

CHIEF CONTENT OFFICER

CULTIVATING THE
GLITCH AESTHETIC

JOHN CLEESE
ON CREATIVITY

CONTENT MARKETING
WORLD IN PICTURES



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and advice to hit the right notes.

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It's Going to Get Weird

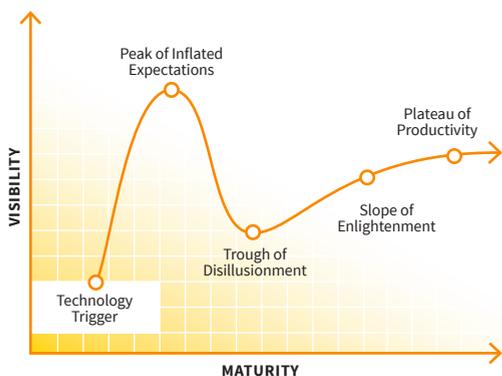
In the hit science-fiction movie *The Matrix*, Neo (the chosen one) is about to enter a virtual simulation of the real world. Morpheus, his teacher and guide, tells Neo before he enters the simulation, “This is going to feel ... a little ... weird.”

And that's exactly where we are with content marketing.

In our *2016 Content Marketing Benchmarks, Budgets and Trends* research (in partnership with MarketingProfs), the effectiveness rate for B2B organizations actually went down (from 38 percent in 2015 to 30 percent in 2016). This is not good. And the worst may be yet to come.

During my opening keynote at Content Marketing World in September, I talked about content marketing through the lens of Gartner's Hype Cycle for Digital Marketing. The Hype Cycle concept is a great way to follow the adoption curve of a disruptive technology, and it's amazingly accurate.

GARTNER'S FIVE-STEP HYPE CYCLE



First you have the technology trigger—in the case of content marketing, the trigger was that all companies, regardless of size, could publish on the web. At the same time consumers had unprecedented access to information. No big media company or corporation controlled the flow of information. BANG. Even though content marketing has been around for hundreds of years, the growing popularity of online content created a free flow of information for both the publisher and the consumer.

Then the cycle tilts upward into the peak of inflated expectation. At this stage, content marketing is seen as shiny, amazing and new. We've been in this stage for the past couple years.

After hitting the big peak, we slide into the trough of disillusionment. It's the moment all those who tried the shiny new thing realize it's not so easy. This is where we are heading as content marketers. Sounds ominous, right? Well, maybe not.

Right now you'll read article after article in other media saying content marketing doesn't work and we need to consider something else. I see at least one post per week slamming the practice. And it makes sense. Lots of companies bought into the hype and started what they thought was content marketing, but either didn't have a strategy or didn't execute it well ... or both. So they are looking for something else.

The reasons why marketers are disillusioned with content marketing are varied: Companies focus on campaigns instead of ongoing programs, publish content that's brand-focused rather than audience-focused, or produce content that's undifferentiated in any way.

Here's what I believe: Now is when we will witness the greatest content marketing failures of all time. And right now we also will see some of the greatest success stories of our time.

What should you do? While your competitors may slow their content-marketing velocity or kill the plan entirely, those that have a strategy and continue to execute against it will win. We know that over time, with a documented plan, a focus on the needs of the audience and consistency, the approach of content marketing works.

So, things may get a little weird for a while, but those who keep to the plan will emerge successful. I'm hoping that's you. ☺

Yours in content,

Joe Pulizzi

Founder

Content Marketing Institute

@JoePulizzi

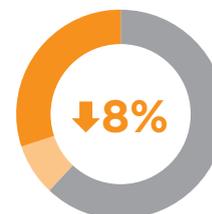


To stay on top of content marketing trends, subscribe to Joe and Robert Rose's weekly podcast, **PNR: This Old Marketing**. <http://cmi.media/pnr>



THE EFFECTIVENESS RATE FOR B2B ORGANIZATIONS

38%	2015
30%	2016



2016 Content Marketing Benchmarks, Budgets and Trends

“Now is when we will witness the greatest content marketing failures of all time.”



CHIEF CONTENT OFFICER

DECEMBER 2015

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WHAT'S ONLINE

PNR: THIS OLD MARKETING PODCAST

Native Advertising in Trouble?

What does the ad-blocking ability of the Apple iOS9 update mean for publishers and brands? Robert and Joe sum up the implications.

<http://cmi.media/PNRepisode97>

REPORT

B2B Content Marketing: 2016 Benchmarks, Budgets and 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>



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13 Ways to Get More Opt-Ins From Your Content

<http://cmi.media/optin>



DAWN PAPANDREA

Three Proven Ways to Nail Visual Storytelling

<http://cmi.media/visualstrategy>



MEGHAN CASEY

Why You Need Content Strategy Before Editorial Planning

<http://cmi.media/caseystrategy>

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MEDIA FOREVER.

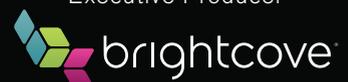


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Executive Producer





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THE
SOCIAL MEDIA
ISSUE



Ian Cleary | RazorSocial

Future Watch

Social media expert **Ian Cleary** explains some fundamentals social media marketers still can't seem to master, as well as next-horizon ideas to apply in 2016.

CCO: What do marketers struggle with most in social media?

Building an effective sales process from social media. Marketers are great at building engagement and relationships, but not so good at driving all that engagement to a sale or thinking of social media as part of the sales funnel. When building the sales funnel, you need not only a social strategy in place, but also access to analytics, access to email marketing, etc. ... There's a disconnect there; those working in social media often don't have access and influence with the right people across the organization



Use a content grid to map your content marketing strategy: <http://cmi.media/visualmaps>

What are you excited about that's new in social media?

Social selling.

To see how it works, check out **Heyo Cart**. A company posts a product for sale, users type in "buy" in the comments and an in-platform app opens to take care of the sale. Increasingly Facebook and other social sites will expand this concept and we'll see more direct sales on these channels.

Live streaming.

Just a few months ago I wasn't on **Blab** and **Periscope**, but now I think tools like those will play a very important part in social selling in the coming years. Meeting your customers face to face is the best way to build a relationship. Live streaming means you're online and on video, interacting with people one on one. Social media is great, but it's so much more effective to see one another live.

Here's how it works: Periscope, for example, lets me get on video and broadcast on a topic of potential interest to my customers. They can see me and interact with me. Using live streaming, your audience is getting a real feel about who you are, what your business is about and what your personality is like.

NEW FOR 2016: SOCIAL STREAMING

Tools like Blab and Periscope let you pull people into live, video-based conversations. As the newest entrant to the field, Blab.im also feels the most innovative of the bunch. Pull four people into a live video conversation, and invite others to watch and chime in through messaging features. When someone wants to join the video feed, the host can remove a current member of the foursome to make room. Viewers weigh in by messaging and adding "feels" (i.e., emojis) to those guests with whom they feel most at one. Host a debate, a fireside chat or a live workshop—the content types are endless.

THE SOCIAL MEDIA ISSUE

CLEARY SAYS

Marketers need to become one with the social sales funnel. (Is it possible we're still talking about funnels?) It seems a basic piece of advice, but too few social media marketers have mastered it.

MAP THE FUNNEL

You're building an audience on social media and trying to improve engagement. But beyond that, how will you drive people to your website? How will you drive the next action (e.g., become an email subscriber)? How will you lead each person through a series of interactions that signals a maturing relationship, ending with a sale? You should have a plan for starting with a tweet and ending with a sale.

TIP: Use a content grid to map your content marketing strategy.

<http://cmi.media/visualmaps>

MEASURE EACH STEP

Look at the rate of people clicking on a tweet, then find out what they do once they're on your site. What percent signs up for the next step? What portion ends up buying? Be sure you share links through each social media channel using unique tracking codes so you can see the impact of each. All social interactions can't be measured, but you can track traffic from social to your website.

TIP: Find a list of social media analytics solutions on page 14 of this issue.

TIE METRICS TO BUSINESS GOALS

What are the company's goals? What's the end goal? With answers to these questions, work backward. If the end goal is, "I want to sell products," then what metrics do you need to track to measure it?

TIP: Translate content marketing goals to KPIs. <http://cmi.media/goalstokpi>



Translate content marketing goals to KPIs.
<http://cmi.media/goalstokpi>

They are much more likely to buy your product and services. Channels like Blab and Periscope are still immature, but I believe they represent the next phase of social media ... and those that get in early reap greater influence on the channel. It's a risk, but I do believe one that will pay out massive rewards.

Facebook's competitive moves.

I'm interested to see what Facebook is doing with Notes. In a nutshell, Facebook is trying to keep audiences on its site rather than linking to third parties. The new Notes interface is beautiful—imitating the look and feel of Medium—and it may draw users to begin blogging on the platform. Facebook also recently introduced the capability to upload video directly on the Facebook platform, which is in direct competition to YouTube. Both these changes are a serious threat to media companies. Marketers need to think about what the changes mean for their own strategies, and how to tap the massive Facebook audience while still growing a subscriber base to owned channels.

What practices do you see the most sophisticated brands using?

Influencer marketing.

Sophisticated marketers realize the importance of building relationships with influencers as a gateway to access audiences. Audiences already are fragmented, and as more channels open up the problem becomes even more acute. It's difficult for marketers to build a presence on all these channels. Do a cost analysis on the amount of time and effort required to understand a channel, build an audience on that channel and stay engaged with it. It's not always the case, but we usually find an influencer strategy is both important and cost effective.



Companies can use identification tools to keep tabs on the most important voices in their niche or industry and build relationships with them. The dilemma is: Do you spend time nurturing and building relationships with influencers or do you immediately look for value from them? I believe if you invest time to build relationships, it generally leads to longer-term benefit. Marketers should always be careful in their initial outreach—if you spoil it in the early stage, your actions will have negative long-term impact. And remember, you can't outsource the building of relationships. Companies often employ agencies to help identify influencers and handle outreach, but I think it's a mistake. For a top-level influence, you really need to make a direct connection.

Employees as publishers.

Another key area where sophisticated marketers excel is getting employees involved. Tools like GagglesAMP help you use employees as content distributors. The whole idea of social is building a relationship with your audience. Your employees are on the front line and in a perfect position to help. If you fear using employees in this way, remember that if done well this type of engagement is also a win for employees because it helps them build their personal brand online.

