

CONTENT MARKETING STRATEGY FOR EXECUTIVES

October 2015



CHIEF CONTENT OFFICER

ULTIMATE SEO
RESOURCE GUIDE

POP-UP CONTENT:
Brands Experiment
with LIVE Content

THE
CONTENT
AMPLIFICATION
ISSUE

If you publish and no one reads it ...

does it make a sound?

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Can We Please Stop Using Branded Content?

I'm going to be honest with you. I loathe the term "branded content".

Branded content gives content marketing a bad name. It's a word created by the world of paid media ... by advertisers, agencies and media planners.

First off, let's look at the Wikipedia definition:

Branded content is a form of advertising medium that blurs conventional distinctions between what constitutes advertising and what constitutes editorial content.

Sounds disturbing doesn't it?

But Madison Avenue loves branded content, especially in our new found world of native advertising. Branded content gives agencies permission to keep talking about themselves, adding a bit of storytelling to product pitches.

At this year's Cannes International Festival of Creativity, there were 1,394 total entries in the "branded content and entertainment" category. The judges awarded NO grand prize winner (same as 2014), citing no single piece of category-defining work.

I took a non-scientific stroll through some of the entries. In general, here is what I found:

- Most of the entries are campaign-based. They are not ongoing editorial products serving an audience.
- There is heavy usage of product placement. It's amazing how often the product becomes the central character of the story.

In an interview with *Advertising Age*, Mark Fortner, jury member and head of innovation and branded content at Mediacom, said, "Many of the entrants in the branded content and entertainment category just slapped a logo onto something, or made an integration just for the brand's sake without any larger narrative or natural partnership."

Simply put, branded content looks and feels like advertising. If it looks like a duck and walks like a duck, well ...

Content Brands: A Better Way

Andrew Davis, author of *Brandscaping* and *Town Inc.*, has been promoting the use of content brands instead of branded content. "Content brands are created for an audience, while branded content is created for a business," he says.

This is an important distinction. With a content brand, you are always focused on the needs and pain points of the audience first. The goal is to build a loyal audience, and then leverage that loyalty to drive a business goal.

Branded content, on the other hand, is about getting the product or service out there in some way, albeit in a more entertaining way than just straight advertising. This is a quick-hit strategy. There is no need or want to build a relationship through content.

Content brands, if given the right amount of time and patience, work. Just look at John Deere's The Furrow content brand. Over 100 years and John Deere has mentioned its products and services just a handful of times. The print and digital magazine just plainly helps farmers be more successful farmers. It's now delivered to 1.5 million farmers in 40 countries and 14 languages. No, it's not easy, but it creates a real asset for the organization. Commitment and a focus on the audience (not the product) make all the difference.

So let's just let the term "branded content" die. Will anyone really miss it? I think not. ☺

Yours in Content,

Joe Pulizzi

Founder

Content Marketing Institute

@JoePulizzi



To stay on top of content marketing trends, subscribe to Joe and Robert Rose's weekly podcast, **PNR: This Old Marketing**, <http://cmi.media/pnr>



"Content brands are created for an audience, while branded content is created for a business"

—Andrew Davis, Author, *Brandscaping*



CHIEF CONTENT OFFICER

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WHAT'S ONLINE

PNR: THIS OLD MARKETING PODCAST

Branded Content vs. Content Marketing

A look at why so many brands and agencies are looking more often at advertising opportunities than owning their own platforms.

<http://cmi.media/PNRepisode91>

REPORT

B2B Content Marketing: 2016 Benchmarks, Budgets, a Trends—North America

See how B2B content marketing is evolving and learn what the most effective marketers are doing differently.

<http://cmi.media/B2B2016>

TWITTER CHAT

#CMWorld Twitter Chats

Join us every Tuesday at Noon Eastern to talk about content marketing topics.

<http://cmi.media/twitterchats>



MARK WALKER

How to use visual maps for a balanced content marketing strategy

<http://cmi.media/visualmaps>



ROGER C. PARKER

How to turn 1 idea into 2 months of content marketing

<http://cmi.media/1idea>



MICHELE LINN

Three content strategy practices that will make you a better content marketer

<http://cmi.media/cspractices>

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THE
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Find out how to give your content lift.
(And why even the best content needs a little help on takeoff.)

Developing a Buyer-Centric Content Marketing Strategy

Are you pushing to publish more and faster ... and still not seeing results? It might be time to revisit your strategy. One expert shares how to develop a buyer-centric strategy to guide your content architecture.

Carlos Hidalgo

Most marketers no longer need convincing that content marketing is a key strategy to engage customers—but too many organizations try to juice returns by generating more content through more channels at faster speeds. Such an approach has no strategic basis whatsoever and is doomed to fail.

Why do marketers do it? In part, it's a tech problem. The options for funneling more content through a greater number of touch points increase daily. Cloud-based platforms, dynamic web pages, a wealth of social media channels and countless other innovations aim to help marketers automate processes and scale their efforts. Just push another button, and better and better tools will make marketing magic happen.

But the key question from a content marketing perspective is not how fast, how easily or how much marketers are able to disseminate; instead, you must ask what kind of content will best connect your brand with your buyers and customers.

Content marketing's fundamental goal isn't to convey brand information to the organization's main audiences; it's to drive specific business outcomes. Any effort to accelerate content that fails to also achieve positive—and measurable—outcomes in sales, revenues and profits is no strategy at all. More often than not, this crucial nuance is overlooked and so organizations don't get the full value of their investment in content.

Accelerate demand, not noise

According to the 2014 ANNUITAS survey, a mere 2.8 percent of B2B marketers with enterprise-wide responsibilities are satisfied with the effectiveness of their demand-generation programs.

From a content marketer's perspective, this is a devastating statistic. Demand generation is fueled by content, and since marketing's ultimate goal is to increase demand for an organization's products or services, such a high rate of dissatisfaction implies considerable waste in content marketing's potential value. In fact, Sirius Decisions says 70 to 80 percent of all marketing content is never used.

What motivates buyer behavior?

First, marketers must understand what the buying journey looks like and what triggers or events signal readiness.

How do your buyers get information?

How do your buyers prefer to consume content? How does that change over the buying cycle?

How does your content architecture tie it together?

With data in hand, marketers can build a content architecture that meets buyers with relevant content at each stage of the process.

Understanding how to create content specific to demand generation is the key to augmenting successful content marketing results. It all begins with a documented content marketing strategy.

Define key elements of a customer-centric strategy

An effective content marketing strategy is built on three core components: buyer insights, content consumption patterns and content architecture. Failing to integrate any of these three elements into the content marketing strategy will ultimately cause a demand-generation program to fail, and augmenting the wrong tactics will make it fail even faster.

What motivates buying behavior?

Buyer profiling is certainly not new, but understanding behaviors that make a real difference in results is

surprisingly lacking. Demographic information and other routine data points are not enough to understand how to be heard above the noise.

The real challenge is to develop a deeper understanding of how buyers think, what they need and what we need to say to get them to choose us. Who are they? What roles do they play in the buying process? What is important to them individually and collectively as a buying committee? What are their pain points, challenges and buying triggers?

Understanding what truly motivates the buyer is by far the most important component in creating a content marketing strategy.

How do your buyers get information?

Next, you must understand the buyers' content-consumption patterns. What kind of content do buyers prefer? Where do they consume it and what channels do they use? Only after establishing the buyers' specific preferences will amplifying the content be able to generate reliable and predictable results.

Building a content architecture

Understanding the buyers' purchase path is the final cornerstone in building a strategic blueprint. Aligning content consumption patterns with insights into the buyers' pain and trigger points provides the framework needed to develop a predictable purchase path. With a clear roadmap, it's then possible to create a content architecture to engage, nurture or convert buyers according to where they are in their own particular buying journeys.

Only after a written content marketing strategy aligns buyer behavior with key stages in the buying process should any content development begin. Amplifying content that doesn't resonate with buyers in meaningful ways is far more likely to increase marketing costs than it is to generate pipeline and revenue

Accelerate demand

Strategic content acceleration doesn't happen in isolation. Integrating content effectively into a demand process requires more than simply aligning content to the buyer. It also requires a strategic alignment with people, process and technology to ensure the organization as a whole derives greater value from the augmentation initiative. Only then will content marketers be able to validate the program's ability to increase the number of qualified leads and achieve the company's broader marketing objectives. [COO](#)

LENOX: DEMAND-DRIVEN CONTENT MARKETING STRATEGY DRIVES UP QUALIFIED LEADS

In early 2014, the LENOX marketing team began a strategic effort to launch a buyer-centric content marketing strategy. As one of the world's largest providers of industrial saw blades, LENOX was well-known and entrenched in its markets, and the company's leadership knew well that its target base was changing the way it consumed relevant content.

The change process began with in-depth customer and industry research to identify the personas, pain points and triggers needed to understand the buyers' consumption patterns and purchase path. Research showed a serious gap in content designed to nurture potential buyers who weren't yet ready to convert into qualified leads, and as a result, too many marketing messages were falling on deaf ears.

To reach buyers regardless of where they were in the buying process, LENOX created the Industrial Metal Cutting Resource Center. Each section within the center focuses on a stage

of the buying process—engagement, nurture or conversion. Depending on what kind of content the prospects access, LENOX can identify where they are in their buying journey.

An ongoing flow of blogs, SEO, PPC, email communications, white papers and other forms of content generate leads that are given a weighted score. The feedback gives the marketing team what it needs to continue to optimize content. Tactics that lead to better results are augmented; those with lesser impact are minimized or eliminated altogether.

