

THE STATE OF ENTERPRISE CONTENT MARKETING – 2014

**HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE
CONTENT MARKETING INSTITUTE EXECUTIVE FORUM**

MAY 28-29, 2014



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PREFACE

Content Marketing Institute (CMI) is honored to present highlights of the first CMI Executive Forum, which was held May 28-29, 2014, in San Francisco.

The Executive Forum brought together 40 senior-level marketers to address the present and future state of enterprise content marketing. During candid discussions, participants shared the challenges they face, roadblocks to success, and victories both large and small.

Certainly, this report asks more questions than it answers. Its goal is not to provide pat answers to complex issues, but rather to report on the insights and challenges that participants shared.

This report would not have been possible without the generous contributions of the Executive Forum participants. Their presence at the event is not a tacit endorsement of any of the ideas presented here; rather, the collective group is responsible for the value of the discussions as a whole.

Ultimately, the discussions that took place at the forum will serve as our “stake in the ground” moving forward. And as we work toward re-engineering marketing processes more broadly, it can help as a waypoint.

On with the content marketing revolution...

Robert Rose

Chief Strategist

Content Marketing Institute

INTRODUCTION

In 1999, Philip Kotler, the world-renowned marketing professor, published *Kotler on Marketing*. As he indicated in the book's introduction, the late '90s were a time of tumultuous change. He concluded the book with a section called Transformational Marketing, in which he discussed how the field would change with the "new age of electronic marketing."

"In the coming decade," Kotler said, "marketing will be re-engineered from A to Z. Marketers will need to rethink fundamentally the processes by which they identify, communicate, and deliver customer value."

There's only one problem: Fifteen years have passed, and it hasn't happened yet.

Yes, the buyer's journey to acquiring products and services HAS fundamentally changed. Maybe, it's even more accurate to say IS and WILL CONTINUE TO fundamentally change, as the cycle of evolution shows no signs of slowing.

The challenge is that marketing operations in enterprise companies remain largely the same today as they were when Kotler wrote his book. Most enterprise marketing departments are still working from late 20th century organizational models and have reacted to the disruptive changes in consumer behavior by throwing more discrete "teams" at the problem.

To complicate matters, enterprises have become content factories, producing enormous mountains of content (Forrester Research asserts that on average, enterprise content volume is growing at a rate of 200% annually). At some point, all that content will inhibit productivity in an organization, rather than contribute to it.

Content In Marketing Isn't New. Content Marketing Is.

Yet at its core, content is an incredibly important piece of the broader disruption. Content in marketing isn't new. Content marketing as a holistic, strategic approach is. After seven years of watching content marketing transform businesses both large and small, CMI is confident that it's here to stay.

Content can be managed as the strategic asset that it has (or can) become for enterprises—or it can be an expensive byproduct that ultimately weighs down a company as it tries to navigate the broader disruptions taking place.

FINDINGS FROM RESEARCH SHAPED THE AGENDA

Prior to the Executive Forum, CMI undertook a research project wherein 27 marketing executives were interviewed about content marketing. Some of these interviewees also participated in the Executive Forum.

The details of those research findings will be presented via two reports authored by CMI's Michele Linn over the next few months. The reports will cover: the structure of today's content marketing operations, spending, effectiveness and the future of the discipline.

The insights discovered during these 27 interviews helped shape CMI's agenda for the Executive Forum.

To get the conversations started, we asked one person (a "firestarter") to lead each session by relaying either a personal story or an example from his or her experience on a particular topic. Participants were then encouraged to ask questions, offer insights, speak candidly about challenges, or simply move the conversation forward.

What follows is the summary of each of these firestarter sessions, with both key insights and challenges called out.

THE INTEGRATION OF CONTENT MARKETING & DATA

Topic Leader

Julie Fleischer, *Director of Media and Consumer Engagement, Kraft Foods*

One of the biggest questions for content marketers is, “How do I integrate customer data into a more optimized content strategy?”

Julie Fleischer opened the discussion by relaying her experience with leading a content marketing initiative and finding a “home” within Kraft’s brand media group.

► KEY INSIGHT:

Content marketing sits at disparate areas within the larger enterprise. It’s often thought that content marketing should be situated in the brand group or the demand generation group (especially in B2B). However, this discussion centered on the different parts of the organization where content marketing could provide value.

► KEY CHALLENGE:

Change is messy and hard. Content marketing must be ushered in by “educating” those who are hesitant to join in—rather than rolled out as a forced, new process. In other words, change has to come as a “promise,” not a threat.