As you study this option, keep in mind that including employees in your content-promotion plan should never be transactional (i.e., *Here is some content; please share it.*). You need to look first at your organization's goals: With whom are you aiming to build relationships and what types of communities do you want to sustain? From there, define your employees' role as part of that plan. Employees are just a small part of the whole. 

Governing Brand Identity in the Age of Social Media

Lisa Welchman & Kristina Podnar

With each new wave of social software and tools, marketers have more prominent and sophisticated ways to adopt an online identity and interact with audiences—for better and for worse. The good is that organizations now engage with prospects, customers and the world at large in ways inconceivable a decade ago. The not-so-good is that organizations no longer control their brand identity as they did.

SOCIAL MEDIA GOVERNANCE

WHAT: Understanding who represents your organization through social channels and ensuring they work in concert with business objectives

HOW: Defining roles and responsibilities

WHY: Risk mitigation, brand oversight and crisis management

Most organizations have adopted some sort of approach to social media—even if not very strategic. Most organizations have acquired appropriate Twitter handles and claimed Facebook identities, and human resources regularly uses LinkedIn for recruiting. Global organizations are localizing social media, focusing on Weibo, Tianji and QZone in China or Mixi in Japan. Yet staking claims is the simplest part of social media marketing.

We've all heard about infamous social media missteps. In honor of the Fourth of July holiday, American Apparel posted to its Tumblr page a stylized picture of the space shuttle Challenger disaster, mistaking it for an image of fireworks. McDonald's gave its brand mascot a new look and an associated Twitter handle (@RonaldMcDonald), underestimating the virulence of brand detractors—who promptly came up with a new hashtag, #notlovingit. Smucker's deleted users' Facebook comments regarding the company's use of GMOs in its products rather than engaging in a conversation.

Missteps like these lead organizations to become reactive, either shutting down certain social media channels or hesitating to launch new ones. While some of these actions may be warranted, non-participation is not the best approach in the long run. That's where having a clear approach to social media governance comes to the forefront.

Just as with any marketing channel, social media channels need to be governed. Social media

governance focuses on understanding who represents your organization through social channels and making sure they work in concert with business objectives. It's all about roles and responsibilities. It's about a focus on issues such as risk mitigation, brand oversight and crisis management.

We find it's useful to break the governance task into four major parts:

Assemble the social media team

Who is moderating and managing your social channels? Signing up for a social media account is a 30-second process that requires little skill. Unfortunately, ease of adoption means some organizations have no idea who owns certain social accounts; even worse, they find relevant and desirable handles aren't owned by their organization.

GETTING STARTED: Understand and document who in your organization (and outside) is operating in the name of your business.

Define strategy

Organizations need to be intentional about defining a social media strategy.

That means handpicking individuals on the strategy team and ensuring the team represents a broad spectrum of interests inside your organization. That team should be responsible for establishing an organization-wide approach to social media and expressing what outcomes (qualitative and quantitative) it expects once that strategy is implemented. With a global strategy in place, different parts of the business can localize the strategy to suit

SOCIAL MEDIA TRUTHS

Organizations don't fully own their online identity

Customers and the public at large contribute to an organization's identity

Tactics for managing brand identity online are different than in the offline world



Ready to document your social strategy?
Find tools & resources here:
http://cmi.media/sm_content

THREE MUST-HAVE SOCIAL MEDIA GOVERNANCE DOCUMENTS

Social Media Strategy

The social media strategy is the organization's overall approach to leveraging social channels to meet business goals. The strategy is informed by social media and business expertise, and expresses basic principles and measurable outcomes.

Social Media Policy

This people-oriented document governs how employees should behave online; it must offer clear parameters about employees' behavior as representatives of your organization, as well as guidance for out-of-work behavior. The policy should include clear rules for dealing with crisis and controversy. Think of it as a risk-minimization tool for your social media presence.

Examples: HP's policy spells out how to deal with inaccuracies: "We will correct inaccurate or misleading postings in a timely manner. We will not delete posts unless they violate our policies. Most changes will be made by adding to posts and we will mark any additions clearly."

Gap Inc. famously writes its social media policy in an informal, no-nonsense style: "If you #!%#@# up? Correct it immediately and be clear about what you've done to fix it. Contact the social media team if it's a real doozy."

Social Media Standards

Think of it as an extension of your brand standards. Your social media standards should spell out the look and feel of your social media channels, the ideal tone of voice for each, and the values of your organization that you want to spread via social channels. It's the way you want your brand to be personified in social channels.

Examples: MailChimp gives practical guidance to writing for Twitter and Facebook with direct requirements such as "Be appropriate. During major news events, turn off scheduled and promoted tweets."

Ben & Jerry's uses standards that specify which colors, illustrations and sans serif fonts should be used to impart the company's fun, friendly and relaxed attitude.

their needs. This "think globally, act locally" view is effective in organizations with multiple products and lines of business.

GETTING STARTED: Understand which social channels you are using, why you are using them and what outcomes you expect to achieve through the use of the channels.

Develop policy

Social media policy boils down to creating a competitive advantage while minimizing loss. Organizations take on significant risks by operating in the social world. For example, most organizations don't clearly differentiate an employee's behavior as a private individual versus the person's behavior as part of an organization—and the result can spell disaster. Much like with public relations specialists who speak on behalf of the organization, it can be challenging to determine when employees are "on" versus "off the record"; special consideration must be given to what social media specialists do as part of their job and what expectations the organization has for their performance. Social media policy not only guides employee behavior online, but also aims to protect confidential or proprietary corporate information, drive compliance with regulatory and legal requirements, and clarify crisis management steps that must take place should a misstep occur (including expectations about deleting online posts or related actions). A clearly thought social media policy will ensure the risks your organization takes are wholly necessary and appropriate.

GETTING STARTED: Identify and name an individual who understands the business and its objectives, and ask him/her to facilitate conversations with subject-matter experts about the risks and opportunities of using social. This context becomes the foundation of your social media policy.

Define standards

Because many organizations don't provide the tactical infrastructure for social media, little or no attention

is given to how the accounts should look and feel, the nuances of properly communicating in short bursts, how online statements might be scrutinized, or how social should be monitored from an analytics and engagement perspective. This can lead to disconnected messaging at best, and brand degradation or PR disasters at worst. Organizations should help themselves by defining social media standards as an extension of brand standards, focusing on the look and feel of social media accounts, the tone and voice used, as well as language localization for targeted social media channels—all of which help the organization execute communication in a consistent and effective manner.

GETTING STARTED: Identify what aspects of social media are most important to your organization (e.g., brand consistency, tone or voice of communication, responsiveness and engagement levels to customers) so that you can prioritize the development of associated standards.

If an organization takes a strong approach to social media governance, it can ensure the investment in social media maps to the right organizational priorities, and that channels are leveraged in a way that limits brand and marketplace risk. For those who are deliberate and embrace social media through a properly governed framework, the payoffs can be significant—from effectively listening and engaging online audiences to leveraging a misstep into an opportunity for positive dialogue, audience conversion and brand loyalty. After all, social media is just another way to express who you are and what your organization stands for. The only difference is that you have over 2 billion eyes and ears potentially looking at your brand. ☞

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Kristina Podnar is vice president of consulting services at ActiveStandards. Follow her @kpodnar.



BY THE NUMBERS

Which channels do marketers use most, which are effective, and what needs to change in 2016?



Want even more data? Check out the Content Marketing Institute's 2016 Content Marketing: Benchmarks, Budgets and Trends reports. contentmarketinginstitute.com/research/

WHICH SOCIAL CHANNELS ARE MARKETERS USING THIS YEAR?

B2B

LinkedIn	94%
Twitter	87%
Facebook	84%
YouTube	74%
Google+	62%
SlideShare	37%
Instagram	29%
Pinterest	25%
Vimeo	21%
Tumblr	9%
Vine	7%
Medium	6%
Periscope	6%
Snapchat	5%

B2C

Facebook	94%
Twitter	82%
YouTube	77%
LinkedIn	76%
Google+	72%
Instagram	62%
Pinterest	61%
Vimeo	25%
SlideShare	20%
Tumblr	20%
Vine	15%
Snapchat	13%
Periscope	11%
Medium	9%

HOT OR NOT? Change in usage between 2014 and 2015.

B2B

Instagram	Up 21%
SlideShare	Down 10%
Pinterest	Down 24%

B2C

Instagram	Up 27%
Vine	Up 29%
Snapchat	Up 13%
Tumblr	Down 31%

WHICH CHANNELS ARE MOST EFFECTIVE IN 2015?

B2B

LinkedIn	66%
Twitter	55%
YouTube	51%
Vimeo	43%
SlideShare	41%

B2C

Facebook	66%
YouTube	53%
Twitter	50%
Pinterest	39%
LinkedIn	39%

COURSE CORRECTIONS

Slow Down: Google Plus is widely used by marketers, but most think it's not effective.

B2B	Use	Effective	B2C	Use	Effective
Google+	62%	13%	Google+	72%	22%

Sprint Ahead: Medium is relatively new on the scene and shows promise as an effective channel.

B2B	Use	Effective	B2C	Use	Effective
Medium	6%	35%	Medium	9%	33%

SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS FOR CONTENT MARKETERS

Trying to scale your social media efforts? Check out these tools that help you engage, manage, measure and optimize.



SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT

Social media managers use tools to scale their efforts across channels and products/brands. Some social media management tools are meant to knit together all the channels—creating a more robust profile of each customer—while others focus on using a single channel with greater sophistication.

AgoraPulse
Bitly
Brandwatch
Bu er
Crimson Hexagon
Facebook Pages Manager
Hootsuite
NetBase
Sendible
Simply Measured
Spredfast
Sprout Social
Synthesio
TweetDeck

INFLUENCER MARKETING TOOLS

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

BuzzStream
BuzzSumo
Cision
CultureSphere
DWOM
Dynamic Signal
Influence and Co.
inPowered
Jive
Kred
Little Bird
Marketwired
ReadyPulse
SocialToaster
SocialChorus
TapInfluence
Topsy
Traackr

SOCIAL ANALYTICS

Analytics tools help marketers do more with metrics they track for each social channel. The best tools let you analyze performance based on different business goals (e.g. brand awareness, purchasing intent), canvas emerging trends within your industry and turn data into insights for your marketing strategy team.