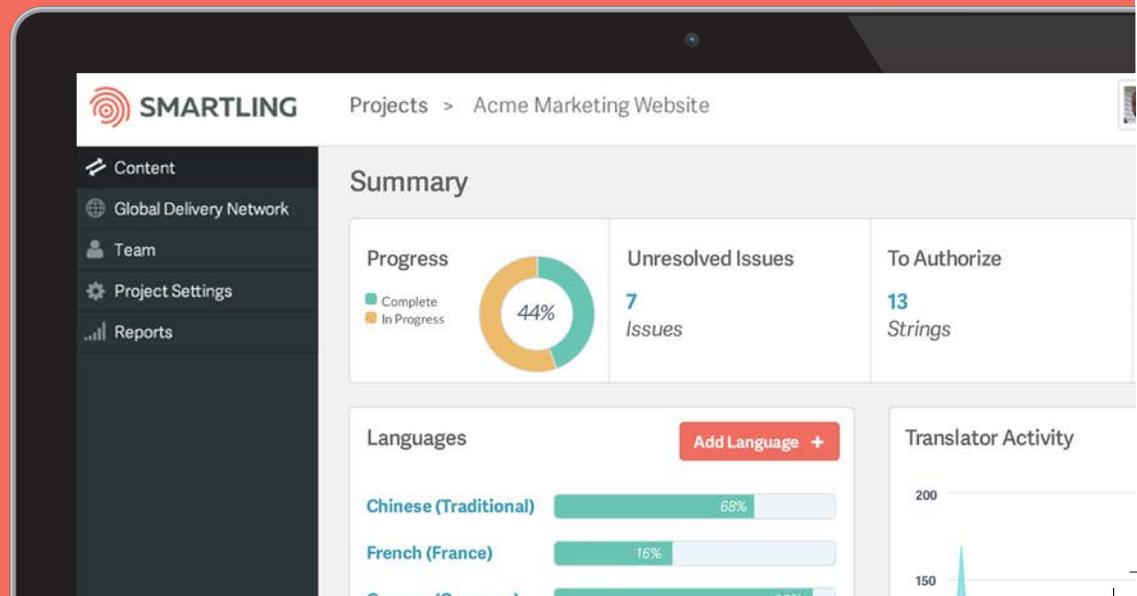
Within months, the program began to deliver measurable results. By the end of 2014, LENOX marketing had increased its contribution to the sales pipeline significantly, and by early 2015 the program was consistently converting 11 percent of engaged leads into qualified leads—up from single digits in pre-program results. At LENOX, the strategy is to accelerate results, not content.

Carlos Hidalgo is the CEO of ANNUITAS. Follow him @cahidalgo.

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Content Mover

Need more help? 8 non-obvious tips to promote your content.
<http://cmi.media/8tips>



Andy Crestodina is the co-founder of Orbit Media and one of the best teachers we know when it comes to search engine optimization, email marketing and social media. In this interview, Crestodina speaks plainly about why great content creators don't always come out ahead, and the dangers of putting your content distribution strategies on auto-pilot.

Clare McDermott



CCO: Three years ago, the content marketing mantra was something like, “If you build it, they will come.” Yet more and more, I see marketers paying a lot of attention to what comes after creation. What matters more?

Crestodina: Quality is a deal breaker. Low-quality content can't be helped by any effort. No amount of promotion will help a bad piece of content get more traffic, engage more visitors or attain higher ROI. Quality is a necessary baseline.

But there is not necessarily a correlation between high-quality content and traffic. An OK piece of content that is promoted brilliantly will outperform brilliant content with just-OK promotion. There is no doubt in my mind about that. The winners are those who are great promoters. Great creators are not necessarily going to come out on top.

It's common—especially for bloggers—to publish something, share it on Twitter and Facebook, and then move on to the next piece of content. They spend 80 percent of their time on content and 20 percent of their time marketing it.

They're slaves to the publishing calendar. To get better results, they speed up the publishing schedule but do not change their tactics for promotion. Endlessly sharing via social media and

emailing to a list are not nearly as powerful as a plan to get large-scale sharing or a plan to aggressively grow your list.

The winners in content marketing are those who are good at influencer marketing, list growth and keyword research/usage. Those are the most important tactics for the three main traffic channels: social, email and search.

I see influencer marketing, list growth and SEO as tech-driven. True?

There's a science to it and tools for each, but I don't think you need technology to do any of those three. You only need basic tools. Simple programming and web design tricks will give you list growth. And you don't need to use influencer-marketing platforms.

It's not really about the tools; it's what you do with them. Imagine you want more friends in life. Would you say, “I need to get better at communicating. I'm going to buy a better phone?” No. You can't automate getting new friends. The same is true for growing your audience.

Here's a classic example: A lot of marketers use a plugin from WordPress to manage keywords. Every time they write something, they are careful to use certain keywords in the headline and body text, use meta tags, etc. ... The

Good content with great promotion will beat great content with good promotion ... every time.

<p>CONTENT AMPLIFICATION MASTERY</p> <p>Crestodina points to four key competency areas:</p>	
<p>Search</p> <p>Keyword research, keyword usage, guest posting, search-savvy PR, related marketing activities</p>	<p>Social</p> <p>Influencer marketing, pitching content via social (PR), social sharing (community) and conversation</p>
<p>Email</p> <p>Design, list growth, subject line expertise, timing and frequency, landing pages, testing, optimization</p>	<p>Analytics</p> <p>Traffic, traffic sources, content performance, conversion rate optimization</p>

plugin tells them to use the keyword “x” many times. The visual meter on the screen goes from red to green when they’ve filled the quota. That is a crazy way to do SEO because it doesn’t take into account the likelihood of ranking for that phrase. No matter how and where you use the phrase, you will lose if you’re not in the same range of authority and link popularity as the other high-ranking sites for the phrase.

Marketers who try to ram in keywords—and particularly those targeting a phrase for which they have zero chance to rank—show a fundamental lack of understanding of what works. It’s depressing in the long run.

Another mistake is choosing a keyword(s) because it has the biggest search value. If someone sees that one phrase gets 100 searches per month versus another with 10,000 searches per month, they think the second phrase is better. But this isn’t always true. People want a prescriptive answer, but it’s not that simple.

The gap between good and great isn’t a quality gap; it’s a promotion gap. Great content requires an understanding of why people visit a particular website, how headlines work, the role of images and colors—basically the psychology of web searches and content consumption.

Let me offer an example. You may want to know: What is the best format and topic for downloads that will get people to give you an email address? The answer? A list of tools in a PDF format. It may vary audience by audience, but evidence shows the ideal ethical bribe to get a visitor to subscribe (i.e., share an email address) is a PDF with a list of tools. Those who don’t try it will have slower list growth.

Promotion savvy requires an analytical—even technical—skill set. You need to be a hacker of psychology and search. There’s little opinion involved. Judging the quality of content is squishy, but knowing which actions lead to which outcomes for traffic and promotion is not that squishy. 

Clare McDermott is chief editor of CCO magazine. Follow her @soloportfolio.

The winners in content marketing are those who are good at influencer marketing, list growth and keyword research/usage.

AMPLIFICATION KNOW-HOW

Want to sharpen your amplification skills? Check out these resources:



BOOK: *Content Chemistry: The Illustrated Handbook*. This easy-to-digest guide from Orbit Media Studios (and written by Andy Crestodina) covers the essentials of amplification, including search, social, email and analytics.

VIDEO: Whiteboard Friday. Moz founder Rand Fishkin hosts this Friday video tutorial on key aspects of SEO, amplification and demand generation. It’s a must-see for marketers in the trenches of content creation and distribution.



<http://cmi.media/influencermktg>

eBOOK: *The Complete Guide to Influencer Marketing*. This guide from the Content Marketing Institute covers the strategies, templates and tools you need to pull off an influencer marketing program.

CASE STUDY: How to Attract Over 50K Subscribers in 6 Months. The creators of digital magazine, Relevance, share the step-by-step process they used to build an audience—from earned media and influencer marketing to paid promotion and social media.



<http://cmi.media/50ksubscribers>



Linking techniques that will help your content get ranked, found and read: <http://cmi.media/linking>

THE ULTIMATE SEO RESOURCE GUIDE: 10 Steps to Optimize Your Content Marketing Plan

With search engines updating algorithms so frequently, how is a mortal content marketer supposed to keep up? Here are your 10 essentials.

Tracy Gold

STEP 1



View SEO and content marketing as partners, not opponents.

Agencies that specialize in one discipline or the other may benefit from creating a distance between SEO and content marketing, but this way of thinking can be detrimental to the success of your content. Stop wasting time wondering whether you should implement content marketing *or* SEO. Just write for humans, but use the tenets of SEO to help the right people find the right content.

STEP 2



Audit your existing SEO program.

A good first step for improving your SEO is to audit your existing activities. In an industry with rapidly changing algorithms, constant evaluation and iteration is key to stay on top.

Steps and tools to audit your SEO.
<http://cmi.media/websitelaudit>

STEP 3



Choose the right keyword(s).

Yes, search is becoming more context-driven, but choosing the right keywords and using them in an optimized way is still important. SEO expert Mike Murray points out, "If you constantly create internet content without thinking through search engine optimization and keywords, you will rank for *something* (content does resonate with search engine algorithms) ... yet you will run the risk of shortchanging your SEO strategy."

Print a 12-step keyword checklist.
<http://cmi.media/keywordchecklist>

STEP 4



Seek (non-spammy) links.

Google considers how many credible websites link to your content as part of its algorithm. As with all things SEO, don't try too hard. If Google thinks you're trying to game the system (e.g., buying links), you'll likely be penalized. What's the best way to build links? Publish awesome content people want to reference. End of story.

STEP 5



Optimize your content.

Once you've identified your target keywords, be sure your content is optimized for them.

Read a beginner's guide to finding and using keywords to optimize your content. <http://cmi.media/optimizecontent>

STEP 6

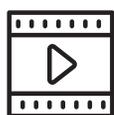


Incorporate SEO into social.

