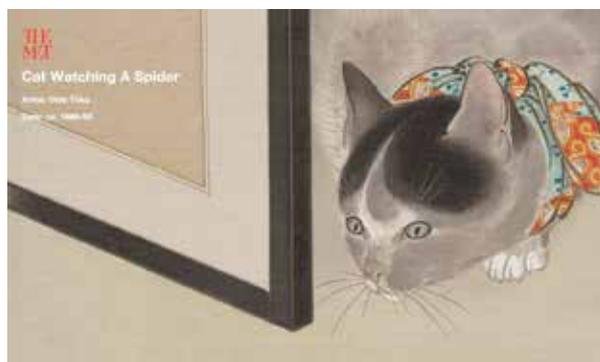
for **The Washington Post**, Upstanders aims to inspire Americans to engage in acts of compassion, citizenship and civility.

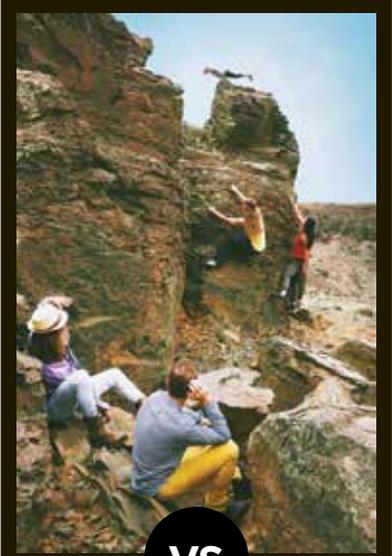
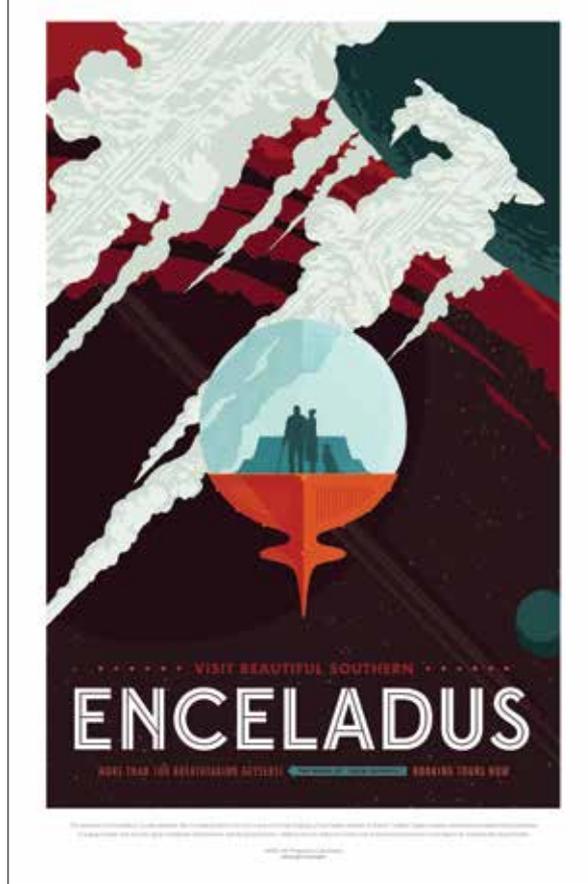
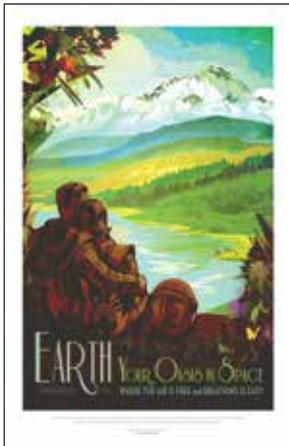
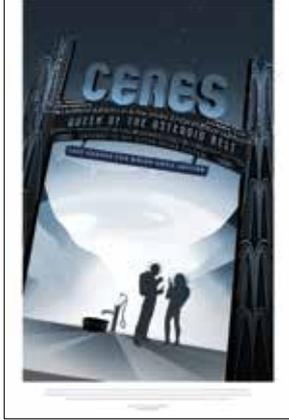
To inspire a social movement, Starbucks invites people to show their support by using **Fotition**—a social platform and app designed for people to complete photo challenges for charity. Visitors to the Upstanders website can also fill out a form to nominate someone who's making an extraordinary impact in the community.

