



# 2018 CONTENT MARKETING **PREDICTIONS**



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**M**y predictions for the upcoming year are simple (though somewhat aspirational):

1. Apple will buy Disney. Although I still think this transaction is a few years away, I believe it will ultimately happen, so I want to go on the record with this. As Apple continues to invest in original content, it will discover that an out-and-out acquisition makes far more sense. It will see the light and purchase what is, perhaps, the greatest media company on the planet.
2. In 2018, at least two major Fortune 500 brands will hire former publishers and/or media executives to serve as their chief marketing officers.
3. At least one Fortune 100 company will announce it is transforming its marketing department into a true profit center.



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**I**n 2018, I expect to see more diversification of content formats. More livestreaming on social. More audio/podcasts. Alexa skills. Content will continue to expand beyond the traditional web and print approaches. Brands will continue to invest in content, as they have been over the last few years; but that investment will shift from mostly writing services and paid distribution/promotion to a whole host of services – production, more animation and video-related graphics, voice talent, etc. It's no longer just about words – content is about creating experiences.



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**W**ith Joe Pulizzi stepping back, all serious content marketers will curl up in the fetal position in the corner for the duration of 2018. We will build shrines and hold vigils, awaiting his return.

Plan B: In 2018, content marketers – especially in B2B – will start to figure out how to integrate content marketing into a wider performance marketing model. We'll get dramatically better at showing how and where content drives success. And our new dashboards will show us that what works is confident, ambitious, hard-working, intelligent, fun, strategic content that celebrates what we believe in while delivering real value.



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“Brands.” “Companies.” “Content Marketing.” We use all these terms to describe one thing: PEOPLE. There is no invisible force, no faceless entity. It’s all just you, doing what you do. And so, here’s a prediction about YOU: In 2018, you will finally trust your intuition.

You will read the same lists, from the same faces; hear the same refrains around the industry; and finally accept that all of them are just possibilities, not answers. Instead, it’s up to YOU to find the real answers – not by obsessing over some blog post, or guru, or trend, but by investigating your own context and making the right call FOR YOU.

So, what will it be in 2018, friend? Will you trust each new best practice, or will you craft your own? Will you obsess over the trend, or use whatever approach best serves your customers? Will “they” have your answers? Or will YOU?

I believe that, in the Era of Experts, it has never been a better time to think for yourself. But don’t listen to me. Trust your intuition.



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**C**ontent must be connected! Brands will be doing more with voice, the Internet of Things, and skills for Alexa and Google Home. 2018 will reward predictive, personalized, frictionless content.



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**C**onversational interfaces – chatbots on websites and in Facebook Messenger, as well as voice interfaces such as Alexa – are going to experience explosive growth in 2018. Delivering the right content to people, in the right way, through these interfaces is the next frontier in content marketing.



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**I**n 2018 brand marketers will focus heavily on establishing a voice that their audience will recognize. A voice that isn't a bland industry message, but an approachable human resource that naturally meets the consumer's needs.



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**I**'m seeing two trends. The first is a real exploration of global content strategy. Organizations that are deploying content locally, or in differing lines of business, are seeing the imperative to streamline, coordinate, and operationalize on a global level.

Trend No. 2 is the rise of automation – and we're not just talking "marketing automation." Instead, it will be about bringing highly contextual information from beacons, sensors, and the Internet of Things into content marketing.



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**I**n a world of increasing scandal (think Wells Fargo) and people slapping “fake news” labels on content with increasing frequency, success will come from telling the truth. Always.



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**F**acebook will become a MAJOR player in video and other businesses will jump in. Facebook will become a major competitor to YouTube. In 2017, Facebook kicked off the Facebook Watch rollout for select creators (its TV-like option within Facebook). In 2018, we'll see that program expand to all people and pages on Facebook. We'll also likely see Facebook roll out new features for video creators/businesses that'll make it far easier to get exposure and be discovered. This could include preferential Facebook News Feed exposure for original native video, generous revenue share deals, and the eventual rollout of a dedicated video app. We also might see Facebook negotiate traditional television deals, or even start its own cable television network. If you're a video creator, watch this space closely!