Adobe Analytics
BuzzSumo
Conductor
Crimson Hexagon
Followerwonk
Google Analytics
gShi
IBM Coremetrics
Kissmetrics
KLEAR
Majestic
Mixpanel
Moz
NetBase
Piwik
Searchmetrics
Simply Measured
SocialBro
Spredfast
Synthesio
Talkwalker
Topsy
Tracx
Unmetrics
Webtrends

SOCIAL MEDIA MONITORING

Monitoring tools ensure you're apprised of breaking information—whether comments from fans, damage from detractors or rapidly changing news stories. Monitoring tools also help you collaborate with teams to ensure a unified front.

Brandwatch
Cision's Social Edition
Crimson Hexagon
Digimind Social
Mention
NetBase
Synthesio
Syomos

ONLINE COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT

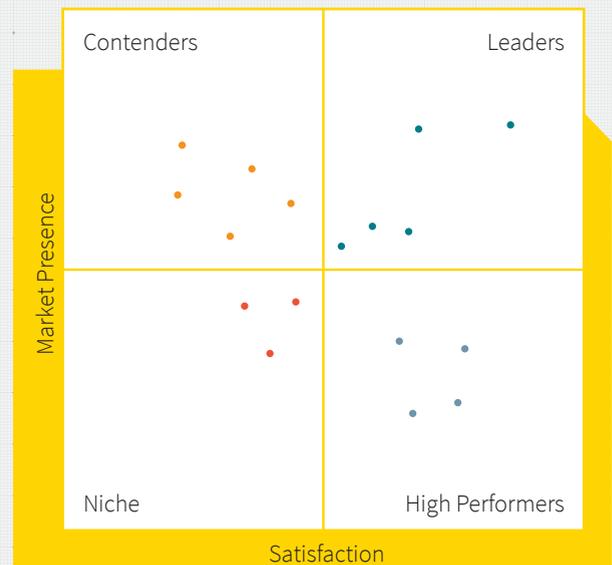
Community management platforms offer forums and commenting tools to host your most passionate fans. Online communities can drive up search rankings and increase buyer confidence. The best community management tools integrate all your social channels, ensuring social fans become active members of your community.

Hootsuite
Jive
Lithium
Muut
Ning
PlushForums
Sendible
Spredfast
Sprout Social
Vanilla
ZetaBoards

SOCIAL MEDIA SUITES

Think of these tools as social management for enterprise clients. Suites include analytics, management and monitoring. Some take it a step further by helping you monetize your investment or integrate your social channels with live experiences, such as digital billboards and in-store displays.

Brandwatch
Brand Networks
Buddy Media
Hootsuite Enterprise
Lithium
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Woobox



READY TO COMPARE TOOLS?

G2 Crowd offers user reviews of dozens of marketing technology platforms. Read testimonials for each product and find out how others are using features you may not even be aware of. Plus, check out G2 Crowd's comparison grid, which shares or rates each tool's satisfaction and market presence.



Karianne Stinson | Priceline.com

Onward & Upward

Karianne Stinson heads social media for **priceline.com**. Her role—part strategist, part crisis manager and part travel ambassador—requires a clear vision plus a huge dose of patience. Stinson opens up to CMI’s Cathy McPhillips about the challenges she faces day-to-day and the long-term course she’s setting for the company.

Cathy McPhillips: You manage a very complex operation—one that includes customer service, promotions and content delivery. Tell us about the process and systems you’ve put in place.

Karianne Stinson: When I started, it was just me handling customer service, community management and strategy. We have since invested in growing our customer service and related processes for social. I now have a counterpart within our customer care team who’s the manager of social customer care, and he’s hiring agents who engage in the channels.

With the customer care team in place, it gives me more time to focus on marketing and community building. I work closely with our brand team and the rest of the marketing team on our integrated content effort. I also work with our product and mobile teams to highlight new features and services for our customers.

For example, we had an integrated campaign across all of priceline.com, including email, TV and web this summer. We promoted our feature called *Tonight Only* (i.e., customers can book a hotel that night). We had done surveys and knew why people were booking last minute, so we took that information and turned it into content to promote *Tonight Only*.

It was engaging content that was more focused on the reason people book last minute rather than deals. We want to highlight what the deals mean for our customers—what they’re able to do or the places they can visit because they saved money with priceline.

A lot of brands when they respond to negative feedback online sound very scripted. I’ve noticed priceline does a nice job personalizing responses.

Tell me about how you manage that—and balance the need for consistency with the desire to sound human. That’s a core value for priceline: we should be as personable as possible. We take complaints as opportunities to show we offer help and care—that we are here for you. It’s a human that’s sitting at the other end of the computer trying to help with your unique situation. It’s a process that’s evolving as we grow our team. Of course it has to be scripted to a point because there are pieces of information we need to relay, but we never want to be copy/pasting. Our team needs to be as personable and empathetic as possible to connect with our customers.

Does the person who responds first see the customer through to the end? It depends. We have different products and there are a lot of rules and regulations unique to each product, so we begin by finding out the trip number or other booking information; then we may shift the conversation to someone in airfare, for example, because they know that segment backward and forward.

We work with Sprinklr as our social CRM; it lets us see the history so we never have to say, “Tell us the story again.”

Social media can get negative. How do you help your team battle fires all day long, keep them engaged and avoid

burnout? It’s definitely a challenge, especially on Twitter. People are far more likely to complain than they are to talk about the great experiences they have. First, we try to highlight happy customers. We get a lot of comments such as, “Thank you so much for your help. You’ve restored my faith.” We highlight those as much as possible. We give bonuses to agents who are commended online or through email.

I also tell people to remember it’s not personal. Travel invokes a lot of passion—both good and bad. Sometimes you need to get step away from the computer to take a break. You also need to take time off on take vacations. I have had to train myself to unplug when I’m on a vacation because it’s too easy to check the feed. You need to know when to separate yourself and not make everyone’s problems your own.

At the Content Marketing Institute, we use a 4-1-1 rule borrowed from our friend Andrew Davis: for every one self-serving tweet, post or update, a brand should share four new pieces of content and one re-share. Do you have a formula you use? We don’t have a formula, but we are using influence marketing a lot more. One of my goals is to get other people talking about us. During the promotion for *Tonight Only*, we worked with the Eh Bee family [famous on YouTube] to create content that was



Search CMI's library of resources related to social media. <http://cmi.media/socialmedia>

less about priceline.com and more about connecting through a moment with the family. It was about why you would book at the last minute, and we wanted it to resonate with the Eh Bee's audience. It performed really well. Last I looked, it had 5 million organic views—all on Facebook.

We're also doing an Instagram campaign with Instagram influencer . We send them to different locations to highlight the beautiful properties you can book through priceline.com. The great thing about getting others to create content is they do it in their own style and share it with their followers.

How do you decide who will be a key influencers for you? Some influencers we choose because we really like what they are doing and so we have over time built a relationship with them. We also use LIKEtoKNOW.it to find influencer who reach our target audience.

And of course we have our partnership with William Shatner and Kaley Cuoco, who we feature in commercials. They are great supporters of priceline.com and often willing to help promote our marketing effort . Of course, we want to make sure it feels natural for their audiences as well, so we balance how often we partner with them outside of commercials.

Bill and Kaley have a lot of fun together and are great on set, so we capture a lot of behind-the-scenes footage. That content does really well, giving everyone a sense of what it's like on set when they are together, unscripted. We try to do use that content related to bigger campaigns so it's not always on.

You've mentioned Sprinklr. What other technology do you use to monitor the feed and watch trends? Sprinklr is one of our main tools. We use it for engagement and for reporting. We use it for listening as well and identifying what people are talking about. Because I'm the main person focusing on our social media marketing effort , I need to have all my information in one place. I've tried a lot of tools but the best solution for me is to have a single dashboard.

You're in such a noisy space and have so much competition—both direct and

indirect. How do you stand out? It's a big challenge. We try to connect with consumers based on real trips and real needs to save money. We talk about things like a trip to see your buddy from college, your night out on the town with friends, or that spontaneous road trip you took that didn't require a lot of advance reservations because you used the priceline app to book and go. It's about real life and taking advantage of fleeting moments.

One of the Eh Bee influencer videos we used is about how Dad has forgotten their anniversary. Mom is on the phone talking to a friend about their anniversary plans and Dad is thinking, "What am I going to do?" He books a *Tonight Only* deal through the app before she hangs up the phone. That's our sweet spot. We're focused on real trips and the desire to save people money. We want to help our customers have fun, enjoy their lives and not worry about the details.

How did you end up where you are today? What skills have mattered the most in your career evolution?

I've had an interesting journey. I was an elementary school teacher. I was a social worker. And then I went into the traditional PR. I love social because for me, everything I'm drawn to is about relationships—whether having a connection with my students or building relationships with at-risk kids. I worked at Old Navy and Starbucks, and what I loved most was connecting with the customer. Social is the latest evolution of that.

The next step is content marketing. It's telling your story but in a human way. Advertising is often, "We're going to tell you what we want you to know," and it's not really thinking about the customer or the consumer who's going to be taking that in.

Content marketing, at its finest, is about building relationships. We know a lot about our customers, what they care about, what they are looking for in the travel experience—from research and booking to the trip itself. We focus on what will make their lives easier. My work has always related back to helping people, making people happy and building relationships. 



The Eh Bee Family

USING INFLUENCERS TO PICK UP THE CONVERSATION

To promote its *Tonight Only* offers (i.e. same day bookings), priceline asked the YouTube-famous Eh Bee family to create a series of videos that picked up the last-minute travel theme. In one video, Dad books last-minute reservations for a forgotten wedding anniversary; in another, Mom books a last-minute hotel stay to escape the family. The videos, says Karianne Stinson, tap a new audience for priceline and get others talking about the company. What's more, it hits on priceline's overall strategy of being a site-of-choice for everyday travel bookings—from last-minute weekend plans to a trip home to see family.

Explains Stinson: "We're focused on real trips and the desire to save people money. We want to help our customers have fun, enjoy their lives and not worry about the details."



Cathy McPhillips is marketing director of the Content Marketing Institute. Follow her @cmcpillips.