Ensure your social media and SEO efforts complement each other.

Why you need integrated social and search to attract customers. <http://cmi.media/optimization>

STEP 7



Consider rich snippets.

Rich snippets are a way to mark up your content that will allow search engines to enhance their results listings displays. There are many different types of rich snippets (e.g., video previews, images and ratings) but all of them make your content more appealing to search engines.

How to use rich snippets. <http://cmi.media/richsnippets>

STEP 8



Activate your employees for greater SEO power.

Search marketing expert Paul Shapiro calls employees a "sleeping giant for content marketing SEO." Content marketers already strive to activate employees on social media, so why shouldn't we place the same emphasis on involving employees in SEO?

How to encourage employees to join in your SEO efforts. <http://cmi.media/employeeSEO>

STEP 9



Measure your success.

Gauge search engine optimization success as it ties into your content marketing strategy.

How to use Google Analytics to measure content marketing and SEO. <http://cmi.media/GAforSEO>

STEP 10



Use SEO data to inform all content marketing.

As frustrating as the ever-changing world of SEO can be, content marketers should rejoice about one aspect of SEO: There's a wealth of data produced by SEO efforts that we can use to improve our other content marketing efforts.

Gather and apply search insights to content marketing in four steps. <http://cmi.media/searchinsights>

DON'T STOP LEARNING ABOUT SEO

Blogs

- Google Official Blog
- Matt Cutts' Blog
- The Moz Blog
- SEO by the Sea
- Search Engine Journal
- Search Engine Land
- Search Engine Watch

Quick Tools

- **comScore Search Planner:** Paid tool for advanced search insights
- **Google AdWords:** Research keywords whether you run a paid campaign or not
- **Google Analytics:** Free website analytics
- **Google Trends:** See search trends over time
- **Rank Checker from SEO Book:** Check your page's rank on specified keywords

THE
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ISSUE

Content Amplification Tools for Content Creators

While technology won't single handedly save your content amplification efforts, these tools can help you leverage your existing efforts.



INFLUENCER MARKETING

These tools help you identify key influencers, use influencer channels to get your ideas shared, and measure results.

:DWOM

BuzzSumo

Dynamic Signal

Influence & Co.

inPowered

IZEA

Kred

SocialToaster

Studio D

TapInfluence

Topsy

Traackr

SEARCH

Are you choosing topics your audience cares about? Using keywords that will lead to conversions? Creating engaging headlines? These tools help you with keyword research and usage, plus help you measure results.

Bing Webmaster Tools

Brafton

BrightEdge

BuzzStream

BuzzSumo

Conductor

Crowd Content

Distilled

Google Analytics

gShift

Kissmetrics

MOZ

Majestic

Raven Tools

Rio SEO

Search Laboratory

SEMRush

Squirrly

Track Maven

UpCity

WebCEO

CONTENT DISCOVERY, SYNDICATION & NATIVE ADVERTISING

These tools help you gas up your content engine by distributing your content through a greater number of channels than you can reach organically.

Custom Studios

Disqus

Google Matched content

LiveFyre

Movable Media

Nativo

nRelate

OneSpot

Outbrain

Scripted

Sharethrough

Storylift

Taboola

WSJ. Custom Studios

Yahoo Recommends

Zemanta

Need more help understanding your audience?

Find out how to translate audience data to improve your content marketing strategy. <http://cmi.media/audienceedata>



Data: The Missing Piece in Your Content Strategy

Brad Messinger

Too few marketers truly use a data-driven content marketing strategy. Setting clear goals and using data as your guide ensure you are developing the right type of content, getting it in front of the right audiences, and understanding its impact in a way that lets you to continually optimize your strategy. I refer to this three-step framework as the three Cs: context, connections and clarity—all of which are grounded in data.

CONTEXT

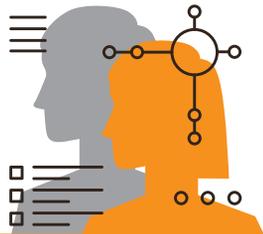
At the crux of data-informed design is a solid understanding of your target customers. The more you know about your audience, the better you will be able to develop relevant content that reaches and resonates with them at the moments that matter.

This means gathering as much information as possible—including your customers' online and offline behaviors—to determine their interests and how they act upon those interests. While it may not be feasible to develop true one-to-one content at scale, you can use this data to pinpoint common characteristics and habits of individual audience segments and prioritize your content development accordingly.

One of the most intriguing aspects of digital marketing is the data trail customers leave behind during their online journeys. Marketers are able to piece together this information in hopes of understanding the true context and intent of people's interactions. These puzzle pieces come in many different shapes and sizes, including your customers' search queries, social media conversations, digital media interactions and more.

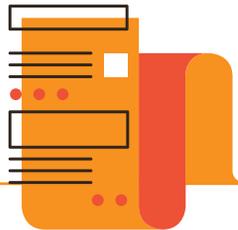
Don't undervalue the competitive intelligence at your fingertips. Invest in time to understand what type of content your competitors are developing, and across what media. What areas are already saturated within the market? Are there certain keywords or topics that will give you top billing in search engine results? This will give you insight into whether you want to compete in those areas, or if you can find some more open space to creatively stand out and win the heart of your customers.

These are just a few ideas to get you thinking about creative ways to collect information, all with the goal of understanding the context of your target



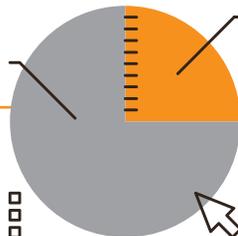
CONTEXT

Let your customers' online behavior influence the content you develop.



CONNECTIONS

Distribute your content in a way that maximizes reach, particularly for your most valuable audience members.



CLARITY

How well are your customers engaging with your content and does your content help them make buying decisions?

audience. As you continue to gather data, consider how your brand will use it to add value to the equation. An informed approach will allow you to create more relevant, timely and differentiated content that will delight your customers. Your data is telling you a very important story, make sure you're listening.

CONNECTIONS

Through your data gathering, you should have a pretty solid understanding of what your target audience wants, when they want it, how they want it and where they want it. Once you've developed content based on that understanding, the next phase is to distribute it in the most high-impact and efficient way possible. Just pushing the post button on your corporate blog isn't going to cut it. No matter how relevant a piece of content is to your audience and how well you've matched it to their interests and needs, if they never see it you're wasting your efforts.

Now is the time to think through creative distribution methods, outside of your owned channels. This may include leveraging advocates both inside and outside of your organization, or partnering with influencers whom your consumers trust. You can also use paid social or display ads to target the right kinds of customers based on the same contextual information you used to develop your content. Additionally, simple remarketing techniques can guide customers to relevant content at the time when they are most receptive.

CLARITY

This final, data-driven step is an important one. Evaluating the success of your content's performance not only informs the first two phases of your strategy, it also lets you prove the value of your investment.

Study how to map your content to various stages in the customer journey. Traffic and shares are great places to start, but dig deeper. How are customers interacting with your information and how is it being used to advance or accelerate their next decisions? Through this analysis, you'll identify key insights, such as whether your content is driving a shorter purchasing path or more frequent purchases. Consider setting benchmarks against certain segments and audience areas.

For some brands, it can be very difficult to assign ROI figures to content, in which case you might consider using proxy metrics to illustrate impact. I've seen marketers use different scoring systems to assign value to various areas of engagement and test pieces of content against each other. For example, a click on your brand's content may be worth one point while further engagement with your site is two points content sharing is three points, and a content download (such as a recipe or guide) is four. Then, assess the buying propensity of different score levels. This can be adjusted based on your goals and the types of content you are creating, but ultimately, you are looking to show correlation between the scores and sales.

The most successful content marketing campaigns don't just happen by chance. Marketers have a wealth of data at their disposal. Knowing how to harness and leverage this information appropriately can be the difference between developing content that simply looks nice, and implementing a content strategy that leads to engagement and conversions.

Content marketing has been said to be difficult, costly and hard to measure. But do it right and there is an opportunity for outstanding payoff. ☞

Brad Messinger is the senior vice president of marketing for Rise Interactive, a digital marketing and analytics agency. Follow him @BradMessinger.



BASIC TOOLS TO GUIDE YOUR CONTENT MARKETING STRATEGY

Google Trends helps you identify trending topics and see the popularity of various search queries over time.

Google AdWords Keyword Planner gives you insight into the searches your customers are performing, including linguistic opportunities you may not have otherwise uncovered.

BuzzSumo enables you to research specific topics and see what articles about those topics have performed particularly well, giving you purview into how various pieces of your future content may perform.

Pew Research Center and other data-rich research sites provide access to demographics, media analysis, statistics and more.

Your own first-party data, such as web analytics, can give you a wealth of insight into your audience and content performance.

For a more detailed understanding of how to amplify your content, turn to page 12.



Read more from
Jonathan Crossfield:
[http://cmi.media/
crossfield](http://cmi.media/crossfield)



When Followers Attack...

A Monty Python guide to maintaining social media harmony.

Jonathan Crossfield

The day starts like any other—a bit of trivial hashtag banter, a share of a new infographic and answers to customer queries. But then an unexpected and highly negative comment kicks you right in the sentiments. Followed by another. And another.

You try to take the complaints offline. “DM me your email,” you tweet. “Call our support line,” you post on Facebook. But the attacks, complaints and heckles keep on coming.

Eventually, someone adds a witty hashtag and that’s when your day really starts.

A social media attack can be quite a surreal experience, leaving you as bewildered and frustrated as a character in a Monty Python sketch. The trick to finding the right punchline is to know which Python sketch you are in.

“Is this the right room for an argument?”

Let’s deal with trolls first, as they’re often misunderstood.