Upstanders is Starbucks' first original series of content using multi-platform distribution channels, including the Starbucks mobile app and online and in-store digital network.

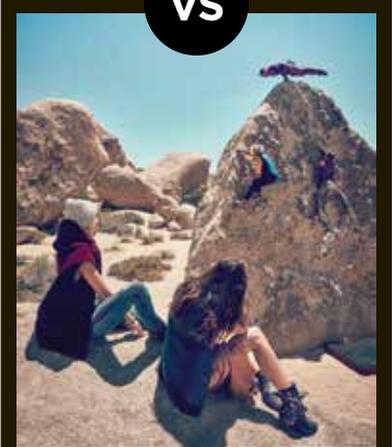
## MORE 'MEOW,' PLEASE

Need more “meow” in your life? The Met can help. Joining the plethora of cat videos and memes online is Meow Met, a Chrome extension that overrides the standard blank new tab page with a random cat from the **Metropolitan Museum of Art's** online collection. Users can click on a work of art's title to learn more about it. Launched through the museum's MediaLab program as part of a strategy to connect with the next generation of museum visitors, the extension gained 3,500 users in the first week—in case we needed more proof that the internet just can't get enough of cats.





VS



## ‘VISIONS OF THE FUTURE’ FROM NASA

Do you dream of space travel? Ready to book a summer holiday to Mars? Known as “The Studio,” a creative team of visual strategists at **NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL)** wants to help fuel your imagination with “Visions of the Future,” a poster series that highlights imaginative travel destinations. Nine artists, designers and illustrators brainstormed with scientists, engineers and other experts to create the 14 posters, whose nostalgic style is reminiscent of the posters created for national parks in the 1930s. According to David Delgado, one of the project’s creative strategists, “The point was to share a sense of things on the edge of possibility that are closely tied to the work our people are doing today.” The posters are free for anyone to download and print from the JPL website: [www.jpl.nasa.gov/visions-of-the-future](http://www.jpl.nasa.gov/visions-of-the-future)

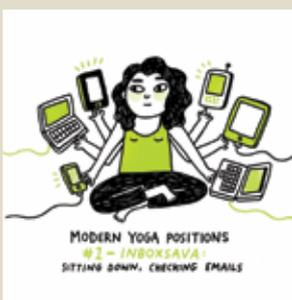
## OUTDOOR RESEARCH: 1, GQ: 0

When **GQ** published a piece on rock climbing and couture clothing that featured famous male rock climbers with a “couple of cute friends” as female accessories, **Outdoor Research** responded with an inverted rebuttal, an article and photo shoot that recreated the GQ piece with female climbers. Titled “Designer Clothes for Watching Ladies Climb,” the humorous piece is a bold response to GQ that reinforces Outdoor Research’s core values of respect and innovation.

### DEPARTMENT EDITOR

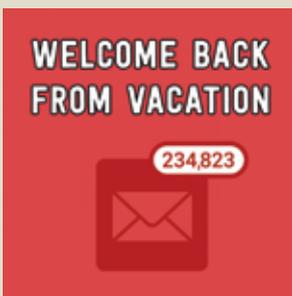


**Natalya Minkovsky** is a content strategist who lives and works in Washington, D.C. Follow her at @hejhejnatalya.



## HUMANKIND OR HUMANKINDA?

**JetBlue** wants to know: are you human or humankinda? Defining “humankinda” as “when you are so busy, you feel as if you’re losing your humanity,” the airline created a short film that highlights the symptoms and effects of busyness in a humorous way, hoping to inspire people to take a step back and reflect on the busy state of their lives. The 16-minute Humankinda video is the airline’s first foray into long-form content. The film is accompanied by a quiz that generates a humankinda percentage based on the viewer’s responses; a Tumblr feed full of cartoons and statistics about busyness, time-saving hacks and relaxation tips; and social media content that includes GIFs, memes and videos. “Ultimately, it’s about the conversations we ignite,” says Phillip Ma, manager of brand advertising and content. “But if we can see a rise in getaways, it’ll obviously be exciting.”