Find out how to
choose topics that
get C-suite attention.
[http://cmi.media/
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Reach Executives with Your Best Content Engine: Your Clients

Roanne Neuwirth

Looking for a surefire source for topical, relevant content that grabs your executive audience? Look no further than your own clients. At a minimum, you develop some compelling stories to share with clients and prospects. Done well, content co-creation can help you create a powerful voice, build a market and deepen important client relationships.

Making the Case for Co-Creation

As I have discussed frequently in these pages, executives value hearing from their peers. To connect with them, your content must tap directly into their most pressing priorities and concerns, and help them take action on timely issues. Many marketers fail to realize they have a rich source of the most relevant ideas in the form of their own client base. Your clients provide fertile ground

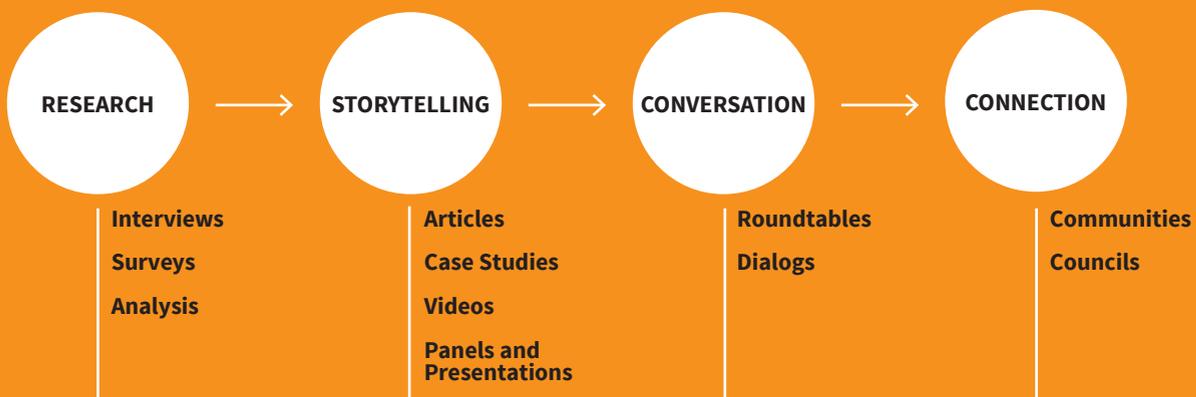
for both extracting the insights and stories that resonate most, and disseminating those ideas in the most effective ways. Here are just a few of the benefits of taking this collaborative approach:

- **Establish relevance and authenticity.**

Integrating your clients into your content program ensures you can pinpoint what executives care about and what is directly relevant to them. The peer voice provides a more authentic perspective on the ideas and solutions you share than if they come from a vendor, which has an obvious horse in the race. As Cortnie Abercrombie, who runs the Chief Data Office Community at IBM, explains, “We have them write stories and articles with us. We don’t have our own people as authors. Executives don’t

Your clients provide fertile ground for both extracting the insights and stories that resonate most, and disseminating those ideas in the most effective ways.

EXECUTIVE CONTENT VALUE CHAIN



Source: Forland Group

want to hear us talk. They want to hear from each other.” (For more on Abercrombie’s approach see sidebar.)

- **Enhance your role as an authoritative, trusted source.** By listening to your clients and helping them share stories with their peers, you not only build trust with them, you build it with other executives who appreciate the value of learning from each other. The more your clients do the talking, the more you will find executives listen to you. Abercrombie notes, “You can’t just be a convener; you have to build the trust and you have to bring people together.”
- **Elevate your clients’ voice and their impact.** Bringing your clients into your content agenda helps elevate their ideas with their own peers and raises their profile in the marketplace. Abercrombie explains, “We use the co-created content to accelerate our clients’ agendas.” Marketers know that creating client success is the best way to turn your most valued clients into advocates, which deepens relationships and enhances the bottom line—not a bad outcome from a content program.

Embedding your clients in your content value chain

There are a number of ways to integrate your clients into your content value chain—from brainstorming ideas and insights to lending a voice during content creation. Consider these elements as you build your strategy:

- **Research** Grounding content in research reinforces its credibility for executives. Tap your clients through interviews or surveys to gather insights on challenges, priorities, innovative solutions and best practices.
- **Storytelling** Help your clients write articles, create case studies, and develop and produce videos for publishing on your own site or in other settings, both internal and external. Invite clients to present or participate in panels at your events or

co-present with your own experts at third-party events.

- **Conversation** Bring together clients to exchange insights and ideas to extend the knowledge and create additional content. IBM convenes small groups of chief data officers for virtual roundtables on key topics, and extracts the lessons from each session in a paper to share with the participants and beyond. Abercrombie also makes a point to introduce individual CDOs with similar challenges or like-minded ideas to expand the dialogue.
- **Connection** Create the ultimate exchange of insights and learning, and advance your thinking through ongoing forums like client communities or advisory councils. IBM’s THINK Data Community provides an online forum for sharing content, highlighting tools, contributing ideas and helping to bring CDOs together offline or online. Having client stories to share makes a client community more powerful and valuable as a tool to engage others.

Any one of these elements creates useful content, but the most value comes from taking a holistic view and integrating the pieces. Abercrombie lays it out this way: “The value is in the way you engage them in the entirety, not just convening them on a periodic basis. We involve CDOs in research, ask them to write articles, invite them to speak, and set up ways to share back to the community and with each other.”

Creating content that resonates with the C-suite is not an easy task; they are a highly demanding audience and require a rigorous, targeted approach to stay relevant. Client co-creation is a great way to give your program a leg up, and help you focus your resources and time where both you and your clients benefit from content and conversation. 

Roanne Neuwirth is a senior vice president at Farland Group. Follow her @RoanneNeuwirth.

CASE STUDY: MAKING A MARKET WITH CONTENT CO-CREATION

When charged with helping IBM target the newly emerging role of chief data officer, Cortnie Abercrombie, global-emerging-roles leader for data and analytics officers and data scientists, knew IBM had to take a different approach to establish leadership credibility with this C-suite cohort. “We wanted to be the first company to get behind the CDO role as business critical and go after this group as a key client base—and content was core to doing this.”

Accelerating IBM’s presence with this executive group meant going beyond the usual approach of sharing expert points of view and talking about services and solutions to create conversations and a community of ideas. Abercrombie embarked on a co-creation content marketing strategy: “To launch this effort, we began by interviewing 14 CDOs. Based on the findings, we created a thought-leadership piece describing the emerging role of the data leader and its impact on and value to the business. We went on to create articles, case studies and blog posts that address the challenges and opportunities identified by CDOs, and offer best practice examples and solutions we heard from them.”

IBM’s efforts didn’t end with written content, however; Abercrombie and her team added events to the mix to generate another platform for the CDO’s stories. She explains, “Our first event was hugely successful because it was CDO-led, with little IBM presence on the agenda. We curated the program to only include speakers with the best stories. This helped create a valuable agenda as well as establish a strong community feeling.”

Abercrombie and her team continue to co-create and share content to sustain the momentum, and a number of the executives has gone on to blog and posted on their own stories based on the voice they developed from connecting with IBM. The benefits of this program have been significant, establishing IBM’s dominance within this executive segment and creating strong relationships to grow the business. Abercrombie sums it up: “Now everyone tries to convene this audience, but for us, because of the trust we built, we can pull in the top CDOs to share in all of our forums, which creates the best learning and exchange.”



VISUAL REALISM

As user-generated content floods the web, more and more brands are cultivating the so-called glitch aesthetic as a way to ditch the polish and build trust.

Victor Gamez

*Want to learn more?
Read about three
proven Instagram
marketing strategies.
[http://cmi.media/
IGstrategies](http://cmi.media/IGstrategies)*



Few would dispute the importance of visual content to brands. But is it possible for a brand to choose images that—by virtue of feeling more authentic—build trust?

One answer lies in user-generated content (UGC). A recent study by Nielsen found 84 percent of consumers say they trust people they know over direct advertising, which explains the huge surge in interest among brands in building both collecting UGC, as well as working with influencers who can publish on behalf of brand . But let's take it a step further: What if the images your company publishes emulate the look and feel of user-generated content? How would that work and what would it accomplish?

The look and feel of UGC

If there's a center of gravity for visual UGC, it's shifting closer and closer to Instagram and Snapchat.

These visual platforms surged in popularity three years ago, according to Mary Meeker's 2014 Internet Trends report. Instagram has enjoyed faster growth rates than Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Pinterest between 2012 and 2014, and has become the most important and most used social network for U.S. teens, according to the Pew Research Center. Snapchat is also a powerhouse with an average 100 million daily users, according to Meeker. It has the youngest user base: 45 percent of Snapchat's adult users are between the ages of 18 and 24, more than any other social channel, as Comscore reports.

And yet, too many brands trying to build followings on Instagram and Snapchat forget the aesthetic of these channels. Far from perfectly posed images or elaborate sets, the types of images that work on Instagram and Snapchat feel spontaneous, imperfect, even quirky.

The glitch aesthetic

The types of images popular on sites like Instagram often emulate (whether intentional or not) a style of visual art called glitch art. Guy Merrill, senior art director at Getty Images, describes the glitch aesthetic as being defined by image errors—oversaturated colors, overexposure, lens flare, pixelation, and the like—that are either intentionally made or added in post-production. These images would have been rejected by art directors a decade ago.

Merrill characterizes the aesthetic as a way to bring authenticity to your brand, explaining that errors and imperfections help you stand out in an environment filled with picture-perfect content. "In our increasingly curated world, there's a pull toward an aesthetic that feels messy and unexpected," Merrill says.

The glitch aesthetic describes much of the content found in abundance on Instagram and Snapchat. (Channels like Pinterest and Tumblr also have tons of glitch-inspired photography in certain niches like fashion and design.) Videos are a little shaky and unrehearsed.

Photos are slightly crooked or have an arbitrary composition. And images tend to use filters available through dozens of

If there's a center of gravity for visual UGC, it's shifting closer and closer to Instagram and Snapchat.

THE UGC AESTHETIC



Coca-Cola

Coca-Cola often uses the so-called glitch aesthetic, intentionally oversaturating images or otherwise giving them an imperfect, authentic look.



Levi's

Levi's award winning ad for its recycled WasteLess jeans captures on-kilter images from what appears to be a handheld camera (though we're pretty sure it's not). The clips feel like a series of outtakes, giving it a gritty realism.