► KEY CHALLENGE:

Many marketing silos exist in enterprise companies. To complicate matters, each silo often has its own agency or outsourced platforms. Many participants said they are challenged with finding the proper place for content marketing within their companies.

► KEY CHALLENGE:

A lack of expertise in deriving meaning out of data has resulted in slow progress of data and content integration.

► KEY INSIGHT:

Institutional learning comes from owning the data instead of outsourcing the main owned content platform or using third-party data. An owned media platform is a “self-learning system” where data is an ever-increasing asset. As one participant put it, “This is not a campaign—[our content marketing program] just keeps growing and becoming more valuable year over year.”

► KEY INSIGHT:

When looking at integrating data and providing value, it’s important to develop a robust taxonomy and tagging structure for your content from the very beginning. It becomes invaluable later when you want to go deeper into measurement and content optimization. However, a word of caution was thrown in: Don’t get so wrapped up in data and tagging that you lose the sense of creating great content.

Topic Leader

Todd Wheatland, *Head of Strategy, King Content*

Todd Wheatland, previously the CMO of KellyOCG, began this session by describing his success in managing content marketing as a global function.

► KEY CHALLENGE:

Not surprisingly, translation is a key challenge. As global organizations add more markets, more languages must be taken into account and more content must be created. The language issues, along with the localization, cultural, and topical challenges, make content marketing a very “local” affair for most large enterprises.

► KEY CHALLENGE:

Resources are another big challenge. Managing content production across one set of content and social platforms in one language is difficult enough; managing across multiple regions, social platforms, and languages is even more challenging. Those who are “making it work” are creating partnerships with local offices to manage channels in the native language. More holistic strategies for managing and communicating are still emerging.

► KEY INSIGHT:

If you translate, do it well. Address not only the language, but also the examples, metaphors, and other types of localization that might need to happen.

► KEY INSIGHT:

Developing “snackable” content in local languages (that links to bigger pieces in one “company language”) can be an effective strategy. For example, you can create and localize promotional, “snackable” versions of a piece in the native language to promote the download of a larger piece (e.g., a research report or eBook) in English.

Topic Leader

Matt Preschern, *SVP and CMO, Windstream Communications*

If there was one overriding theme throughout all of the sessions during the Executive Forum it was “measurement.” Every discussion somehow found itself merging into the measurement topic.

This discussion was marked by the provocative question, “How good is the content we are already producing?” It initially focused on why measurement doesn’t really matter if businesses don’t start with high-quality, relevant, and creative content.

▶ KEY CHALLENGE:

Content production is often conducted in silos, which prevents consistent quality and consistent measurement of its efficacy.

▶ KEY INSIGHT:

Content marketing leaders need to engage with every piece of content their company creates and distributes, at least until a clear benchmark is in place for the direction the content should be taking.

▶ KEY INSIGHT:

Creating a functional “content filter” can help ensure that only the best pieces of content make it out of an organization. Similar, perhaps, to the structure of a Content Center of Excellence, this group would assemble, curate, and package all content before it goes out to an audience. This would help the team measure how individual pieces of content are used, as well as the impact of the content marketing program in general.

▶ KEY INSIGHT:

The quality of content that a company produces should be measured from the perspective of how valuable it is to consumers—not through the lens of the product marketer. For example, content about how companies solve their IT challenges will be more attractive to prospective technology buyers than product-focused content about high-end server solutions.

SETTING UP WORKFLOWS & BUDGETS

Topic Leader

Scott Linabarger, *Sr. Director, Multichannel Content Marketing, Cleveland Clinic*

The research CMI conducted prior to the Executive Forum showed that while budgets for content marketing were becoming quite substantial, the processes were still mostly “being figured out.”

Most companies recognize the need for some level of content promotion, as the “build it and they will come” scenario doesn’t work. The CMI research further indicates that budgets are now allocated, on average, in a 50/25/25 split between content creation, management, and promotion.

▶ KEY CHALLENGE:

The processes around content marketing often need a great deal of work in large enterprises. In many cases, the processes are both ad hoc and improvised while experiments are executed across various platforms. This is exacerbated by the degree of outsourcing of various job functions, parts of the process, or even the complete approach of content marketing itself.

▶ KEY CHALLENGE:

It can be difficult to get support for a dedicated content marketing team. Finding an evangelist within the organization is critical. As was said, “It’s about bringing others into what we’re doing. For instance, sales. We want the sales teams to participate, but we can’t get them to devote the time, budget, or energy to this.”