# Content with a Higher Purpose

Comedian **Michael Jr.** is Content Marketing World's most popular speaker ... ever. The Content Marketing Institute's head of content explains why his message for marketers resounded so powerfully.

*Michele Linn*

When Michael Jr., a Content Marketing World keynote, took the stage, he admitted, "This is not my audience at all." While this may sound like an inauspicious beginning, within a few minutes, there was a palpable shift in the room as the audience truly focused its attention—and turned off devices—to hear what he had to say next.

One of the key messages from Michael Jr.'s act is a simple statement: "When you understand your 'why,' your 'what' has more purpose." By that he means, when you understand why you're telling a particular story or—even more elemental—why your business exists, then your story or message can be on note.

We all need to hear—really hear—this message, but there was something even deeper about Michael Jr.'s connection with the audience—and something I couldn't put my finger on until the follow-up conversation. I was expecting to spend an enjoyable 30 minutes chatting with Michael Jr., but I didn't expect the degree to which he would change the way I think about marketing ... and how I interact with people in general.

"My comedy is comedy, but it's more than funny,"

explains Michael Jr. "And even more, the comedy is based on what I feel the crowd really needs. So, there is really not any preparation I can do. I just never know. I don't know if you've noticed, my comedy is not as fast-paced as other comedians because I'm trying to listen in between the gaps and try to figure out what the audience really needs so I can give, instead of trying to get."

What's behind this comedian who understands that comedy is more than funny? How did he make the transformation from traditional comedian to someone who inspires people—especially people he doesn't consider to be his audience—to act?

## A message in search of meaning

Over the course of an hour at Content Marketing World, Michael Jr. shared how a transformational moment fundamentally changed the way he communicates with his audience—and there is much for marketers to learn.

"I was going to get on stage, and right before I got on, I had a shift in my understanding. Every comedian in Los Angeles, every comedian I know ...



we're all about getting laughs out of people. And I just had this shift, this epiphany, where instead of going to get laughs, I just decided, why don't I just give them an opportunity to laugh?

"So I went up there and dropped my shoulders ... because I was looking to give something instead of get. Everything changed. When you're looking to take something from somebody, they can sense it. You can't necessarily articulate it, but you need something from them. So the audience, they actually have more control that way. But when you have a gift, your job is simply to present the gift."

Michael Jr. went on to explain how this works in his stand-up career. For example, he's just as likely to offer stand-up comedy at a prison or a hospital these days as he is in front of a paying crowd. And no matter the audience, he makes a point of hearing stories from those attending—and finding a way to tease comedy from ordinary interactions. In fact, he has a gift for pulling laughs from beautifully awkward moments with his people in his audience—individuals willing to share private details in front of massive crowds based almost entirely on the spirit of giving Michael Jr. brings to his shows.

Beyond simply giving laughs, Michael Jr. also believes we all have important gifts to share. He says his own gift is the ability to make people laugh while asking them to examine the deeper meaning of their lives. His comedy, he explains, pushes people to open up to him in ways that are hard to imagine. Whether it's the widow who sought him backstage to say she laughed for the first time in months or a man who tearfully approached him after a show to explain he was a fugitive of the law, hiding out at his aunt's house, and had decided to turn himself in.

"If we sat there for two hours, and I didn't deposit anything that could help you get any further, what is the point of that? If I make 7 million people laugh next year, and nobody was better as a result of it, then I need to go fill out an application somewhere," he shares.