Betabrand

This geek-chic clothing brand makes wide use of UGC, particularly for its Model Citizen program in which customers share links that feature their uploaded photos as the brand's model. Even Betabrand's professionally shot images look somewhat low-tech and imperfect.

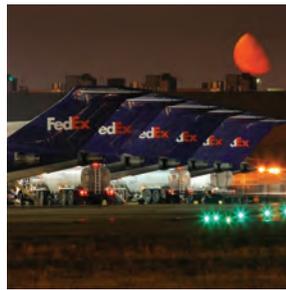
VISUAL REALISM

THE UGC AESTHETIC



FedEx

Have a thing for planes, trains and trucks? FedEx's Instagram channel offers beautiful, glitch-inspired photos of the fleet.



mobile photo apps—including lens flares and overexposure. The result is a visual style that creates a sense of identification with the photographer or videographer as a real person.

Integrating UGC and brand content

Ultimately it's not an "either/or" proposition for brands—should they use UGC or simply imitate it. Most large companies incorporate all three: user-contributed photography and videos, influencer visual content *and* brand-designed visual content. The important thing, however, is to ensure your brand-created content is not wildly inconsistent with the look and feel of your UGC and influencer content. Brands that use the aesthetic well are able to present all sources of content in the same stream, without the abrupt switch between styles. And content from brands on channels like Instagram and Snapchat feels less like an interruption and more like an in-stream experience. [COO](#)

Victor Gamez is a marketing associate at Percolate. Find him at [linkedin.com/in/victorxgamez/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/victorxgamez/).

GE

GE is a content powerhouse, and its Instagram shows it understands the social channel's aesthetic. Photos range from art shots to images that look like they were picked up off the cutting room floor.



Read more from
 Jonathan Crossfield
<http://cmi.media/crossfield>



Is Viral Content Making You Sick?

Most of us know achieving a viral hit is a crapshoot, even for the most skilled marketer. Your content is subject to the capricious, anarchic, unforgiving, cat-loving whims of the Internet. Yet, some still exploit meme culture to spread brand messages without understanding what it really means to “go viral.”

[Face palm.]

Jonathan Crossfield

So far, I’ve written this regular column on social media with barely a mention of the “v” word. Debunking the concept of viral content always seemed like too much of a slam dunk. How should I fill the remaining word count after stating the obvious in the first 100 or so words?

But strip away the myths and misconceptions of virality and we may find a more useful truth worth exploring.

First, let’s get that slam dunk out of the way. Of course there is no foolproof method or secret formula for sending your content viral. If you think there is, I can point to hundreds of other pieces of content that use exactly the same techniques and go absolutely nowhere.

For a start, the whole concept is subjective. At what level do we say something is viral? A thousand views? A million? And over what time? Should we measure the number of shares, or is reach the metric to shoot for?

If there is no agreed measure, no benchmark and no clear definition of what even qualifies as viral content—except after the fact—then it’s not much use in any serious discussion of marketing strategy.

Except ... let’s dig a little deeper.

The ‘amazing’ hashtag that wasn’t

The coal industry doesn’t have the best reputation right now. This is particularly true in Australia, where mining interests are lobbying hard to increase local coal production, despite global pressure to reduce carbon emissions.

In September 2015, the Minerals Council of Australia decided to repair coal’s reputation with a



AN ETYMOLOGY OF VIRAL MARKETING

In 1989, *PC User* magazine published an article describing the rapid adoption of the new Macintosh computers. This article contained the first use of the word “viral” to describe the rapid spread of information: “It’s viral marketing. You get one or two in and they spread throughout the company.”

Today, marketers use the word to describe the spread of content, and not necessarily the information, idea or message within it.

campaign—a hopelessly one-sided video, seeded in social media with the hashtag #coalisamazing.

You can bet both went viral very quickly. When the hashtag first appeared, I wasn't the only one who thought it was satire. Before long, almost everything posted to the hashtag WAS satirical, lampooning the video, sharing anti-coal facts and criticizing the industry. Within hours, a parody of the video spread quickly.

If the goal was for the video to go viral, gathering views and web traffic, then the campaign was a roaring success. But the content and hashtag had been repurposed to say the exact opposite of what was intended, fueling criticism instead of mollifying it.

Any controversial brand, industry or topic needs to develop ideas and arguments that take the critics seriously. Persuasion is an art, not a hashtag.

You want your message to go viral, not the medium (apologies to Marshall McLuhan). So the message

has to be palatable and persuasive enough to be adopted, adapted and advocated by your audience.

There's already a specific term to describe ideas that spread this way, one that predates viral by more than a decade—memes.

The meme epidemic

Today, when people talk about memes they usually mean captioned images or other content that people adapt and share in social media, usually for comic effect

You've probably seen images of an exasperated Jean-Luc Picard, a passive aggressive Willy Wonka or a million other images given new meaning with each new caption. I'm a big fan of the Hitler bunker videos. Since 2007, this meme has spawned thousands of variations, each adding new subtitles to a particular scene from the movie *Downfall*. The spoofs capture Hitler's rage against everything from Xbox Live to Donald Trump's election bid. The success of the *Downfall* meme is incredible when you think of the effort involved in producing each one.

Richard Dawkins coined the word "meme" in 1976 to describe the transmission of ideas or behaviors by imitation. But he's not concerned with how the Internet has appropriated the word, as he told *Wired* magazine in 2013: "The meaning is not that far away from the original. It's anything that goes viral. In the original introduction to the word meme in the last chapter of *The Selfish Gene*, I did actually use the metaphor of a virus. So when anybody talks about something going viral on the Internet, that is exactly what a meme is."

If memes are viral by definition constantly replicated, personalized and redistributed through communities, does that mean marketers should develop branded memes instead of chasing viral hits?

Remember, the meme is the *idea*, not the adaptable content format. The original image, video, hashtag, etc. is just the medium that allows each person to express his or her own idea or message.

If I may borrow the *Lord of the Rings'* Boromir meme for a moment, "One does not simply launch a branded meme generator. It is folly!"

KNOW YOUR MEME—AND THE RISK

While memes may position you as hip and in touch, there are myriad ways to screw it up.

In Australia, Woolworths ("the fresh food people"), hoped to commemorate the centenary of the World War I battle of Gallipoli with a meme generator. However, the embedded logo and caption—Fresh in Our Memories—meant it was seen as a cynical branding exercise. The result? Woolworths' idea turned into a parody engine before Australians finished their first cup of coffee.

What was intended...

What it became...



Fresh in our memories

In April 1915, the Australian and New Zealand Army Corp (ANZAC) landed at Gallipoli as part of an allied campaign. By January 1916, more than 44,000 allied troops, including 11,410 ANZACs, were dead. Australia's biggest military tragedy is marked by an annual public holiday and the Anzacs have become mythologized to almost sacred levels in Australian culture.

In April 2015, Woolworths—a supermarket chain and one of Australia's largest retailers—decided to mark the centenary of the World War I Gallipoli campaign with a hashtag and meme generator. The campaign website invited people to commemorate Anzac Day with a custom profile picture or cover photo. “We encourage you to share a memory of someone you know who has been affected or lost to war, by changing your profile picture on social media to that person.”

If you uploaded an image of a relative who fought in the war, the website gave you a version optimized for social media, captioned with the words “Lest we forget, Anzac 1915-2015.” At the bottom of each image was a second caption—“Fresh in our memories”—and the Woolworths logo. It was this latter caption that sent the campaign viral for all the wrong reasons.

Woolworths' tagline is “the fresh food people” and the word “fresh” appears throughout all of its marketing. Someone probably thought it was very clever to come up with a campaign tagline and hashtag with such strong brand alignment. But the wider community just saw a weak pun that placed war heroes on a par with iceberg lettuce.

People used the generator to make jokes, satirize local politics, and, above all, ridicule Woolworths. The news

websites reported on the story within hours. Woolworths pleaded that it wasn't a marketing campaign. “Like many heritage Australian companies, we were marking our respect for ANZAC and our veterans.” Unfortunately for Woolworths, the ill-advised branding meant the community heard—and shared—a very different message.

The Woolworths and the Minerals Council of Australia examples failed because they didn't understand how the same sharing behaviors they wanted to exploit also could distort or undermine their message.

The moment you share a meme, you lose all control of how it may be used. So you'd better be sure your message will survive when you release it into the merciless wilds of social media. ☹️

DEPARTMENT EDITOR



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

Accelerate your content marketing with self-paced, best practice training. Start with two free, no-obligation lessons to find out how CMI University can help.



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*Social Influence s Share the Tools
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contact [techtools@
contentinstitute.com](mailto:techtools@contentinstitute.com).



What are your favorite website analytics and content audit tools?

URL PROFILER urlprofile.com

SCREAMING FROG screamingfrog.co.uk/seo-spider



My indispensable content-auditing tools are the combination of **Screaming Frog** to create a site inventory, and **URL Profiler** to gather qualitative data like readability, social media metrics, and links. Even better, both are fairly low cost subscriptions and work for enterprise and SMB alike.



KANE JAMISON, CONTENT HARMONY, @KANEJAMISON

INSPECTLET inspectlet.com

SESSIONCAM sessioncam.com

Inspectlet records videos of your visitors as they use your site, allowing you to see everything they do—every mouse movement, scroll, click and keypress. This is a fantastic tool for seeing how users really interact with your site and identify areas for improvement.



SessionCam helps marketers identify problem areas that might be killing conversions. It does this by providing actual visitor recordings (including mobile), along with heat maps and funnel drop-off data

JOSH WENDROFF, CSTMR, @JWENDROFF

SEMRUSH semrush.com



SEMRush offers a robust tool set content marketers can use to monitor competitor marketing channels, link-building efforts and overall search-engine-ranking performance. It's fantastic for quickly and easily tracking performance against competitors and reporting to the executive level.

RYAN O'DONNELL, AVALARA TRUSTFILE, @RYANOD

CRAZY EGG crazyegg.com



Crazy Egg majorly helped me improve the conversion rate of our landing page. We launched using only affiliates and had a 4.3 percent conversion rate. Crazy Egg's heat maps and scroll maps were the most useful. We reformatted sections of our landing page and changed some of the copy and increased our conversion rate to 8.9 percent.

EDWARD STURM, THE VIRAL BIBLE

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.