A troll isn’t just anyone who criticizes or unleashes anger at your brand on social media. *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines “troll” as: “A person who makes a deliberately offensive or provocative online post,” intended to cause distress, disruption or elicit an angry response.

You can’t reason with trolls because their goal isn’t to solve a problem, discuss an issue or provide feedback. Trolling is about deception—trying to keep you on the hook for as long as possible by convincing you that the complaints or claims are genuine. The argument is the goal and your frustration is the reward. No matter what you say or do, the troll will contradict, confound and contest all attempts to calm or resolve the situation.

That’s why the best advice is always,

“don’t feed the trolls.” If it becomes clear that someone is only interested in ruining your day, politely call an end to the conversation. Once a troll realizes you can’t be baited further into responding, he or she will lose interest.

However, while you should ignore a troll, you shouldn’t ignore any other social media heckler. It might be tempting to treat them as trolls, as it allows you to ignore a difficult situation or dismiss their criticisms, but you may inadvertently trigger a much bigger situation.

“I wish to register a complaint!”

Think about when someone has made you angry. If that someone refused to acknowledge your concerns, offering feeble excuses, you probably became even angrier and more determined to be taken seriously.

This is the difference between a troll and a genuine complaint. The anger is genuine and, if ignored, may come back in a very public manner. And if that single spurned complainant finds other equally unsatisfied customers online, you may find yourself facing the online equivalent of flaming torches and pitchforks.

Some social media backlashes are now so infamous that they have become the marketing equivalent of campfire horror stories. “And so the passenger took vengeance for his broken guitar by writing a catchy protest song and YouTube video that went viral, putting the social media thumbscrews on United Airlines for weeks!”

Just like “United Breaks Guitars”, there are many other examples of brands fueling a social media storm by refusing to treat a complaint with enough respect or by constantly dodging accountability ... but I can’t advise you how to handle



“I wish to complain about this parrot what I purchased not half an hour ago from this very boutique.”



“Oh yes, the Norwegian Blue. What’s wrong with it?”



“I’ll tell you what’s wrong with it. It’s dead, that’s what’s wrong with it!”



“No, no, it’s resting.”



“Look, my lad, I know a dead parrot when I see one and I’m looking at one right now.”

THE DEAD PARROT SKETCH - 1969



Michael Palin: “Argument is an intellectual process. Contradiction is just the automatic naysaying of any statement the other person makes.”



John Cleese:
No it isn’t!

THE ARGUMENT CLINIC - 1972

such a social media backlash, as social media usually isn't the problem.

In each case, the real problem was elsewhere in the business. Someone at United broke Dave Carroll's guitar and someone else dismissed the angry complaint. By treating the resulting firestorm as an exclusively social media problem, the brand once more trivializes and dismisses the core complaint or community concern.

If your brand chooses to blame social media for causing the problem instead of identifying what really needs fixing, then, to be blunt, you deserve everything you get!

But not every customer backlash is justified. Sometimes, a brand can be victimized by a fanatical protest it could never have expected.

"Nobody expects the Spanish Inquisition!"

Unlike trolls, fanatics definitely want your brand to do something and won't stop protesting or heckling until you do. But unlike a broken guitar or dead parrot, the dispute may be unfair, unrealistic or just plain wrong.

So how do you handle the constant disruption and attacks from a fanatical inquisition that considers your brand guilty until proven innocent (and probably not even then)?

In Australia, Vegemite was one of a number of brands to come under sustained attack in social media by the Boycott Halal movement, protesting against the certification of foods as Halal (i.e., permissible for Muslims to eat). Vegemite is an iconic Aussie brand that, just because of the nature of the food product, happens to be Halal and therefore eligible for certification. (It's also certified as Kosher too, but that doesn't seem to bother anyone.)

The Halal critics certainly believe in their cause, but that doesn't mean they are right. (There's a neat summary of the controversy at <http://cmi.media/boycott>.)

To reclaim its social media channels from the angry mob, Vegemite decided to get in front of the controversy with a media release and a carefully-worded post on its Facebook page.

While we enjoy a bit of banter as much as the next breakfast spread, anyone who insists on posting comments of hate, religious vilification or unwarranted grumpiness will be removed from our social media pages. So, no matter how you spread your Vegemite, remember – we're just here to #SpreadTheLove.

The Vegemite team used the ensuing comment thread to reply to relevant comments with the

Knowing when to bend and when to stand firm (and when to walk away) takes experience.

brand's side of the story, while providing the facts about Halal certification in a calm and conciliatory manner. This tactic also contained the argument to a single thread and hashtag, instead of allowing the debate to dominate the brand's Facebook page and other social media channels.

The carefully moderated environment encouraged more of the community to speak out in defense of the brand, spreading the message across Facebook and tilting the weight of the conversation away from the protesters.

There's nothing funny about a social media attack

Defending a brand against a social media attack isn't easy. Knowing when to bend and when to stand firm (and when to walk away) takes experience.

It's a good idea to have a plan in place to deal with a sudden social media crisis—when to escalate, who should be notified and how to move the conversation out of the public arena where you can. But it's virtually impossible to come up with a script or series of responses specific enough to get you out of trouble in all situations. Some attacks—such as the Boycott Halal campaign—just can't be predicted and certainly can't be resolved with generic responses.

So, don't treat all attacks the same way. Determine what you're dealing with, follow your agreed process and develop the most appropriate response for the specific situation.

That's why some days can be tough. It ain't all memes and hashtags! Then again, I never planned to work in social media, you know. I wanted to be ... a lumberjack! ☪



Cardinal Fang: "You are hereby charged that you did on diverse dates commit heresy against the Holy Church."



Cardinal Biggles: "Now, how do you plead?"



Lady Mountback: "We're innocent."



Cardinal Biggles: "We'll soon change your mind about that!"

THE SPANISH INQUISITION SKETCH - 1970

DEPARTMENT EDITOR



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



**A
COMPLEX
UNITY**

A look inside the United Nations social media efforts, and the difficult balance between reporting critical, breaking news and supporting the longer-term needs of a diverse membership.

Andrew Vale

How is social media structured at an organization as large and diverse as the UN?

It's a very decentralized organization. Around the UN system, everyone is completely separate, with distinct budgets, officials and reporting structures. So UNICEF, the World Health Organization and others are all their own entities with their own communications people and that's where most of the individual social media content will come from.

I work in the Secretariat's department of public information, which sits at the top of the UN. So our team works with the spokespeople, the Secretary-General's team, and we also have a mandate to cover the major issues of the UN. We coordinate global campaigns, but organizations across the UN system might adapt those campaigns for their own audience. For example, WHO may join in a global campaign on sustainable development; they use our guidance but then may adapt it for a public health audience and not use all the content. In the end, each entity has editorial control over its own accounts.

Our team is surprisingly small. Social media came into being at the UN during the recent financial crisis, so we couldn't afford a team as large as I would have liked at the time because all of our member countries were dealing with the crisis and our budgets were cut. That means a lot of our social (media) work is still done by staff as part of their role, rather than the primary part of their job. We've requested more positions in the future and we hope to get help covering other languages.

With over 13 million followers across its Twitter accounts, the United Nations has a community worthy of its global presence. The UN's presence includes accounts such as the World Health Organization, UNICEF and its primary UN account, and it publishes a vast array of news announcements to its 193 member states across six languages.

For many, the UN's social accounts are fast becoming the first port of call in times of struggle, yet the organization must balance crisis content with news about the wide variety of work it does around the globe, long after news cameras have stopped rolling.

Nancy Groves, social media team leader at the UN, discusses the unique challenges of delivering an effective social media presence amid major global issues with a multitude of powerful parties involved.

PHOTO CREDIT: UN PHOTO/ESKINDER DEBEBE; UN PHOTO/ARI GAITANIS

Your mix of content covers an eclectic range of global issues. For example, you posted about International Jazz Day on Twitter, right after a post about Ebola. How do you balance the more uplifting stories with the more serious ones?

It's really hard, but we try to think of what people want to know about. They want to know about what's happening in a crisis, how they can help, if there's any positive news on it, and what the governments around the world are doing about it. At the same time our bosses are all of the UN member states, who have chosen various international days for us to cover (such as International Jazz Day).

Internally, it can feel a bit inappropriate for us to be looking at something less urgent when we're highly aware there's a major event happening somewhere else in the world. But those international days are sometimes our most popular content and a lot of people want to see it. So we try to take those more feel-good stories and explain why it's worth caring about. So with that jazz content, we're showing how it promotes social tolerance and celebrates different arts. This coincides with our wider goals that we talk about on our accounts as appreciation for different cultures can help to deal with violent extremism.

Do you run into trouble when you publish such a diverse mix of content?

There are some people who write to us and complain, but all of the international days are set months or years in advance. For example, we recently had Intellectual Property Day, looking at the issues surrounding music rights; it happened to be around the same time as the Nepal earthquake. We had some people saying "there's an earthquake happening, I think we can forget about intellectual property for now." The earthquake was still something we were covering, but intellectual property is important to many people; it's their livelihood and they deserve their day too.

Even though there are huge crises all over the world, the UN is big enough to have people dealing with all of these different issues. So hopefully with social media, people can start to understand more about what the UN is and how we're set up to deal with a wide range of areas.

How much impact do these crises have on your overall Twitter communication strategy?

Over the last two years it's been tough. We've had the Ebola outbreak, fighting is continuing in Syria; then

there are all of the forgotten crises such as the situations in the Central African Republic or in Darfur. We're always assessing ourselves to make sure we're giving enough attention to these various areas. It's a challenge for us to not just focus on the big crises, but also all of the work that the UN does that many in the world might know about. Our economic work still continues, the human rights work still continues, and luckily the UN is organized in such a way as to be able to address major events alongside our ongoing efforts elsewhere.