### Helping others give

"The greatest gift you can give someone is the opportunity to give," says Michael Jr.

During our conversation, Michael Jr. recalls a family with very limited income who adopted multiple children so the siblings would not be split up, and shortly afterward had its vehicle stolen. "I felt like I was supposed to help this family, but I didn't know exactly how," he explains. "I didn't feel like I was just supposed to buy them a new vehicle. My thing is I want to do the right thing; I don't just want to do something ... I want to do what's right."

Instead of doing a comedy fundraiser—which

would have easily raised enough money to purchase a new vehicle for this family – Michael Jr. chose a different path. He decided to have a comedy event ... with no show. He sold \$50 tickets, raising \$40,000 for a show that never happened. "One guy walked up to the table to buy a ticket and he had a ring on his finger," laughs Michael Jr. "I remember thinking it was awesome that he was going to buy a ticket and I asked him if he was going to take his wife. He laughed and bought another ticket. I can't tell you how many emails and stories we received from those ticket buyers, and what happened as a result."

### Finding your opportunities to give

You may not think you have these opportunities, but they abound. Michael Jr. challenges each of us to answer this question: If you didn't need to make any money, but you wanted to help your customer, what would you give them?

I have found myself coming back to this question time and time again since my conversation with Michael Jr.

What is your gift that you can give? 

**Michele Linn** is senior director of content for the Content Marketing Institute. Follow her at @michelelinn.

## CONTENT WITH A HIGHER PURPOSE

If you're taken with the idea of giving more and taking less, consider these examples of brands creating memorable, giving experiences.



### The Nerdery's Overnight Website Challenge

The Nerdery is a one-stop shop for nerd-needed mobile and web applications, websites, systems integrations and digital-project consulting. Recruiting top nerds is an ongoing challenge in an economy lacking in digital talent ... and the Nerdery is consistently named a top employer. One project that defines its workplace culture: The Overnight Website Challenge. Volunteers form teams of web designers, developers and writers to crank out websites for needy non-profits in 24 hours. [nerdery.com/](http://nerdery.com/)

### Bombas

Bombas sells socks ... what is so special about that? Before the company launched, it learned that socks are the No. 1 clothing item requested at homeless shelters. To help, Bombas donates one pair of socks for every pair purchased—and not just any type of sock, but socks designed specifically to withstand the rigors of living outdoors. [bombas.com](http://bombas.com)



# AGENDA 2017

Take these five content marketing research insights to your next planning meeting ... and use them to drive decisions in 2017.

*Lisa Murton Beets*

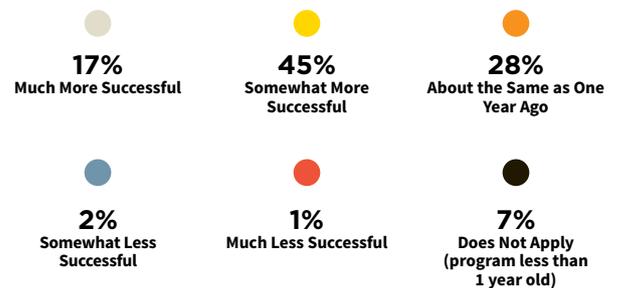
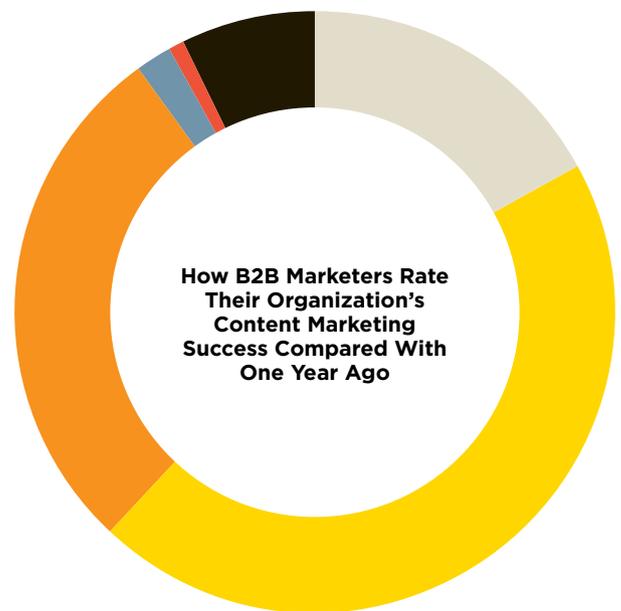
Now in its seventh year, the Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs annual survey of content marketers has evolved with the times. In 2010, content marketing was little more than a buzzword. Most marketers dabbling in the approach were curious about the tactics (e.g., blogging, webinars, events) their peers were using and how well those tactics were working.