▶ KEY INSIGHT:

Establishing a dedicated team (e.g., a “digital engagement team”) can help create a scalable workflow and measurability around budget. Roles for this type of team might include a hub manager to oversee the entire platform, an editor to manage the content contributors, and a social media coordinator. The team is then supported by the broader, marketing-focused creative services team.

▶ KEY CHALLENGE:

Many content marketing teams, especially in B2B enterprises, don’t receive budgets for media or promotion. As a result, they have to create media budgets out of their own “creative” budgets and/or make deals with internal advertising groups to use their budgets to promote content. This can sometimes put the content marketing team at odds with media buying teams.

▶ KEY INSIGHT:

If money is flowing into a content marketing program, some percentage of that budget should flow into content promotion. If you are going to invest in creating content, you **MUST** invest in promoting it as well.

Topic Leader

Eric Webb, *Sr. Director, Corporate Marketing and Brand, McGladrey*

The discussion about the operational aspects of content marketing began with a common feeling among the participants that many times the new content marketing function is inherited by an existing group, rather than created anew.

This is something we see in our work at CMI with our advisory clients. It's rare that content marketing, as a concept, is conceived, constructed, and then rolled out as a function within an enterprise. It is almost always something that is grown from the practitioner level upward—building critical mass through small experiments that prove worthy—and then inherited by one or multiple marketing/communications functions within the business.

And, similar to the Julie Fleischer-led discussion on the integration of content marketing and data, as the groups become more mature, they often have to find “new homes” within the business as their value becomes evident.

► KEY CHALLENGE:

The inner workings of the content marketing approach (content marketing operations) are a work-in-progress. How the process is structured (everything from editorial calendaring, to project management, to how the publishing process is facilitated) is quite unique at the organizational level.

► KEY CHALLENGE:

It can be difficult to get employee buy-in for content marketing. In addition, education is needed around social media governance, especially in companies where the C-suite is still “afraid” of what might get out. Training, as well as a flexible line of communication about content that can be shared across networks, can be invaluable.

► KEY INSIGHT:

Pointers to keep in mind while assembling content marketing teams include the following:

- Alignment—Educate the team about how the process will work (e.g., how writers will be assigned, how requests for projects from product marketing will be prioritized, etc.).
- Transparency—Select a project process platform (e.g., Basecamp) that will show everyone what the team is working on. Everyone—including subject matter experts, executives, and the product marketing team—should be able to see the project queue.
- Measure—The team should be measuring how successful its efforts are. This helps members identify the low effort/big wins in order to repeat them.
- Prioritization—Show the team how to prioritize incoming requests from other parts of the company. A suggestion here was to propose that anyone who requests higher importance for their project can “pay” for an external resource to accomplish it.

▶ **KEY INSIGHT:**

Centralize ALL communications within the team. Get out of the multiple functions and platforms for communications such as email, Excel, Word, and project management systems. All communications—even those that come through those other platforms—should be moved into the project process platform (e.g., Basecamp).

▶ **KEY CHALLENGE:**

Many companies are still using Excel to create and manage editorial calendars. New “dedicated” calendars should be built into other enterprise applications, but at the present time they are not (oftentimes, these dedicated calendars are new IT tools that aren’t necessarily budgeted for).

ALL COMMUNICATIONS
SHOULD BE MOVED
INTO THE PROJECT
PROCESS PLATFORM.

OPEN DISCUSSION ON CONTENT MARKETING EXECUTION

Topic Leader

Carlos Abler, *Manager of Online Content Strategy and Global eTransformation, 3M*

Drawing from his experiences at 3M, a company that was founded in 1902, Carlos Abler led this discussion, which centered mostly on how to scale content marketing/effect change within large organizations that have been operating in certain ways for many years.

► KEY CHALLENGE:

Innovative startups that don't have the legacy of large marketing organizations structured in specific ways have an easier time transforming into proficient media production teams. Is it any wonder that many of the early "leaders" within content marketing are themselves startup companies that have emerged within the last 15 years? This is a critical point and something we see often at CMI. Enterprises that are looking to implement content marketing need to understand whether they are changing ingrained marketing and communications practices or whether they are creating them from scratch. Frankly, there are lessons learned in both approaches.

► KEY INSIGHT:

We have seen large enterprises succeed in content marketing by NOT trying to make it a holistic enterprise-wide approach—but rather by focusing on only one product, one region, or one strata of the customer journey. As one marketer said, "We had cross-functional teams working to grow the practice globally for a while—but as we focused our mission it became solely a thought leadership effort for sales enablement. So now some of the other groups have less of a role to play. This may change as we grow, but right now it's working for us."