What sort of sign-off process is there for social content at the UN?

We are lucky in that our senior officials really trust us from a communications standpoint, so there's not as much sign off as you might expect. But a lot of that is because we're taking already-approved messages and adapting them for each social platform. So there might be a statement put out, then it's up to us to decide which one line from the statement might be the best one to feature in a tweet. If we aren't sure, then we can speak to an expert internally and discuss which angle we should be putting out.

Also, we have a practice of making sure that everything we tweet or post has been seen by at least two people. When you're tweeting quickly about major issues it's easy to make a typo or leave out an important word, so we always endeavor to get more than one pair of eyes on everything before it goes out.

There are 193 member states of the UN. If there's an issue going on between two members, how do you balance delivering updates on the situation while also being impartial to both sides?

There's an understanding among the governments that the UN will try to be as neutral as possible, and we work to live up to that. From a humanitarian standpoint we want to do what we can to get the aid where we need to get it or promote the human rights of everyone. So as long as we stick to the UN's messages we're usually reasonably safe.



Nancy Groves
on the UN's most
pressing social
media challenges.

On balancing crisis communications with ongoing program promotion:

Over the last two years it's been tough. We've had the Ebola outbreak, fighting is continuing in Syria; then there are all of the forgotten crises such as the situations in the Central African Republic or in Darfur. We're always assessing ourselves to make sure we're giving enough attention to these various areas. It's a challenge for us to not just focus on the big crises, but also all of the work that the UN does that many in the world might know about.

On toggling between using Twitter for general communication versus crisis management:

People are beginning to realize that beneficiaries of aid (are) looking to their social media accounts to report needs, update people on a situation or point out some wrongdoing. Then the social media responses might not be best carried out by communications people. So we're working on solutions with the aid agencies where we can work together to use Twitter to help to deliver aid or information more efficiently.

On representing such diverse—and even dueling—factions:

There's an understanding among the governments that the UN will try to be as neutral as possible, and we work to live up to that... But we can't always please everyone.



A
COMPLEX
UNITY

On the peacekeeping side we tend to focus on the mandates of the mission itself and the work that the UN is doing, as we don't want to jeopardize any sensitive ongoing discussions.

But we can't always please everyone. There have been times when a member state has called and said they didn't like an image that we'd used for one reason or another. One time we used an image of an older woman in a post about a human rights report. That particular country called and said it made it look like everyone in the country was old. We just thought it was a great picture that tied in with the theme of human rights issues and the convention on aging that the country had signed up to, painting them in a positive manner. They disagreed. It shows that member countries do look at our accounts to make sure we're representing them in a fair light.

What role does Twitter fulfill in assisting people affected by a crisis?

It's something new that we've been talking about. People are beginning to realize that beneficiaries of aid (are) looking to their social media accounts to report needs, update people on a situation or point out some wrongdoing. In that case the social media responses might not be best carried out by communications people. So we're working on solutions with the aid agencies where we can work together to use Twitter to help to deliver aid or information more efficiently.

We will still have a lot of people tweeting to us on social media to ask

us general questions, such as asking if Ebola is in their country and how they could protect themselves. Other times we might have someone complaining that they've not been able to vote in their country, so we'll look to respond with details on the local organization that's reporting back to us on election issues. It was gratifying to see that social was the channel they chose to seek those answers, and I think that a directly helpful role is most likely involved in the UN's future on Twitter. We're not quite there yet, but intense discussions are happening to look at how we take this factor forward. ☺

Andy Vale is the content manager at SocialBro. Follow him @AndyVale.



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CONTENT MARKETER *of* THE YEAR

AND THE WINNER IS ...



VISHAL KHANNA

Director of Marketing and Business Development
Wake Forest Innovations

This year the choice for Content Marketer of the Year does not have the quirkiest Vine videos or the most passionate Pinterest following. One might even argue Vishal Khanna's portfolio of work is on the boring side. **We beg to differ.**

Under Vishal Khanna's leadership, Wake Forest Innovations generated a 600 percent increase in web-based marketing-qualified leads and a 100 percent increase in sales revenue. (Yep, you heard that right.)

Khanna built a B2B marketing powerhouse by helping to commercialize Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center and Wake Forest University's medical science assets. Because he didn't have a model of how to undertake it, Khanna translated what works in other industries to his own unique requirements.

Khanna established five distinct websites for each of Wake Forest's areas of focus. An outside agency helped develop the content marketing strategy for the websites, but Khanna, one full-time employee, and two contractors working 30 hours a week create the content. To maximize the time required of Wake Forest scientists to provide input, Khanna developed a methodical process for gathering information. Each 90-minute interview yields at least three assets (e.g., web copy, social content, video, photos).

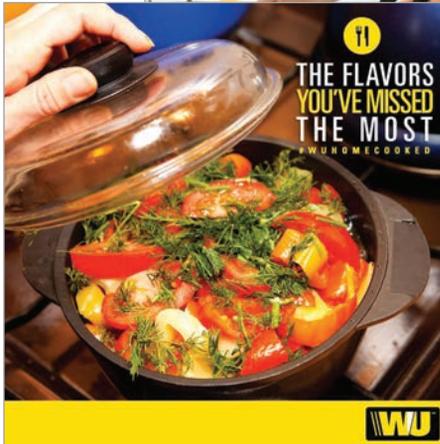
Ultimately, Wake Forest's content marketing strategy is focused on moving users from lead to prospect to customer. Says Khanna, "Our goal is not necessarily to keep users engaged within our website, but instead to try to move them from the web to email or phone because that's where the sale is going to happen." To date Khanna's results are more than impressive ... and a reminder to marketers that hard work in the trenches isn't always glamorous, but can earn you the gold medal. 

Why Vishal Khanna?

- ✓ Established a content marketing program in a new industry.
- ✓ Defined a clear strategy, including a content marketing strategy.
- ✓ Delivered big results with a small team.
- ✓ Aligned with Wake Forest Innovation's business goals: Driving more sales.

Read about all the Content Marketer of the Year Finalists: <http://cmi.media/CMOY15finalists>





Inspired Content

Western Union banks on its customers' passions to inspire remarkable content. **Laston Charriez**, the company's senior vice president of marketing for the Americas, explains how it innovates in a conservative industry.

Carla Johnson

Few brands have been household names as long as Western Union. Launched in 1851 as the New York & Mississippi Valley Printing Telegraph Company (the company changed its name to Western Union in 1856), the brand boasts an impressive list of "firsts": the first transcontinental telegraph, first transatlantic cable, the historic telegram that confirmed the Wright brothers' first flight and the world's first commercial beam radio system. Along the way, the telegraph company transformed into a leader in global-payment services.

Today Western Union's portfolio of brands—including Vigo, Orlandi Valuta, Pago Facil and Western Union Business Solutions payment services—provides consumers and businesses with fast, reliable and convenient ways to send and receive money around the world. In 2014, the Western Union Company completed 255 million consumer-to-consumer transactions worldwide, moving \$85 billion between consumers and completing 484 million business payments.

Laston Charriez, Western Union's senior vice president of marketing for the Americas, leads marketing for the company's largest region—the United States, Canada and Mexico. He sat down with me to talk about the Western Union strategy and the brand's ability to connect with a diverse audience.

Western Union has an amazing content microsite dedicated to home cooking around the world, a recent collaboration with Marvel Comics, and even a stint on Jimmy Kimmel. How do ideas like this come about?

We do "points-of-passion" studies with the help of an agency, Networked Insights. We bring consumers together and learn about their interests, and then we keep peeling the onion to understand their true passions. We use an index—a numerical indicator—that lets us know how strong these areas of interest are for the general public and for our consumers in particular. When our consumers over-index on a topic (i.e., when their numerical indicators are much higher than that of the general public) then we know we're on to something that really matters to an audience we want to reach. For example, when we did research on how to better reach families with small children, we saw that they over-indexed on family movies. That's how we came up with the idea for *Rio 2* (see sidebar).

It was this same process that led us to understand the passion that a group of consumers have for home-cooked meals from their local region or country of origin. We discovered that food

was a point of passion and then our social media team listened to what people were sharing. The #WUHomeCooked approach was a very personal and meaningful way for customers to tell the Western Union story on our behalf. [See sidebar.]

The idea for a Marvel comic came about the same way. We wanted to understand young men age 18 to 34. Our research showed that they over-indexed in comic books. One of our brand managers worked with Marvel to produce a comic book—brought to you by Western Union—that it released at Comic-Con in July. The brand is embedded within the story, and it's a fun way for us to bring Western Union forward without over doing it. We worked closely with Marvel and saw the storyboards and characters from the very beginning and gave them the green light on how the Western Union brand is presented, but we didn't have control over the story line.

Many brands have preconceived ideas about how to tell their story. In the case of Western Union, you followed insights and were open to where they led. How did you resist the urge to control the story?

We don't try to control the story or the content, but we do work closely with our legal team to make sure that we pay tribute to the Western Union brand and follow guidelines. For example, our research showed that food is a passion point, but we didn't know how that story would unfold. We looked for what mattered to consumers, and that's how we landed on video and the #WUHomeCooked hashtag. When we tapped Jimmy Kimmel to create something around Mother's Day this year, we didn't have full creative control. But both of these were ways to create rich content and then bring it to life in surprising ways that create delight for consumers.

By venturing into family recipes, movies, late-night TV and comic books, you're nothing like a rigid financial services company.

We're unwavering about the message of sending money, but we're trying to expand the conversation platform to a larger number of points where we can engage with consumers. In the last year, we went from 160,000 likes on Facebook to 5 million. We've done that by expanding the menu of touch points through which we talk to customers. We ask ourselves if these points are true opportunities to engage based on the points of passion. Are they true entry points through which to keep the conversation going? We don't buy attention, but we do look for authentic conversation points with consumers.