Sure, we're still interested in tactics ... but there is so much more to consider now. Content marketing has grown into a complex business discipline composed of many distinct areas—content creation, strategy, distribution, paid promotion and measurement, to name a few. Managers have to determine the best ways to organize content marketing across the enterprise, how much budget they need and the mix of roles required to pull it off. There's always something new to learn.

Here are some of the key insights based on the responses of 1,102 B2B marketers in North America—representing a wide range of industries, company sizes, and content marketing maturity levels – as reported in B2B Content Marketing 2017: Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends—North America.

## KEY INSIGHT #1

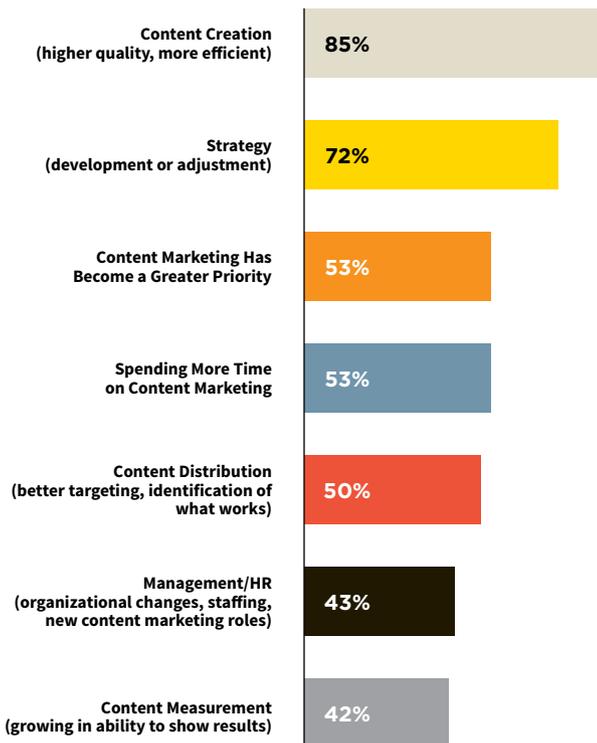
What drives success? Successful marketers cited two factors most often: **Creating higher quality, more efficient content. And developing or adjusting content marketing strategy.**



Sixty-two percent of B2B marketers say their organization's overall approach to content marketing is much more or somewhat more successful than one year ago.

## Factors Contributing to B2B Marketers' Increased Success Over the Last Year

*Factors identified by respondents who say their organization's overall approach to content marketing is much more or somewhat more successful than one year ago.*



When asked about the factors contributing to that success, two appear to be most influential: more effective content creation and developing/adjusting content marketing strategy. (In past years, survey respondents indicated content creation issues were among their top content marketing challenges, so it's reassuring to see progress on this front.)

### HOW THIS FINDING CAN HELP YOU:

Consider how well your organization is doing with regards to each factor cited above—in particular looking at the quality of the content you create, the efficiency of the process and the strategy underlying all your efforts. While marketers are often told to experiment and iterate to improve results, it's equally important to step back and take a hard look at bigger picture issues such as process, people and strategy. These findings offer insights to inspire those discussions.