GOOGLE SEARCH CONSOLE

google.com/webmasters/tools



One of go-to tools for content auditing is **Google Search Console**, formerly known as Google Webmaster Tools. It can provide a lot of detailed information about how your content is performing in search, and give you information and ideas about how to improve it (such as keywords that drive traffic but aren't a focus of an individual post, which might reveal a good opportunity for an untapped post topic.)

It can also help you identify any technical errors that might be holding back your content and website.

JOHN TURNER, USERSTHINK, @USABILITYGUYPGH

GOOGLE ANALYTICS google.com/analytics

AUTHORITY LABS (<http://authoritylabs.com/>)



We rely on **Google Analytics** to find the source, medium and campaigns that were responsible for bringing not just traffic but more importantly the conversions (form submissions). What I like about Google Analytics is its endless flexibility and customization.



For tracking our search-engine ranks, we use **Authority Labs** so that we do not need to manually view the rank on various regions, which is quite unreliable if you don't have a dedicated tool to do it. We also use Ahrefs, Majestic, and Google Webmaster Tools (Google Search Console) give us an idea how many links and social media mentions our content campaigns are generating.

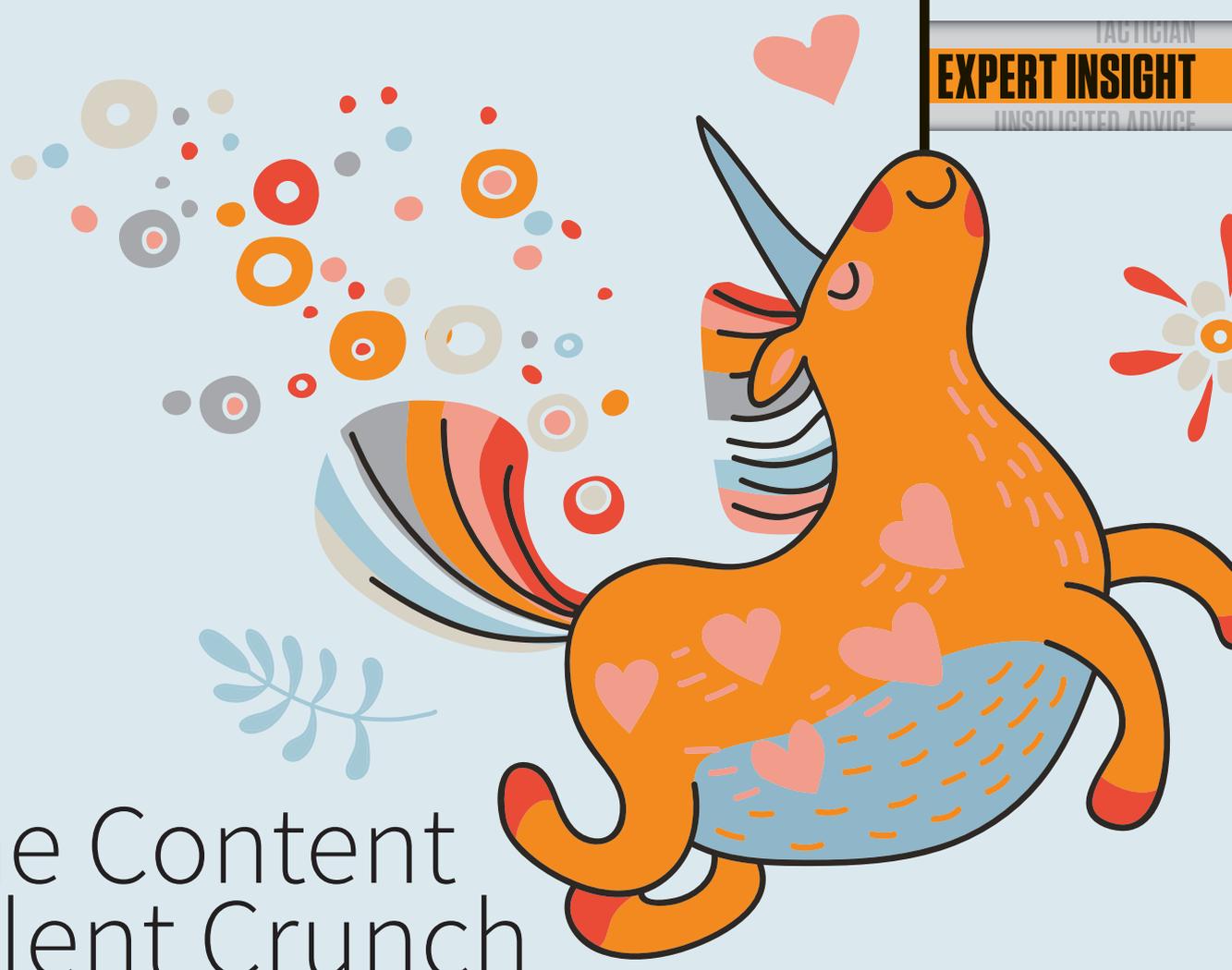
NEENA DE LEON, AZEUS CONVENE, @AZEUSCONVENE

IMAGERAIDER imageraider.com



A lot of our content marketing effort involve infographics. One of our favorite tools is **Image Raider**. It quickly and easily is able to show us which web pages are using our infographics by means of a reverse-image look-up. While there are other services that can do this, what really sets this tool apart is that you can keep your previous images stored within your account and it will automatically crawl for new appearances of your image. This is so helpful because when dealing with 40 to 50 images, it becomes time consuming to have to go through one by one when using a service such as Google Image Search.

BRETT BASTELLO, INSEEV INTERACTIVE, @INSEEV TWEETS



The Content Talent Crunch

To solve the critical shortage, it's time to change how we train, hire and nurture creatives.

Jay Acunzo

I have these two friends. Let's call them Brendan and Amanda (because those are their names). These two friends are very, VERY good content marketers. They've built audiences at the top of the funnel. They've converted audiences down the funnel. They're great at managing content teams. They're prolific content creators and leaders. They're so good that they can generate thousands of MQLs, SQLs, RTs and other KPIs with one hand and drink an IPA with the other. LOL OMG.

They are, in no uncertain terms, the proverbial content rock stars we all hear about. Almost every month, I annoy the crap out of them.

Let me explain: The startups in which NextView (the venture capital firm where I work) invests are all falling over themselves to hire the best content marketing talent. Even outside our portfolio, my colleagues in the tech-startup world also are encountering this talent arms race. Almost all of them

desperately want what I call a unicorn hire—someone who can execute and lead, strategize and create. Someone like Brendan. Someone like Amanda. And so I send them job after job, intro after intro.

And as much as I hate to admit it, their best move isn't to take any of these jobs. Their best move is to wait for a corresponding unicorn job—that once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for them.

Yep. We're experiencing a massive talent crunch for great content marketers—and it's not just in the startup space. It's everywhere. And it's time we did something about it.

Where's all the talent?

NextView has invested in 50-plus startups in its five-year history, and the talent crunch is what I hear about most. I get multiple emails every week with requests to share good candidates or make intros. NextView also runs a program called the Talent Exchange to surface candidates to our

Almost all of them desperately want what I call a unicorn hire—someone who can execute and lead, strategize and create.



Want to learn more from Acunzo? Read his crash course in narrative podcasting. http://cmi.media/acunzo_podcasting



startups. The second-most requested intro through this program, just behind software engineers? You guessed it. Content talent.

Over the last 18 months, I've watched the problem worsen. In that same span, the language used by hiring managers also has evolved. "We're hiring a writer" is now more common in my inbox than "we're hiring a content marketer." That one small change hints at a much larger reality: Companies aren't finding enough creative, producer-type talent. Whenever I see a search for "writers," I can practically hear the executive behind the desk throwing his or her hands up in exasperation ... "Enough with the pretenders. We need actual creative talent in here already!"

But they're not finding it. Whether startup or enterprise, in my hometown of Boston or beyond, it's just not consistently there.

Looking outside the bubble

In a survey I conducted with Boston Content (a local content marketing industry group) last year, I asked our members to think of their job in four parts: Planning (strategy, buying tech, crafting editorial calendars, etc.), production (creating and editing the content itself), distribution (marketing), and analysis (post-publishing evaluation). Then I asked them to identify where they receive the *least* amount of internal support and, no surprise, they unanimously said they lacked support in producing content. The marketing world is just not built to support and develop the creative talents of its people, generally speaking.

Unfortunately, when it comes to the other possible solution—attracting better talent from elsewhere—we have a long way to go.

For starters, it's hard to be both focused on your craft as a writer (or any creative) *and* be happy in content marketing. I often lament this fact and propose solutions to it in my blog, but looking across the industry, I'm one of a few people talking openly about why we need to honor good creative processes and cultivate genuinely great writers,

designers, videographers, podcasters, et al. (Hat tip to some of the others doing so, like Ann Handley and Doug Kessler.)

Starting the solution conversation

Nowhere is the problematic environment more evident than in the marketing world's obsession with the quality-versus-quantity debate. Not only are those *not* opposing ideas, but it's also not reality. Creatives sitting at the adult tables of the digital world (media outlets, for instance) don't even get to ask that question. They have to do both. I know some journalists who publish two to three articles per day, all while working on one or two in-depth, long-form pieces. They have to meet a quality bar set by their editors. Ask them, "Do you write to be high quality or high quantity?" and they would just laugh.

Content marketing creatives are still sitting at the little kids' table. That has to end.

While I don't have the answer, we need to start talking more openly about the problem and start working towards a sustainable solution. We need to figure it out and fast, or this wonderful, exciting, rewarding industry niche is going to come crashing down. Here are some ideas of what we can do to attack the problem:

1 Create a program to launch better creators.

Launch Academy is a great program here in Boston that trains engineering talent for startups. What if we had a studio where young marketers could learn the craft of producing media and how to connect it to a larger marketing strategy? (This could then scale to multiple offline locations. Online could work too, though I'd argue not as well.)

2 Change how we source, interview and vet candidates.

We simply can't take the same process used to hire good marketers and use it to hire prolific creators. The best writer I ever hired was a bartender for 10 years prior to my hiring him—and I almost completely messed that up by applying the traditional hiring process to him.

Whether we tweak our vetting process or interview differently to attract new and awesome types of talent, it takes a process and approach that matches.