How, as a leader, do you act in a way that your team operates with no restrictions on what's possible?

We have a 70/20/10 breakdown to our approach. Ten percent of our work are things that have never been done. Twenty percent are things that we've piloted and are in the pipeline for regional expansion, and we'll keep refining them. Seventy percent are things that we've done and they're proven. With this prism, my team understands that 10 percent has to be new, even if it won't work. If everything is working, they aren't taking enough risks. As crazy as some of the things we've done are, it's really all about what will engage consumers.

As you look ahead to the next 12 to 24 months, what do you want to accomplish?

I want to make sure the transformation is complete. It's a journey. Like unfolding a big rug, you can't do it on your own, it's wide and heavy and you need help from others.

As for what complete looks like, I'm not sure and that's OK. It's an illusion to say that we can define the brand because it's consumers who actually do that. I guide it within our brand parameters, but the definition of the brand comes from the experience that people have with it. 

Carla Johnson is founder and president of Type A Communications. Follow her @carlajohnson.

NOT YOUR FATHER'S FINANCIAL SERVICES COMPANY

Laston Charriez is dead set on reinvigorating Western Union's image with a surprisingly non-traditional portfolio of brand content.



#WUHomeCooked: The team took the passion point of home-cooked meals and let Western Union customers tell the story through food and conversations with their loved ones back home. Sharing beautiful images of cuisine from around the world—from the traditional fixings of Ramadan to Khao Yum from Thailand—the company sets of a chain reaction from customers who share images of home cooking and memories from their own kitchens.



Rio 2: Western Union partnered with 20th Century Fox's *Rio 2* to create four commercials. The purpose was to connect with families and Hispanics, in particular.

Jimmy Kimmel Live: The brand tapped Kimmel to create a three-minute paid skit featured on ABC's *Jimmy Kimmel Live* to connect with a younger, hipper audience. The show is a top attraction for late-night TV viewers plus one of the top 100 most-viewed channels on YouTube.



Marvel Comics: Western Union launched *The Avengers* comic book in partnership with Marvel at Comic-Con in July, giving away thousands of copies at the Marvel booth. Initial Facebook engagement shows double that of normal global posts for Western Union.



Sweetgreen



COMING TO YOU LIVE ...

From pop-up to permanent, live experiences are reinventing the way customers interact with brands.

Natalya Minkovsky

Every summer since 1972, hundreds of people have gathered at Nathan's Famous on Coney Island for the company's annual hot-dog-eating contest. What started as a one-time stunt to bring more visitors to the Brooklyn hot-dog stand has become an annual tradition that attracts crowds of spectators and is aired by ESPN. While some would argue competitive eating is an unappealing, unhealthy spectacle, the event is at the core of Nathan's Famous marketing program, and the company's leadership credits consistent revenue growth to the contest's notoriety.

Not every company is capable of getting away with this kind of PR chutzpah, but more and more brands are turning to live experiences to connect with their customers. Creating an experience that is true to the brand and meaningful to the customer is not a small task, but consider the benefits of getting it right: A 2013 global study by Momentum Worldwide compared 23 types of brand experiences, from watching a TV commercial to visiting a website to attending a branded music, sports or other event. The study revealed that attending a branded live experience drives 65 percent of people to recommend the brand and 59 percent to buy it at retail afterwards—more than other type of brand experience.

ROCK & ROLL & TASTE

According to the team at Washington, DC-based salad chain Sweetgreen, music has always been an essential part of the company's DNA. The first Sweetlife Festival in 2010 was a small gathering of friends and family in the parking lot behind its second location.

Fast forward to 2015: There are more than 30 Sweetgreen locations around the United States, and the Sweetlife Festival boasts some of the biggest names in music, including Kendrick Lamar, Calvin Harris, Billy Idol and The Pixies.

According to Sweetgreen, "The Sweetlife is about meaningful living

and authentic relationships. It's about recognizing the unexpected combinations that create memories. Sweetlife 2015 is not just about seeing some of our favorite bands perform, or eating the best healthy, local food around—it's the intersection of these two things coming together to create a memorable experience."

Instead of the usual concert concessions, Sweetlife Festival attendees have access to a mix of national and local vendors, including big names like chef Jose Andrés, serving food from both concession stands and food trucks. Just like at Sweetgreen, the emphasis is on seasonal

offerings. The tavern serves a beer created for the festival in collaboration with Flying Dog Brewery. The event also featured a marketplace with local artisan vendors familiar to DC-area foodies, including Gordy's Pickle Jar, FRESHFARM Markets and Vigilante Coffee.

Known for its commitment to sustainability and seasonal food, Sweetgreen has done much more than sponsor a concert—the company has created a live experience that is a natural extension of its brand and a great fit for the community of customers that Sweetgreen wants to reach.



COOK, EXPLORE, ENGAGE

At the Williams-Sonoma Cooking School, small groups of students prepare, cook and share meals together in a fully outfitted kitchen. With locations in San Francisco and Sonoma, Calif., as well as Sydney, Australia, the school has expanded on the in-store cooking demos and classes that are part of the Williams-Sonoma store experience to create a place dedicated to learning.

Open to all skill levels, classes cover a range of topics: learning to cook, mastering specific techniques and exploring a new cuisine. Recent classes included “Date Night Cooking: Classic French Bistro,” “DIY Donuts” and “Homemade Stocks.”

In Sonoma, the cooking school is part of its landmark store on the site of the original shop and where founder Chuck Williams lived and worked in 1956 when he founded the brand. The store also includes a retail exhibit of Williams’ finds from Europe, a home-design showroom and a garden where some of the ingredients used at the cooking school are grown.

“When it comes to modern marketing in a consumer culture like ours, nothing is more powerful than a great customer or client experience. Experiences last longer. It’s the experience people talk about. Today, you don’t have to sell the best products or offer the best service, you do have to deliver the best experience.”

- Andrew Davis, author of *Brandscaping*

HUNGRY FOR MORE EXAMPLES OF BRANDS CREATING LIVE EXPERIENCES?

45 Grand

Fashion showroom meets fitness studio: **45 Grand**, named for its address in New York’s SoHo neighborhood, is an invitation-only **Nike** showroom where an intense workout is part of the brand experience.

Fifth & 57th

To mark the opening of its new luxury boutique at Selfridges department store, **Tiffany & Co.** brought New York to London with **Fifth & 57th**, an immersive installation that lets visitors walk through a projected cityscape of the iconic Manhattan location of the company’s flagship store.

Outdoor School

From backpacking basics to a sunset kayak tour of the Washington, DC, monuments, specialty outdoor retailer **REI** provides instruction, transportation and gear for people interested in outdoor adventures. **Outdoor School** classes, outings and events are designed for all skill levels.

Icebox Derby

Electric utility **ComEd** launched the annual **Icebox Derby** to promote STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) education in its community. To compete in the derby, teen girls from the Chicago area team up to transform refrigerators into race cars.

Society of Grownups

One of our longtime favorite live brand content experiences is the financial advice storefront in Boston created by **Mass Mutual**. You can read all about it: <http://cmi.media/grownups>



adidas

Music festival. Cooking school. Running museum. Hot-dog-eating contest. Different as they are, each of these experiences invites the customer to step away from the carefully curated world of digital content and join the brand in the loud, sweaty, messy real world. (Really messy, when you think about those hot dogs.) And in each case, the brand is offering something tailor-made for its audience members: a chance to see their favorite band, have a fun night out while learning a new skill, shake up their workout routine. It makes sense for the brand, it makes sense for the customer and it sure sounds fun, doesn't it? ☺



Want to learn more about how content-driven experiences can be created, managed, scaled and measured in today's business? Pick up *Experiences, the 7th Era of Marketing* by Robert Rose and Carla Johnson. The authors synthesize five years of research with global brands into a set of practices that weave together both the why and the how of navigating a new landscape.

RACE, LEARN, SHOP

Home to the world's oldest annual marathon, Boston became home in 2015 to the Boston Marathon RunBase, a year-round hub for runners launched by adidas and the Boston Athletic Association, organizer of the Boston Marathon, in partnership with local running store Marathon Sports.

"RunBase is a one-of-a-kind resource for runners based in and traveling to Boston," said Mikal Peveto, global director of running innovation at adidas. "Adidas is taking its partnership with the Boston Athletic Association to the next level with the help of Marathon Sports to let runners experience the best of our brand and the spirit of the greatest race year-round."

More than an adidas store conveniently located steps from the Boston Marathon finish line, the Boston Marathon RunBase is a museum, fitness center and shop all rolled into one. Stories of the marathon's history—the first race was run in 1897—rotate seasonally, told through historic photos and objects including race bibs, medals and trophies. Interactive screens feature key moments in race history and an archive featuring every participant. The RunBase Run Club offers organized runs around the Boston's Back Bay neighborhood and expert speakers, visits from athletes, training plan assistance and nutrition education. Visitors, of course, also can shop for the latest adidas footwear.

"We've already cultivated a community of like-minded runners through our heritage," said Tom Grilk, Boston Athletic Association executive director. "The experience expands the way we serve and interact with runners while providing world-class product in an environment that celebrates the Boston Marathon's past and present."

Attending a branded live experience drives **65 percent of people to recommend the brand** and **59 percent to buy it at retail afterwards**—more than other type of brand experience.

- Momentum Worldwide

PHOTO CREDIT: [HTTP://WWW.BOSTONRUNBASE.COM/](http://WWW.BOSTONRUNBASE.COM/)

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In his column, Andrew Davis dishes out content marketing advice to unsuspecting targets. In this issue, Davis tells the head of **Deloitte's** Norway marketing team that the company's recent print book project is genius ... except it should be part of a bigger content effort.