### KEY INSIGHT #2

**Content marketing success takes time.**

**B2B marketers who are stuck or falling behind with their content marketing indicate the main reason is, “not enough time devoted to content marketing.”**

Of the 28 percent of B2B marketers who say their content marketing success is about the same as one year ago, nearly half attribute that stagnancy to not enough time devoted to content marketing (the No. 1 most frequently cited reason). This also is the main reason cited by those who say their success decreased over the last year.

### HOW THIS FINDING CAN HELP YOU:

Pull back from the minutiae of day-to-day management and ask if there is anything you can eliminate or do more efficiently. If you are able to devote more time to content marketing this year, which areas of focus will give you the biggest bang for your buck? The answer will be unique to your organization and its specific goals, audience and budget, but be sure you have a documented content marketing strategy before you do anything else. It will serve as your roadmap and help you set the priorities.

### KEY INSIGHT #3

**To be successful, content marketers need support from upper management.**

**Almost one out of four B2B marketers aren't given ample time to produce content marketing results.**

Fifty-two percent of respondents strongly or somewhat agree their leadership team gives them ample time to produce content marketing results. Twenty-four percent neither agree nor disagree, and 24 percent disagree.

### HOW THIS FINDING CAN HELP YOU:

Leaders who give their teams time to produce results are to be congratulated. Content marketers who enjoy this type of support often feel empowered to try different things and take risks. If you're not giving (or receiving) ample time to generate results, consider this finding: 77 percent of top performers report they have ample time (see the next section for how we define top content marketing performers). Clearly, having enough time to produce results has a positive impact on overall content marketing success.

## KEY INSIGHT #4

Top content marketing performers show distinguishing characteristics that set them apart from their peers.

Content marketers who report the highest levels of success are further along in their content marketing maturity.

Every year, we look closely at respondents who report the highest levels of content marketing success and hold them up as our best-in-class content marketers. (Our top performers are defined as those who characterize their organization's overall content marketing approach as extremely or very successful.)

### When compared to all B2B respondents, the 2017 top performers:

Are more sophisticated/mature in terms of organizational content marketing maturity (72% of top performers are in the sophisticated/mature phase vs. 28% of all B2B respondents)

Have more clarity around content marketing success (81% vs. 41%)

Are more committed to content marketing (91% vs. 63%)

Are more likely to have a documented content marketing strategy (61% vs. 37%)

Are more likely to agree that their organization is realistic about what content marketing can achieve (91% vs. 68%)

Are more likely to always/frequently deliver content consistently (85% vs. 58%)

## HOW THIS FINDING CAN HELP YOU:

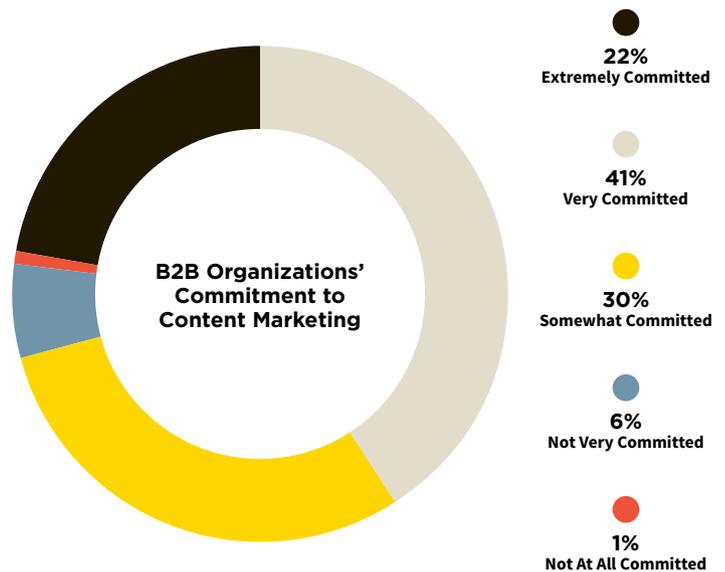
The B2B Content Marketing 2017: Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends—North America report contains a chart showing additional ways top performers stand out. It also compares them with the “least successful” among the sample (i.e., those who say their organization's overall content marketing approach is not very or not all successful). A quick review of this chart will give you a clear picture of how the most successful content marketers do things differently, so you can assess your own progress. <http://cmi.media/b2b2017>