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**W**ith the Facebook algorithm continuing to change – and rumors swirling that you will no longer be able to link to external content – paid social media is going to be even bigger for distribution in 2018. As well, Alexa, Siri, and Cortana have created more and more voice search, which will continue to increase (as we get more and more lazy) in 2018 and beyond. This means paid search will have to be part of a content marketer's toolbox next year. The coveted top three spots in search results will be the goal for just about every organization. Paid social, paid search, and paying attention to the search results the personal assistants return are at the top of my list!



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**G**eofence marketing will be fully democratized. Marketers at smaller companies will embrace this distribution channel as a way to deliver highly customized and targeted communications and content to prospects based on location and demographic data.



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**B**rand marketers will make the transition from creating branded content to building content brands. The most successful marketers will make an appointment with their audience, develop a format for their content, attach talent to their content and, most importantly, create a hook. Those who create a simple twist on a familiar theme designed to ensnare or entrap a buying audience will be the big winners in 2018. Content builds relationships. Relationships build trust. Trust drives revenue. Build a buying audience, and the rest will take care of itself.



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**I** expect 2018 to bring better content to our eyes and ears – instead of just bringing more content. As content marketing becomes more mature, brands, agencies, and publishers will put more effort into creating content that differentiates, stands out, and is focused on creating value for the reader. This will require more emphasis on great writing – more creative, more personal, and even more dramatic, in some cases – to help build loyal audiences.



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**I** predict lower website traffic in 2018, especially from search. Google is filling search results pages with so many “SERP features” that around half of all clicks are on Google products (maps, images, YouTube) or Google ads. They are doing a better job of keeping their visitors. That means a decline in click-through rates from organic search and fewer visits for websites.

Marketers will adapt by doubling down on search efforts in an attempt to get a bigger piece of a slowly shrinking pie. A few will produce better content that’s better optimized for popular phrases and will grow their search traffic. But many others will see organic search traffic flatten out or decline. Some marketers will start buying more traffic to their content and find that the ROI isn’t bad.

Search will follow social. Just as Facebook throttled back organic reach and pushed marketers into paid strategies, you’ll see a similar trend with Google.



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**A**utomation in the form of voice recognition, chatbot front-ends, and cognitive systems is going to take on a bigger role in the upcoming years. 2018 will be a year of research and evaluation to understand how these systems work and the benefits they can bring.



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**M**ore marketers, across both B2C and B2B, will begin to blend SMS texting with other channels as they strive to use data that enables personalization at scale. Conversational texting that invites two-way dialogue through a platform that integrates with CRM and marketing automation means we can build purposeful relationships that continuously deliver mutual value due to increased visibility and responsiveness.

Also, with more companies adopting subscription and recurring revenue models, a focus on customer retention and advocacy will become a bigger play because it ties to revenue protection, as well as growth in CLV. Minimizing churn must become a priority for organizations with this business model that are in pursuit of growth.



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**2** 018 will be the year of audiences. Brands will look to the increasing value of the audiences they have – and those that they want to have – as the driver for their strategy to create and distribute content.



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**W**e'll see brands shift from aggressive outbound campaigns to evangelist enablement strategies. Online opinion leaders are the next wave of focused media channels. Influencers with a strong position in a deep vertical will be nourished by brands. Advanced, embargoed content is the new currency to vertical influencers seeking to provide valuable content to their audience.



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**I**n the past, brands took a “top-down” approach: Content was created, then passed to the team that managed distribution. Moving forward, brands will also take a “bottom-up” approach, proactively understanding where the content will go and tailoring different formats of content for different communication channels.



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**2** 018 will be the year marketing sees that our greatest source of content and power of distribution lies with our employees. The most authentic and engaging content will come from the experts inside their own companies sharing what they know and what they love. HR is the new marketing.



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**M**arketers will work harder to understand more clearly who their customer is NOT, so they can focus more on what their true customers want and need. This will lead not just to more micro-segmentation, but also to a better blend between evergreen and ephemeral content.



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**C**ontent will play an even more critical role in customer experience with the evolution of voice-enabled devices. Finding a niche, owning that niche, and being able to provide accurate, valuable, relevant, and detailed content has never been more important. To stay relevant, we're going to need to go from the top 10 Google search results to the top one or two voice search results, which will soon widen the gap between good content marketing and amazing content marketing. Because of this, Amazon and Google will eventually make voice search pay-to-play. And brands will pay big money for it.