Frode Vik Jensen
Partner Marketing & Communications
Deloitte Norway

Dear Mr. Vik Jensen,

I love your new book. Yes, your new hardcover, beautifully printed, amazingly designed, book. I have two wishes.

1. I wish it were available in English.
2. I wish you had devised a promotion plan for it.

I don't speak any Norwegian, but I know the book title, *Verdien Av Tillit*, translates to "The Value of Trust." I used Google Translate to read all about the project on your website and I watched the wonderfully produced book video trailers too (thanks for the English subtitles, by the way.)

Partnering with a famous archaeologist and a reputable public accountant to write a book about the history of trust is a genius idea. Your cover image of a 5,000-year-old audit report in clay conjures up the simple idea that even the most basic societies rely on a foundation of fiscal trust. I can only imagine what your authors uncovered.

Here's the thing: The book came out of nowhere. You're not the only one who misses a tremendous opportunity to build anticipation for your cornerstone content (like a book.) Most marketers do the same thing. They release an e-book or a video or some research and promote it after the fact.

Instead of just dropping the book on us, perhaps you could have spent a year building an audience interested in uncovering the value of trust with you. I would have gone for that ride.

Content marketing success relies on building anticipation into each and every piece of content you create so that it crescendos with the highest value content. Your book could have been the climax of a much bigger, longer-term commitment to exploring the value of trust.

Here's the deal: If you commit to releasing a version of the book in English, I'll help you put together a content marketing strategy designed to raise anticipation for its release.

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 @TPLDrew.

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What is your favorite video platform or tools?

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JOE MONTANO, CATALENT PHARMA SOLUTIONS, @MONTANO_JOE



POWTOON powtoon.com

As a program director for a graduate school, I have found PowToon to be easy and fun to use. It produces high-quality animated videos. We have seen excellent success in the number of views and engagement with our Powtoon videos. It only takes a few minutes to get started, and advanced techniques were well within our reach in the first few hours of using the tool.

THE REV. DEREK R. DAVENPORT, PITTSBURGH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, @DEREKRDAVENPORT

CAMTASIA techsmith.com/camtasia

I am a big fan of Camtasia for creating ad-hoc and product-demonstration videos, and to turning marketing presentations into videos. The screencasting software has robust video-editing capabilities. It is ideal for demonstrating software because it will record on-screen activity while simultaneously recording voiceover commentary. It is also a great tool for turning a static PowerPoint presentation into video by adding voiceover commentary.

DAVID ERICKSON, KARWOSKI & COURAGE, @DERICKSON

GoAnimate [GOANIMATE goanimate.com](http://goanimate.com)

GoAnimate made it easy, fast, and economical to help us create an animated video that told our message in a way that still looked professional. Many people asked us "Who made your video?", and we were delighted to say "We did."

CRISTINA SAUNDERS, WALKZEE, @WALKZEE



VIDEOSCRIBE videoscribe.co

VideoScribe makes creating white-board-drawing videos so easy. It looks like we paid someone thousands of dollars to create a hand-drawn video, but it took us just 30 minutes. You can even upload your own images for it to draw and add voice overs and music directly in the software.

LOUISE HENDON, PALEO FLOURISH MAGAZINE, @LOUISEDHENDON



RAPT MEDIA www.raptmedia.com

Rapt Media enables us to deliver our messages in a way that is more engaging and memorable than traditional linear video. The interactive videos through Rapt allow the audience to actively make decisions, helping us create a more engaging experience and gain more insight about the interests and preferences of our customers in the process. The system is flexible and straight-forward, and easily embedded into our clients' websites via an iFrame.

LORNA PROBERT, AARDMAN STUDIOS, @AARDMANSTUDIOS

AdRoll [ADROLL www.adroll.com](http://www.adroll.com)

This is the best video remarketing software. It is easy to set-up and you are able to serve your video assets to people who visited your site but dropped off without converting. The tracking through AdRoll is amazing.

JASON PARKS, THE MEDIA CAPTAIN, @THEMEDIACAPTAIN

wideo.co [WIDEO http://wideo.co/en](http://wideo.co/en)

The easy-to-use tool offers good transition options and allows for easy image importing. The timeline is easy to learn and the templates act as a good starting point for most simple, low-cost video needs.

RYAN O'DONNELL, AVALARA TRUSTFILE, @RYANOD

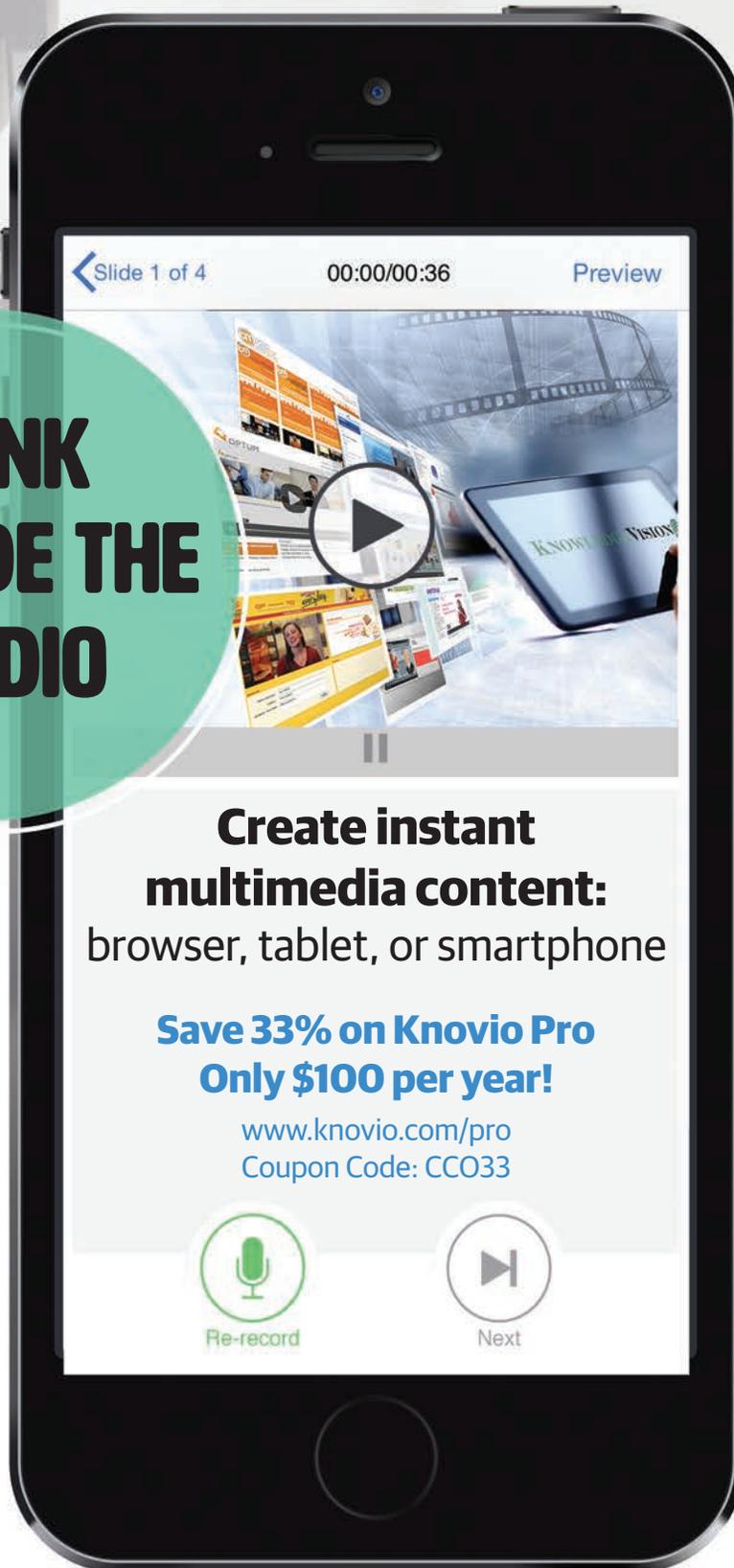
DEPARTMENT EDITOR



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

STRETCH YOUR VIDEO BUDGET

**THINK
OUTSIDE THE
STUDIO**



Where to start? Here are the five videos that businesses can't live without: <http://cmi.media/5videos>



Podcasting for Beginners

Advice from experts about getting started, growing your audience and finding the tools to lessen the load.

Sarah Mitchell



In a content-cluttered world, could podcasting be next big play for content marketers? Maybe “big play” is a stretch—a survey from Edison Research and Triton Digital shows consumer awareness about podcasting is flat. Yet the same research also shows podcasting holds broad appeal. Men and women listen with equal frequency, and there is no age barrier among listeners—all age groups are equally represented.

Podcasting is particularly appealing for marketers because regular listeners tend to be better educated and have higher household income than the general population. What's more, podcasts have particular appeal among commuters. Consider that high-wage earners in London commute for over an hour on average, and in major U.S. cities like New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles and Boston, commute times are 30 minutes on average ... the perfect amount of time to make podcasting a daily habit.

And perhaps the most attractive quality of all: As a channel, podcasting isn't super-saturated ... yet. Only 3 percent of marketers say they use podcasts as a content marketing tactic.

Craig Price, host of the Reality Check podcast and a producer of three additional shows, says podcasting is becoming a medium trusted by consumers. “The president was just on Marc Maron's WTF podcast and that gave podcasting a lot more credibility,” he says. “Obama actually sought out a podcast to go on.”

HOW TO GET IN FRONT OF THE COMING TREND?

Prepare to commit

Podcasting pioneer Todd Cochrane has recorded over 1,000 episodes of his Geek News Central podcast. He's also the CEO of RawVoice, a media company providing services and podcast media statistics to 30,000 audio and video content creators. Cochrane advises aspiring podcasters to question whether they're prepared to make a yearlong commitment to creating a successful podcast.