**Lisa Murton Beets** is the research director at Content Marketing Institute. Follow her at @LisaBeets.

## KEY INSIGHT #5

If you want optimal results, commit fully.

Ninety-one percent of top B2B content marketing performers are extremely or very committed to content marketing, compared with 63 percent of all B2B marketers surveyed.



Not surprisingly, those who report the lowest levels of commitment are from organizations in the first steps/young phases of content marketing. The data indicate that as an organization grows in content marketing experience, it becomes more committed to the approach.

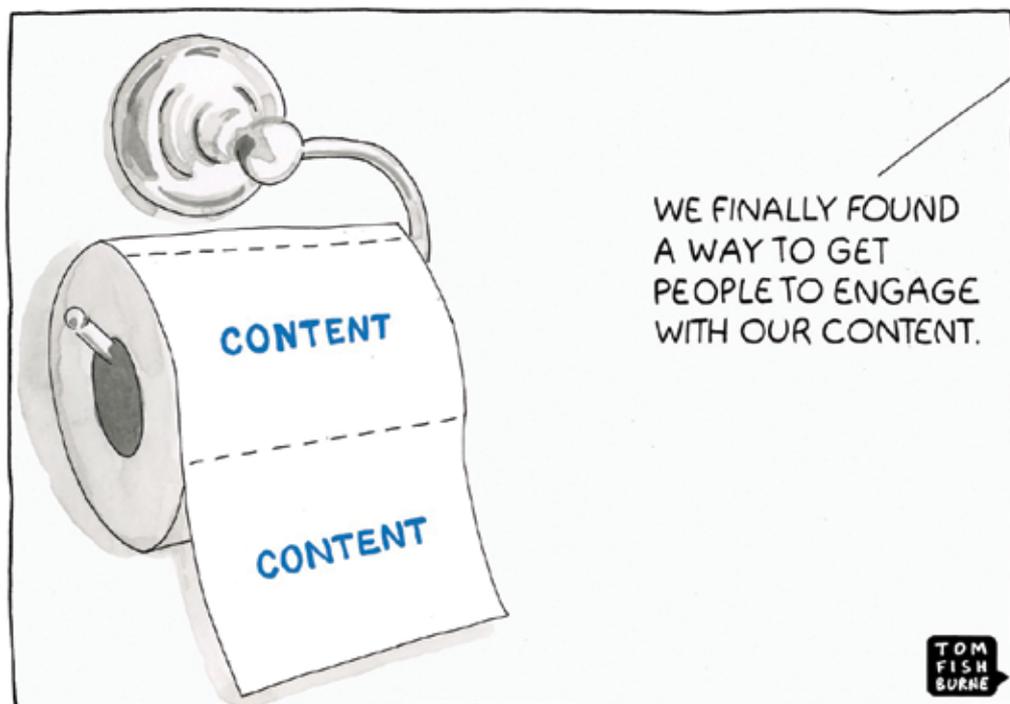
## HOW THIS FINDING CAN HELP YOU:

Go all in with your content marketing. Don't be sort-of committed. The need for a strong commitment is just as great in the young/early phases as it is after you achieve sustained, successful results because it can take over one year to see content marketing results.

## How to Take Part in our Next Survey

We will begin fielding the next annual content marketing survey this June. We're extremely grateful for the thousands of marketers worldwide who take the time to provide their opinions and share their content marketing experiences for the betterment and advancement of the entire industry. If you haven't participated and would like to, please subscribe to receive our email updates at [www.contentmarketinginstitute.com](http://www.contentmarketinginstitute.com).