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**T**o produce competitively relevant content, content marketers will transcend “acting like media companies” by adopting the social value approaches of not-for-profits and startup methodologies. This trend will be driven by:

- Increasing commoditization of most-obvious relevance opportunities
- Corporate social initiatives that are not linkable to business value
- The realization that many successful content initiatives aren’t driven by for-profits
- The rise of social entrepreneurialism and innovation as a business practice
- Global economic development driving reverse innovation.



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**J**ust like “fake news,” we will see more “fake content” in 2018 – essentially, intriguing content that looks credible and gets social traction and eyeballs, but ultimately is false and misleading.



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**I**n 2018, more content marketers will stop chasing what's new and start focusing on what their audiences actually want. Expect even more emphasis on refreshing, repurposing, and repackaging existing content. That's not a bad thing – sometimes the song really does remain the same, even when the instruments change. And the extra value derived from refreshing the golden oldies – audience trust, increased engagement, or actual revenue – will underwrite more experimental pieces that serve as early indicators of changing sentiments and interests.



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**B**rands will create less content – but of a higher quality and relevance – with the aim of creating truly personalized marketing experiences. Strategic, delightful content first, and then automation and personalization technology at the service of that content.



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**I** believe marketers will finally stop listening to those who say shorter is always better and will take the time to tell the story people want to hear. Ironically, Twitter is one place where brevity is core to the brand, and it will reverse its decision to allow 280 characters.



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**2** 017 brought some pretty heavy and high-profile scams, scandals, and online security issues to light (e.g., the Equifax breach, allegations of voter fraud and election interference, fake news...). And with the European Union's GDPR privacy laws set to go into effect very soon, 2018 should bring massive disruptions to the ways businesses can collect and use audience data. Expect consumers to be much less willing to give up their personal information without a clear understanding of how, when, and where it will be used – and how it will be kept secure. This means marketers will have to work even harder to ensure regulatory compliance, as well as to provide content experiences that consumers will consider to be suitably truthful, trustworthy, and valuable.



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**M**ore and more content is being created in-house. But getting eyeballs on that content is also becoming harder and harder. In 2018, there will be a significant uptick in spending to amplify or promote content, compared to previous years. Brands will need to really understand their buyer's journey and target the right audience at the right time on the right channel, then pay to put their content in front of those people.



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**C**ontent is getting granular. The tiniest attributes about your brand, people, product, locations, and events are in demand by consumers addicted to mobile search, adopting voice search, and testing AI. Structured answers demand structured knowledge, and that means brands need platforms that enable the direct provision of their digital knowledge to the expanding universe of intelligent services provided by Amazon, Facebook, Google, Microsoft, and more.



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**C**onstructive insights based on feedback, not more data, will unlock the promise of one-to-one conversation and value. That means understanding the “why” and “what” of behavior in context and becoming obsessed with building a fast-learning culture. The new paradigm is aligning an organization’s behaviors with creating memorable moments in the customer’s experience by enabling human contribution with intelligence.



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**2** 018 is the year brands will shift from thinking of content marketing as a fad to recognizing its place as a primary way to build long-term customer relationships. The result? Brands will plan for the content long haul by formalizing operations, building in-house content studios, and refining amplification strategies.

Also, while virtual reality content gets a lot of hype, we're more likely to see brands create augmented reality content to enhance storytelling at live events.



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**W**e should expect real-world adoption of tools that even 2-3 years ago felt like science fiction. Chatbots with language skills will enable highly personalized content conversations. Digital assistants will deliver more and more content through voice interfaces. AI-powered websites will generate much of their content automatically. And augmented and virtual reality experiences will become commonplace.



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**2** 018 will see the rise of employee brand advocates above paid influencers. Companies will embrace employee-advocacy programs in greater numbers because of the need to produce thought-leading content to break through online noise and the growing body of evidence supporting better outcomes for brands that take this approach.



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“Content marketing” will cease to be thought of as a top-of-funnel, audience-building activity as marketers realize that content is the golden thread that connects every experience in the customer journey. As a result, brands will start leveraging talented content teams to tell great stories that influence customers at all funnel stages – they’ll realize that great stories aren’t just important to articles and videos, but also for case studies and sales decks. As a result, content marketing will start to be held accountable to true business results, not just vanity metrics.



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**M**any have already started, but in 2018 we will reach the tipping point for interactive content. Content shock means marketers have to think differently to cut through the noise. The winners will leverage interactive platforms (SnapApp, ion, Uberflip, and others) to engage prospects, get their interactions, and build valuable data.