3 Evolve how we talk and think about creative.

Companies must put aside their products and revise their agendas to first focus on creating amazing content. If there's one reason media





companies are so much better at producing media, it's because they care about the story first. Then they retrofit the products they sell around a great film show, book and so on. The writers, designers and animators who craft historically great stories and characters don't wake up thinking, "What can I create today to sell more action figures?"

But marketers? Boy do we get this backwards. That's unfortunate, given that better content would yield better results for us. But that's playing the long game.

Right now we don't talk about creative in a way that attracts top talent. We focus almost exclusively on the end result to the expense of (rather than in harmony with) the craft of creation. Sometimes a blog isn't working because it sucks to read.

The question I get that makes me want to toss my laptop most is, "How many words should my blog posts be?" What a great way to turn off prolific quality writers from joining your organization.

This desire to know some magical word count is a sign that (a) someone is interested in shortcuts above craft, (b) someone isn't a born writer, as

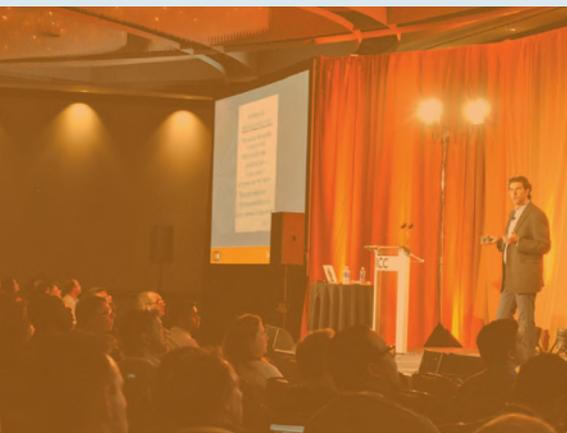
nobody who IS would ever ask that question, and (c) someone who doesn't think about the audience first. Your audience members view a blog post as merely a container. The stuff inside is what they're after. I believe people are multi-dimensional and complex. They'll read any length and consume any medium, provided the stuff inside those containers is worthy.

We need to act now

It's 8:43 a.m. on a foggy Boston morning as I write this. I'm sitting in my favorite coffee shop downtown. And, hand to God, as I finished typing the section above, one of our startup CEOs plopped down in the chair across from me, totally unexpectedly: "Good to see you man. Here's what I'm struggling with ..."

The topic? Everything you just read. The solution? It's time we found one. ☺

Jay Acunzo is vice president of platform at NextView Ventures and host of the Traction podcast. Follow him @Jay_zo.



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ON CREATIVITY

British acting legend John Cleese has spent years studying how to nurture and protect quiet, creative *thinking* in a world that emphasizes *doing*.

Clare McDermott



John Cleese may be best known for his writing and acting in cult classics like *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* and *A Fish Called Wanda*, yet Cleese has had a diverse and prolific creative career. He wrote and acted in two classic television series, more than a dozen other recognized film titles, and even co-founded a production company that creates hilariously unexpected business training videos on topics like customer service and leadership.

After five decades in the entertainment business, Cleese has spent long hours thinking about the roots of creativity—and how to protect it from the vagaries of everyday life.

CCO: When and how did you embark on this journey of studying creativity?

Cleese: In school no one ever thought I had any creative abilities at all. I don't know to what extent it was because I didn't show them or because the teachers tended not to have any creative abilities themselves. I don't think you can recognize it in people if you don't have some idea yourself of what it's about. When I discovered at Cambridge—I was maybe 22—that I could write stuff that would make people laugh, I was a little surprised. I came to Cambridge as a scientist and then switched to law, neither of which stimulated my creativity. From then on, I began to notice things. If I was sitting and writing a sketch, and couldn't think how to finish it ... eventually I would go to bed and when I got up in the morning, wandered over to my desk with my cup of coffee to look at it, I suddenly would think, "Why don't I just do that?" It became obvious to me that thinking was going on when I wasn't consciously thinking about it.

You speak a lot about the importance of quiet space for creativity. What does your quiet space look like? What habits or rituals do you cultivate?

Creating a creative space means creating boundaries of space and boundaries of time. Boundaries of space mean you don't have people walking in, because one of the most completely destructive things to any type of creativity is interruptions. I remember when I was 15 somebody told me a story about Michael Faraday, the physicist; his wife used to leave his food on the tray outside the room. Faraday discovered interruptions were deadly. You have to have boundaries of space.

Then you set up boundaries of time. I don't think there is much point in trying to do anything difficult if you put out less than an hour. You see it's just like meditation. People who meditate know that when you first sit down, all that



happens is your mind buzzes with all the things you should be doing. You have to wait a bit.

Do you become better at quieting the mind over time? I think you do. You become better because you realize this process works. So, when I need to get something done, the very first thing I do is to start thinking about it. When I start early, I know my mind will work on it even if I'm not actively writing.

Children don't seem to have the luxury of quiet anymore. Someone said to me the other day, which is very sweet. He said, "In my youth, the parent's problem was getting the kids in. Now it's getting them out."

More than anything, it's undermining our mental health. In the old days it was OK to sit around whittling sticks, fishing or taking the dog for a walk. Nobody has any space now; that means they don't have time gently to process the emotions that come up during the course of the day.

People have not had a chance to find quiet. Every sacred major tradition has a meditative side to it, in which the cultivation of attention is really considered the most important thing you can do.

Is humor an essential part of creativity? I think so. If you are relaxed, you see the funny side of things much more than if you are focused on the goal. This grasshopper hops into a bar and hops up onto a stool. The bar man says, "We got a drink named after you." And the grasshopper says, "What? Brian?"

Took me a moment ... Telling good jokes is a vanishing art. If you look at what jokes are, it's normally to do with putting two different frameworks together. When the barman says he has a drink named after the grasshopper, the grasshopper thinks, "My name is Brian." He doesn't think the drink's called a Grasshopper. It's two frameworks coming together.

I think that's essential in creativity: putting two different things together and coming out with something new. Sometimes I do jokes and it takes people a long time to get them. But they are often more amused when they have to make a less obvious connection. If you make a joke too obvious, it's not as funny.

Creativity is all about play. Early research about creativity found that people who are creative are people who are more playful in their approach. When something doesn't work, they never think, "Oh darn, the thing isn't working." They always think, "Interesting ... wonder why it isn't working?" There's that childlike focus.

The other thing is that most creative people take more time over their decisions, which always astounds people. Most people's problem is anxiety. People are always trying to get rid of anxiety by making decisions and doing things before they need to.

So, if you have a decision to make, just ask "when does this decision have to be made?" Then wait until it has to be made. You don't take it before because you might get new ideas or new information. People think you've got to take a decision like that (*snapping fingers*). Why would you hurry it? The answer is most people want to get rid of the anxiety, whatever the result. 



Missed the action at CMW? Don't miss Jeffrey Tambor's keynote at ICC. intelligentcontentconference.com

TO SOLVE COMPLEX PROBLEMS, LET IDEAS PERCOLATE

John Cleese says to pull out his most creative ideas and writing, he turns ideas over in his head over a long time, letting the problem quietly trickle through his mind. At his Content Marketing World keynote, he explained, "I invented this phrase, 'Get your panic in early.' Don't do nothing for months and then panic. I want the maximum amount of time for my mind to work on it. So the sooner I start, the sooner it kicks in, and things seem to come together in a way that's almost accidental. Sometimes you don't know when it's going to happen. You can't do that when you're under pressure."

Cleese says a book by Guy Claxton called *Hare Brain, Tortoise Mind* helped him understand the phenomenon better. Claxton explores the dichotomy between intellect and intuition, and argues that by incubating ideas in the "undermind," the mind unconsciously detects patterns and suggests solutions. Or as Claxton argues, we should think less to understand more.



content marketing™ world 2015

3,500+ attendees, 225 speakers and over 550 companies gathered in Cleveland in September for the biggest content marketing event on the planet.

Education **DAY 1** A pre-conference workshop series led attendees through complex topics in small groups; all walked away with practical, usable insights to bring back to the workplace.

DAYS 2-3 The main event included keynotes from brands like Marriott and Starbucks, over 200 sessions on topics ranging from developing strategy to fine-tuning process and analytics--plus time to network with industry influencers.

DAY 4 On Friday, a smaller group came back for industry labs and the Content Inc. track for startups.



Inspiration KEYNOTES

David Beebe, VP of global creative and content marketing, Marriott International

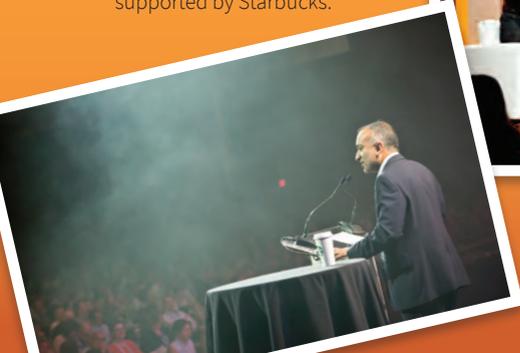


DOCUMENTARY

Premier screening of *The Story of Content*, a documentary about the evolution of content marketing through the eyes of the industry's leading influencers and brand marketers.



Rajiv Chandrasekaran, former national editor of *The Washington Post*, now head of the new content studio supported by Starbucks.