To access the report, B2B Content Marketing 2017: Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends—North America, as well as the complete Content Marketing Institute library of research—including reports on B2C, nonprofit, small business, enterprise, manufacturing, technology, United Kingdom, and Australia content marketing, visit [www.contentmarketing.com/research](http://www.contentmarketing.com/research).



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*You didn't ask for it, but we're  
dishing it out anyway.*

In his column, Andrew Davis dishes out content marketing advice to unsuspecting targets. In this issue, Davis serves up some unsolicited advice to **Sami Khan** the senior director of marketing at the micro-investing company, **Acorns**.

Sami Khan  
Senior Director of Marketing  
Acorns

Dear Mr. Khan,

I get your weekly email roundup of “the best money advice you never got.” Unfortunately, most of the advice doesn’t speak to the life stage I am in.

Don’t get me wrong; I love the Acorns investment platform. I’ve invested thousands of dollars using your app, and I love what you and your team are doing. (BTW, I signed up for Acorns without consuming any of your content.) But every single time I open your email I wonder if I’ve made the right choice by using your platform.

Why? Because the content you send apparently isn’t for me. Consider this: I’m 43. With headlines like “35 Money Questions You Should Be Able to Answer By 35,” and “Retire at 30?” ... I’m getting the message that I’m not your target client. And here’s the thing: I’m OK with that. I just wish you would answer one question up front: Who is your content for, exactly?

If it’s true your email subscription—called Grow Magazine—is for investors under 30 (or 35), as many of your stories imply, that’s awesome. I’d just like to unsubscribe from your content instead of reconsidering my enrollment in your investment platform.

Here’s the deal, if you explicitly state what type of investor you’re targeting with Acorns’ content, I’ll find 20 people in my network who fit that profile and share your content with them. I know they’ll LOVE your platform and they’ll eat up your content too.

What do you say? Do we have a deal?

Whether you wanted it or not,  
Andrew Davis

#### DEPARTMENT COLUMNIST

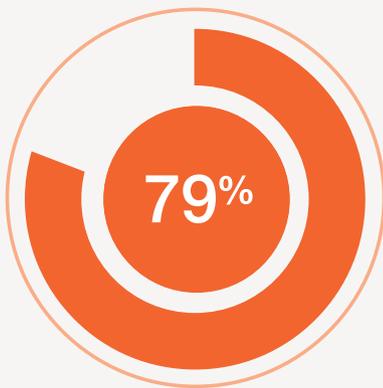


**Andrew Davis** is the author of *Brandscaping: Unleashing the Power of Partnerships*. Follow him at @DrewDavisHere.

# Launch Content that People Love to Use!



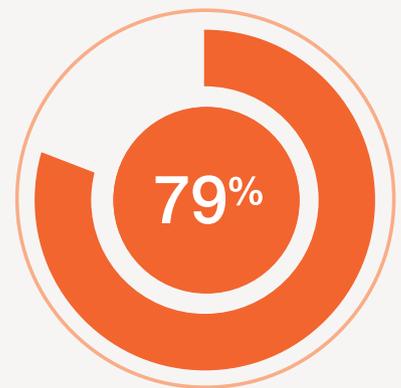
ion's interactive content platform produces modern interactive experiences at scale — without code or development. Give your brand or agency the agile capability to launch and A/B test mobile/tablet/desktop data-driven experiences.



79% of content marketers agree that interactive content enhances retention of brand messaging.\*



81% of content marketers agree that interactive content grabs attention more effectively than static content.\*



79% of content marketers agree that interactive content results in repeat visitors and multiple exposure.\*

\*Content Marketing Institute Peak Experiences 2016 Research Study



Use live customer examples at  
[www.ioninteractive.com](http://www.ioninteractive.com)



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