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**M**y prediction? Technology will make us more efficient, effective, and balanced versions of ourselves. Think of it as Self 2.0.

I've spent the last few years bellyaching about the negative impact of technology in our personal and professional lives. I've grouched about our dwindling capacity for sustained attention. I've bemoaned our lack of creativity due to having our frontal lobes hijacked by social media. I even wagered with Joe Pulizzi back in 2016 that machine learning would not be able to create content you would actually want to read in the next few years. Not even close.

I'm changing my tune for 2018.

I'm now fascinated by the AI-fueled revolution in marketing technology and productivity technology – all of which will help us become enhanced versions of ourselves. The tools I use as a marketer and business owner are changing in such a way that many of the jobs I once did manually are now wholly automated. And, in content marketing, everything from research and content creation to audience development and analytics is being upended by AI (see Paul Roetzer's presentation at CMWorld to get a good taste of all this).

Yes, I'm ready to welcome our AI overlords and achieve Clare 2.0. (And I will admit publicly that I lost that bet to JP. Thankfully, I think we've both forgotten what was on the line.)



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**A**s marcom experiences become increasingly personal and customized, I see a combination of increasingly leveraged social media and PURL-like, customized rich content sites being combined to deliver nuanced offers.



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**C**ontent marketing winners will listen intently to buyers' questions and weave teaching into their companies' DNA. They'll put listening before yelling, showing before telling, and teaching before selling.



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**I**n 2018, I predict more brands will use original research in their content marketing efforts. Not to get too meta, but we conducted research with Smartbrief earlier this year and learned that 74% of B2B buyers consider original research from brands to be influential in their purchasing process (think: research about industry trends). The only thing considered more influential is peer-to-peer recommendations. Yet, our annual B2B research reveals that only 37% of marketers are using original research in their efforts. What an opportunity to give B2B buyers what they crave – and, as I can attest from my experience at CMI, annual research is a wonderful way for a brand to build its audience.



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**M**ore and more companies will not only hire in-house videographers, but they'll also start training their employees/subject matter experts to be stronger performers and communicators on camera.



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**I** believe 2018 will be a year where brands publish more and more content natively on platforms. I have been seeing this trend of hub+hub vs. hub+spoke for some time, but it's becoming more and more apparent that brands will be publishing less and less content on their own platforms (or using their platforms more like archives).



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President

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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**I**n 2018, we will fearlessly cut the noise in our marketing and hyperfocus inward on lower-volume, higher-quality content guided by the steady feedback and expressed needs of our audiences – rather than methodically saturating our channels and looking outward to find best practices, formulas, and advice.



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**I** think you'll see more brands purchasing existing content outlets with relevant audiences, as opposed to building their own (which is pretty tough).



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**M**arketing is all about showing up where your audience is. So every brand will board the runaway train that is Instagram, as its insanely fast-growing member count surpasses 1 billion.

Recognizing that Instagram is no longer a millennial-only zone and is on the first page of so many buyers' phones, brands will dig deep to find ways to make their mark there with visual content, contests, shoppable links, stories, videos, ads, and come what may from the new, high-flying star of digital media.



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**H**opefully marketers will abandon the idea of content marketing as a project and learn to integrate it into all of their marketing efforts. I also think we'll see a move toward customer experience driving content marketing efforts within an organization; in fact, my prediction is that in 10 years, marketing will be “owned” by customer experience.



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**C**ontent creation needs to facilitate your customer conversations across the buyer's journey. To do that, you must create messaging and content assets that answer the questions buyers are asking themselves at key moments: Why should I change? Why should I pick you? Why should I do it now, not later? Why should I pay more? And, why should I stay with you?



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**V**irtual reality content will really ramp up, with dozens of new campaigns coming from all sectors of business. VR content will also take its place in a few martech platforms and be the most talked about type of content (next to video) by the end of 2018.



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**I**n 2018 brand marketers will get serious about podcasting. After years of trying to cajole subject-matter experts to write, marketers will discover that getting them to speak on a podcast is much easier and provides a rich vein of authoritative voices for their brand. And guess what? Everyone has fun doing it!



**SARAH MITCHELL**

[@SarahMitchellOz](#)

Director of Content Strategy

Lush Digital Media



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**2** 018 will be the year more sales leaders will take notice of the importance of content marketing. This will be made possible by collaborative marketing technology and a mindset shift that recognizes that marketing and sales need each other.