“About 50 percent of podcasters who start will quit when they hit episode seven,” he says. “Then 50 percent of those remaining will quit by the time they hit episode 23. If they make it beyond the 25 episode show mark, they have a pretty good chance of lasting two years.”

He cautions that podcasting is work. You have to be passionate about the content, enough to speak about it for hours on end. If you don't have enough content to carry you past episode seven, podcasting is probably not the medium for you.

Interested in cranking up your own podcast listening? You won't go wrong with these podcasts if you're working in content marketing.

PNR This Old Marketing

If you want to know what's happening in the world of content marketing, Joe Pulizzi and Robert Rose provide expert opinion designed to help you attract and retain customers. Each episode includes a terrific marketing example from the past and a popular “Rants and Raves” segment.

BeanCast

Claiming to be “The Best Marketing Podcast Anywhere,” Bob Knorpp discusses current issues and events with marketing specialists and industry professionals. A professor of marketing strategy and execution at New York University, Knorpp provides theoretical insight unavailable elsewhere.

Six Pixels of Separation

Mitch Joel focuses on “marketing with an edge,” finding marketing opportunities created by your customers. He challenges his guests to reach into their core beliefs and back up their claims with experiences and evidence to help you better understand the complex world of digital marketing.

Brand Newsroom

With a focus on content marketing and brand journalism, hosts James Lush, Nic Hayes and Sarah Mitchell (that's me) deliver a global perspective on content, media and PR. This 20-minute weekly podcast offers practical advice and great tips for anyone who has a say in how companies communicate.

Marketing Over Coffee

Hosts John Wall and Christopher Penn break down the complexities of modern marketing into actionable elements. Good for both beginners and seasoned pros, Marketing Over Coffee is particularly good for search, social and email marketing.

Be consistent

Passion won't help if you don't follow a rigid publishing schedule. Listening might be on demand, but your audience builds your show into their life. They want you to drop an episode at a prescribed time.

"People begin to expect that. If you don't deliver, they'll go somewhere else," says Price. "They'll give up on it if they can't find it. With the tools available, there's no excuse for you not to deliver at the same time. You can schedule podcasts weeks in advance."

Focus on the audience

Catering to your audience is essential for long-term success. They demand consistency and expect to be the center of your universe.

"If there's one thing the BBC drilled into me, it was how to address your audience," says James Lush, a former radio broadcaster who co-hosts the Brand Newsroom podcast and produces many more. "No matter how many people tune in to your show, you can't address a crowd in your podcast. Speak as if you were talking to one person. That's the secret to making every listener feel like you're speaking directly to them."

Avoid the perfection trap

The goal for your podcast should be authenticity, not perfection. Recording a 20-minute podcast is much faster than writing a long blog post, but newcomers to the medium often make extra work for themselves by trying to edit out every "um" and "ah." Focus on the content and be confident your audience prefers to listen to a real person, not a highly edited humanbot.

If you want to improve your performance, Cochrane has a novel approach to making you a better podcaster. He advises, "Run a video camera while you're doing your show; it makes you think you're actually live, which in turn makes you prepare better. You can't fix video."

Don't get wrapped up in numbers

Podcasting is not a quick medium. Too often podcasters expect huge listening numbers without taking time to build

an audience. According to Cochrane, the average podcast in the United States has between 3,000 and 5,000 listeners, and that audience usually takes months or years to build.

It's an open secret that podcasters lie about their show traffic but it's not easy to pin down the numbers. Each podcast hosting company reports statistics differently. iTunes, the channel with the most listeners, gives little information about traffic. Subscribers download individual episodes that they never hear. A single listener can download the same episode on different devices and still not listen to any of them.

Cochrane provides insight to help new podcasters understand if they're building an audience. "Download numbers are part of a bigger picture," he says. "The secret sauce is in the trend line."

An active audience will show itself in the trend line of downloads and plays over a 90-day period. Determine how your podcast is doing by keeping an eye on a long-term trend. Don't spend too much time delving into short-term analytics. Your time is better spent on preparing a great topic for your next episode.

GETTING WITH THE PROGRAM

As consumers hook into popular radio programs converted to podcasts, like Alec Baldwin's *Here's The Thing* or discover original programming like *Serial*, they begin to look for other opportunities to program the time they spend listening to audio.

Before you jump in to this burgeoning medium, consider whether you have enough content to get past the seventh episode and beyond the 25th. Are you able to spend all day talking about your topic? Do you have a habit of reading and writing about the subjects you would discuss on your intended podcast? If so, now is a good time to get in front of the podcasting trend before the field is crowded and cut-through becomes difficult. What are you waiting for? ☞

Sarah Mitchell is head of content strategy at Lush Digital Media in Perth, Western Australia. She co-hosts the Brand Newsroom podcast and tweets @globalcopywrite.

CHECKLIST

Support your podcast with multiple content types

One of the drawbacks to audio content is there's nothing for Google to grab to help your search engine rankings. Newcomers to the medium need a strategy to earn search results. The most successful podcasters use a variety of techniques to establish an online presence for their show.

Quality show notes help new listeners find you when searching topics related to your show or a specific episode. You can post these as part of an existing blog or create a dedicated website for your podcast.

Transcribing your podcast and posting it online is another great way to attract organic search results. Use transcription software like Speechpad or Dragon to alleviate the burden of doing it yourself.

Create a complementary blog post on the same topic and include an audio player of the episode in the body of your post.

Set up a Facebook page for your podcast and post each new episode along with a keyword-packed synopsis.

Use your LinkedIn company page (or create a page specifically for your podcast) to promote new episodes.

Set up a Twitter feed for your show. Include a photo for each episode in your tweets to improve engagement. Don't be shy about retweeting your episodes as your podcast grows.

Offer relevant podcast episodes to conference organizers and networking meeting planners to help them promote their events. Everyone loves free content.

Ask your guests to promote their appearance on your show in their networks.

List your podcast in as many directories as possible. In addition to iTunes, Stitcher, Libsyn and SoundCloud, seek out smaller directories as well.

A content smörgåsbord.



Häagen-Dazs Pursues the Perfect Bite ... of Content

For its newest ice-cream collection, **Häagen-Dazs** collaborated with six food artisans who share the company's "passion for quality and the finest ingredients, in pursuit of the perfect bite." Chocolate Caramelized Oat, crafted with Claire Keane, was inspired by her Clairesquares treats that taste of "Irish heritage and hard work." The Applewood Smoked Caramel Almond ice cream is the result of a collaboration with Cruz Caudillo of the Praline Patisserie, where a "commitment to craft and precision go into every jar" of caramel. On its website, Häagen-Dazs introduces each of the six flavors in short videos that feature the artisans behind the flavors.

But Häagen-Dazs didn't stop there. The brand commissioned director Morgan Spurlock, whose 2004 documentary about food, *Super Size Me*, was nominated for an Academy Award, to direct *CRAFTED*, a film that "celebrates artisans dedicated to their craft." In the 25-minute documentary, available on Amazon Instant Video, Spurlock "captures the struggles and triumphs of five modern artisans who vary by trade but share a passion to create." *CRAFTED* profiles Japanese donabe pottery producer Yuji Nagatani, the bladesmiths of Bloodroot Blades, and the chefs/owners of San Francisco's Bar Tartine. Through their stories, *CRAFTED* encourages viewers to get to know where their food and belongings come from; the only reference to Häagen-Dazs comes in the closing credits.



NETWORKING FACE-OFF: High-Tech Vs. Low-Tech



Alike is a wearable technology that promises to improve the way you network, eliminating the “distractions of a phone or computer screen.” The Alike wristband holds a unique user profile created before an event and when two people come near each other at the event (e.g., a conference) their devices exchange information and glow to indicate a match. After the event, each person receives a list of the new connections.



But what about good old-fashioned business cards? Companies like **MOO** make it easy to customize and print unique business cards, including mini or even square varieties. While LinkedIn and smartphones may have made paper cards less essential than they used to be, exchanging business cards is still second nature to many professionals, both at events and in everyday interactions.

WINNER

Business cards. While we like the matchmaking potential of Alike, business cards are just too ubiquitous and convenient to be replaced by a wearable. Plus, if we didn't have business cards, what would we do drop into the “win-a-free-lunch” jar at the sandwich shop?



CHEVY DEALERS ROCK THE LOCAL SCENE

Are you ready to rock? The **Chevy Music Showcase** is an online community and short-form documentary series dedicated to the local music scene. Sponsored by Chevy dealers in communities including North Texas, Oklahoma City, Kansas City and St. Louis, the showcase helps musicians get noticed with promotion on social media and local TV stations. For the regional Chevy dealer associations, the branded content program is a new way to reach 25- to 34-year-old music fans and potential car buyers in their markets.



CITIZENS BANK JOINS THE TINY HOUSE MOVEMENT

Citizens Bank prides itself in investing in the communities where the company does business. So it seemed like a natural fit for Citizens Bank and Cleveland, Ohio's **Detroit Shoreway Community Development Organization** to come together for the Citizens Tiny House Experiment, a pilot project that seeks to bring the tiny house movement to the Cleveland neighborhood. The initiative “explores the viability of affordable, sustainable housing focusing on small-scale living as a means to a better life.” Tiny houses are often 250 and 800 square feet, part of a national trend toward living smaller and more efficiently. Located in the Cleveland EcoVillage, the Citizens Tiny House Experiment invites people to see the tiny homes throughout the building process and connect online through a community forum and social media.

DEPARTMENT EDITOR



Natalya Minkovsky is a content strategist who lives and works in Washington, DC. Follow her @hejhejnatalya.

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