► KEY INSIGHT:

Rolling out a "franchise" model can be a successful approach. In some cases, the enterprise can create a model function, with best practices, and then roll that out as a sustainable, independent training organization that builds a "network" of franchise offices. This can be at the regional, product, or vertical solution level. Another suggestion was to consider an NGO operational model, where a group is built to go in and enable a "content economy" through education and training in markets or solution areas—and then support that content economy by providing the product that supports it.

► KEY INSIGHT:

One way to "smash silos" is to create workshops that promote collaboration and interrelationships. The idea here is to "force" groups together to work on a common goal, in this case, content.

THE FUTURE STATE OF ENTERPRISE CONTENT MARKETING

It was Peter Drucker who famously said, “Culture eats strategy for breakfast.”

Indeed this was an underlying theme during our two-day forum. At every turn, executives find themselves trying to change the culture within their organizations—rather than executing against an intelligent or logical strategy.

As one attendee said, “It’s easy to create a strategy and a plan for MY work. It’s almost impossible to change the culture of the place WHERE I work.” People are loyal to the culture that is created within a company—not to the strategy it lays out.

The future state of content marketing is cloudy. As a focused approach—working in ad hoc ways across a business—it appears to have proven its worth. Today there are myriad case studies, blog posts, stories, and examples of businesses using content in strategic ways to profitably affect business results.

But what does tomorrow hold? The Executive Forum attendees and those who participated in our research study earlier this year have mixed views. Approximately 70 percent say that the marketing department of the future will look substantially different—what it will look like is unclear.

“Change is inevitable,” said one participant. “I can’t tell you where or when; but I do know there will be change. This is the principle we build on now.”

Some attendees see the model of the future as a separate group. As one executive put it, “Brands will become media companies. There will be a whole separate group with its own leadership for content, search, and social. The group will employ writers, multimedia producers, and even reporters with ‘beats.’ It may even have its own accounting department.”

Others aren’t as sure about the separation. “The marketing department of the future is both publisher and demand generation,” said another participant. “It has writers, editors, and creators who create value on one side—and conversion/optimization people on the other. Right now we’re separated and we shouldn’t be.”

New Ideas Needed to Reinvent Measurement

On the first half-day of the Executive Forum, participants went through a facilitated exercise to bring the biggest ideas for the future of content marketing to the table. Those ideas were narrowed down further to determine the “winning idea” for Executive Forum 2014.

Not surprisingly, the winning idea was “measurement.” The consensus was that measurement is fundamentally broken and there should be new ideas proposed to reinvent the way that companies measure success.

This idea fed into every other session that followed. If content marketing is to survive as a strategic, scalable business function, it must be measured—successfully. (It’s important to note, however, that content marketing measurement will be inextricably linked to the future of marketing measurement in general.)

The challenges, insights, and questions that came out of Executive Forum 2014 will help shape CMI’s mission moving forward. In particular, we will explore:

- The bigger questions around marketing measurement—and content marketing more specifically.
- Further operational models of content marketing—and how Content Centers of Excellence, focused departments, and/or outsourcing models are proving most successful.
- How companies can become much more facile with the CREATION of content—and not just its management.
- The types of developmental resources that should be attached to content—especially if content is as strategic as products.
- The function of content marketing and where it should lie in the business. Should it begin to evolve into a service organization that serves multiple parts of an existing business, or will it evolve along with the company as a whole and morph into something different?

The only absolute conclusion that came out of Executive Forum 2014 is that ***things are changing—and fast***. It will be up to us to make good—finally—on Philip Kotler’s promise of transformational marketing, all the while heeding Jack Welch’s warning:

“When the rate of change on the outside exceeds the rate of change on the inside, the end is in sight.”

At CMI, we think this is just the beginning. Now is when the hard work begins. Let’s get to it.

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ZOLL – Data Management Products	Kelli Turner , Director of Marketing Communications
Zywave, Inc.	Patrick Noonan , VP Content Development

ABOUT CONTENT MARKETING INSTITUTE

[Content Marketing Institute](#) (CMI) is the leading global content marketing education and training organization. CMI teaches enterprise brands how to attract and retain customers through compelling, multi-channel storytelling. CMI's [Content Marketing World](#), the largest content marketing-focused event, is held every September. CMI also produces the quarterly magazine [Chief Content Officer](#), and provides strategic consulting and content marketing research for some of the best-known brands in the world. CMI is a 2012 and 2013 Inc. 500 company.

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