**BERNIE BORGES**

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CMO

Vengreso



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**A**s enthusiasm for and adoption of content marketing expands across industries and organizations, we still aren't tracking whether it's really working – not just based on clicks and engagement, but based on sales and revenue influence. Getting to a level of precision on this won't be easy, but I still don't hear enough people asking the question. Our own research recently showed that the vast majority of marketers aren't measuring the revenue impact or influence of their content. We have to bridge that gap better, moving forward.



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President

Heinz Marketing Inc.



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**I**n 2018, more and more brand marketers will incorporate content created outside of the brand with UGC and influencers. The story will no longer be told by the brand, but it will be created and distributed by the community.



**AMY HIGGINS**

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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**S**mart marketers will shift their perspective from “marketing as a cost center” to “marketing as a profit center;” from a focus on generating impressions to a focus on generating revenue – in both expected and unexpected ways.



**ANDREW HANELLY**

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Partner

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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**M**ore brand marketers will master the content force. They will focus less on creating content to support a buyer journey and more on creating differentiated content that attracts and influences their unique audience.



**COLLEEN JONES**

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CEO

Content Science



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**T**he short attention span is over. Very high-quality, long-form content is the way forward. Not just 2000-word blogs, but 5000- and 10,000-word e-books. Short, but complete “how-to” guides offering deep insights. Well-crafted thought pieces. It’s all about quality. Print them up. Write a series. Share them out. Collect the set.



**DAN HATCH**

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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**I**n 2018, content marketing will use tools to predict what topics are about to take off even more. Today, many still respond after something took off; but in 2018, sophisticated listening, anticipation, and execution will all mature.



**CHRISTOPH TRAPPE**

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VP of Content Marketing  
Scribblelive



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**C**ontent marketers will document their content marketing strategy and distribute it across their organization or get left behind. Winging content marketing no longer works! Sixty-three percent of B2B marketers don't have a documented strategy, according to 2018 B2B Content Marketing Research. As with a good marriage, you must commit to content marketing success and work toward it every day.

Content marketing will move beyond the funnel to support customers post-purchase. To reap profitable returns on your customer acquisition investment, you must retain customers over time and keep them purchasing. In the process, marketing will step up to the cash register and manage post-initial purchase sales through effective retention marketing.

Content marketing will also embrace customer lifetime value (CLTV) as the key success metric. Unlike ROI, CLTV proves that marketing contributes to the company's assets and market value. Further, CLTV enables marketers to focus their efforts on the prospects and customers with the greatest potential to grow, and to unmarket unprofitable customers. (Yes, businesses often retain customers past the point when they start costing more than the initial investment!)



**HEIDI COHEN**

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Chief Content Officer

Actionable Marketing Guide



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**I** think brands should consider doing a podcast. Audio is a great method of captivating your audience. My new podcast, Bad Crypto, has received over 450,000 downloads in the first 90 days. This can happen in many industries. A podcast could potentially help you build credibility in any industry.



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Chief Marketing Technologist  
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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

**V**irality and reach will become less important, and marketers will instead focus on better segmenting and targeting capabilities, enhanced with the help of AI. This will finally lead to the downfall of the recent trend of snake-oil salespeople who promise to hack your way into millions of meaningless views, comments, and “likes.” Content marketing will no longer be a game of volume and bloated numbers, but will instead promote empathy, relevance, and exclusivity.



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# 60+ PREDICTIONS ON CONTENT MARKETING IN 2018

Make sure you stay on top of these trends – and  
any others that might emerge in 2018.

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## About Content Marketing Institute (CMI)

**Content Marketing Institute** is the leading global content marketing education and training organization, teaching enterprise brands how to attract and retain customers through compelling, multichannel storytelling. CMI's **Content Marketing World** event, the largest content marketing-focused event, is held every September in Cleveland, Ohio, USA, and the **Intelligent Content Conference** event is held every spring. CMI publishes the quarterly magazine **Chief Content Officer**, and provides strategic consulting and content marketing research for some of the best-known brands in the world. Watch this **video** to learn more about CMI, a UBM company. To view all research and subscribe to our emails, visit **[www.contentmarketinginstitute.com](http://www.contentmarketinginstitute.com)**.

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