Entertainment

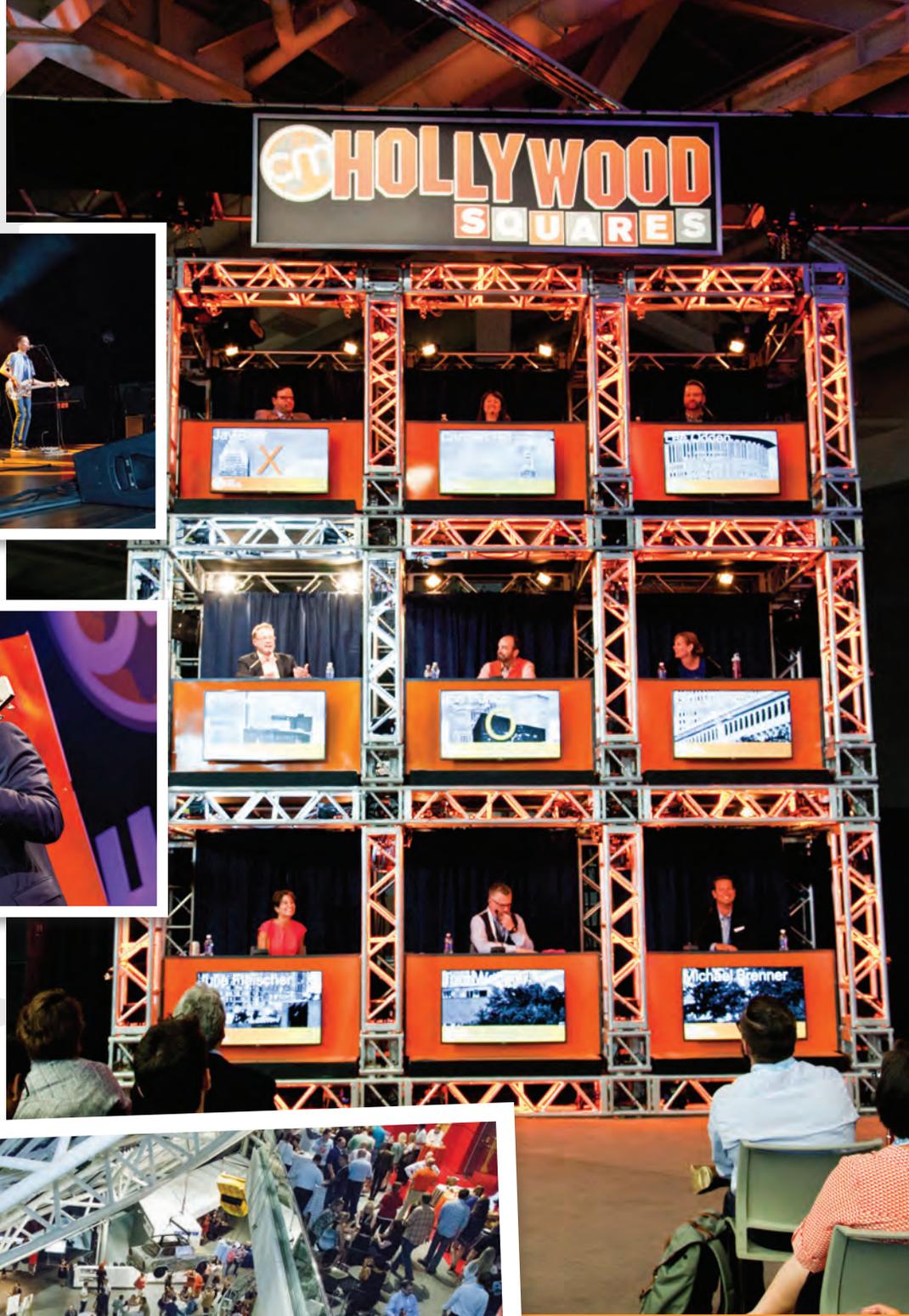
Barenaked Ladies



Nick O erman



Cocktails at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Museum

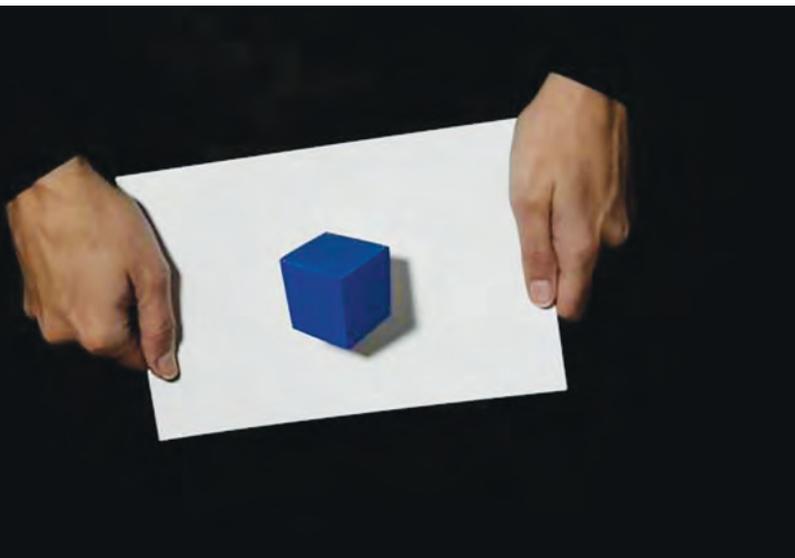


A content smörgåsbord.



CMAwards Spotlight: Intel *iQ Science of Seeing*

For more information on the
Content Marketing Awards, visit
www.contentmarketingawards.com.



What if your computer could see like you? Intel's RealSense is new three-dimensional camera technology that brings human-like vision to personal computers. To get people interested in why it mattered, Intel created *The Science of Seeing*, a special edition of the company's digital magazine, *iQ*.

Intel's team of journalists and designers created nine multimedia stories that each explores a facet of how machines (and people) see—and what more-human-like computers might mean for society. The stories include a feature about a neuroscientist whose stereo blindness was cured when he watched a three-dimensional movie; custom-made optical illusions that show how easy it is to trick the human brain; and an illustrated podcast featuring a sci-fi author, a Stanford professor and a roboticist debating the future of man-machine relationships. Intel also built dioramas designed by a world-famous illustrator and used RealSense to turn them into interactive three-dimensional puzzles for the web.

Intel concluded that *iQ's Science of Seeing* edition stories were three times more engaging than its traditional campaign landing page, and articles syndicated to Medium ranked among the site's top 10 most read.



How Well Do You Know Aldi?

German grocery chain **Aldi** is getting increasingly creative with its content as part of the company's efforts to expand its footprint and become better known in the United States. Aldi partnered with **Ben Bailey**, comedian and host of Discovery Channel's *Cash Cab*, on a web series, *Cart Smarts with Ben Bailey*. Dressed as an Aldi employee and armed with a megaphone, Bailey asks customers at a Chicago store what they love best about the low-cost grocery chain. The short, funny videos entertain while putting the spotlight on some of Aldi's most popular products. Mmmm ... cheese.

CBRE Group Debuts *Blueprint* Magazine

Commercial real estate company **CBRE Group** is extending its content marketing program with the launch of *Blueprint*, an online magazine that hopes to inspire people to "look at the world of real estate from a new perspective." While *Blueprint* is aimed at commercial real estate investors and businesses that buy and lease property, CBRE also wants to attract the general business community, "urban enthusiasts" and other curious readers with a blend of proprietary research and content written by academics, analysts and CBRE subject-matter experts. The debut issue features articles about how property owners in California can navigate the historic drought, the demand for industrial space in Colorado to accommodate legal marijuana growers and the booming real estate market in India.



#ACTUALLYSHECAN

Best known as the makers of Botox, pharmaceutical company **Allergan** is targeting millennial women with the #ActuallySheCan content marketing campaign for Lo Loestrin Fe birth control pills. A play on the popular phrase "I can't even," used to express speechlessness, #ActuallySheCan was designed to empower millennial women to "participate and talk to each other, and in a language that's really meaningful for them." Starring an illustrated character named Violet, the campaign's pop-culture references should be familiar to any millennial with an Instagram account: avocado toast, the perfect selfie, online dating apps and emojis all make an appearance. In addition to a digital presence, the campaign includes live events, celebrity endorsements, a branded content partnership with *Cosmopolitan* magazine and engagement with physicians.

DEPARTMENT EDITOR



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



NO REALLY, VISIT CALIFORNIA

Capitalizing on iconic images of the California coast, mountains and vineyards, **Visit California's** new microsite, Road Trips, offers itineraries for travelers visiting the state. Combining jaw-dropping photography, inside information about each stop on the journey and links for more local information, Road Trips is just the right balance of inspiration plus useful information.

More unsolicited
advice from Andrew
Davis: [http://cmi.
media/davis](http://cmi.media/davis)



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

In his column, Andrew Davis dishes out content marketing advice to unsuspecting targets. In this issue, Davis tells the chief marketing officer of the fast-growing team-messaging app, **Slack**, why content should focus on daily habits rather than product features.

Bill Macaitis
Chief Marketing Office
Slack Technologies

Dear Mr. Macaitis,

Congratulations on the massive amount of positive attention Slack received this year. After so much buzz about your group messaging software, I decided to sign up—and I love it too. Slack is easy to use and well designed. I see a lot of potential.

But here's the thing: I need higher-level help.

I don't need tutorials about how the tool works; I don't need examples of what other tools integrate with Slack; I don't even need an interview with your CEO—all things I found on your blog.

Here's what I do need help transforming the way my team communicates. If we're going to spend money on your software, we need to reduce our dependency on traditional communication tools. We need retraining. Don't just show me the ins and outs of Slack (though that's helpful at first); explain how we integrate slack into our business, when to use Slack versus e-mail, or what we should stop doing so we can start leveraging the power of your tool. To make Slack an automatic part of our workday, give us content designed to help us change our work patterns.

If it's any consolation, you are not the only technology provider with this problem. I cannot count the number of tools I've enthusiastically signed us up for this year only to cancel when I realize we can live without it. I need you to help me maintain inspiration after the honeymoon period.

So, here's the deal: If you commit to creating one piece of content each week designed to help people like me change their communication habits, we'll start paying for your software.

What do you say? Do we have a deal?

Whether you wanted it or not,
Andrew

DEPARTMENT COLUMNIST



Andrew Davis is the author of *Brandscaping: Unleashing the Power of Partnerships* and *Town Inc.* Follow him @TPLDrew.

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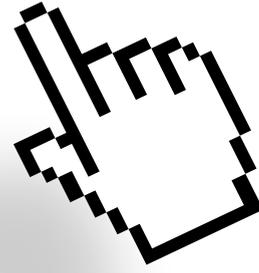
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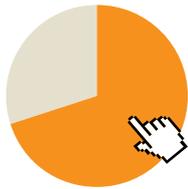
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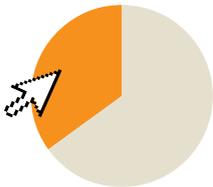
Interactive Touchpoints

Often overlooked in a content marketer's portfolio, interactive content improves engagement and conversions, and offers information about your most valuable prospects.

Douglas J. Guth



70 percent of marketers say interactive content is effective at converting visitors.



Just **36 percent** say static content is effective at converting visitors.

Demand Metric, Enhancing The Buyer's Journey

Say "interactive content," and you may think of a simple social quiz or contest. Yet interactive content describes a wide range of content types and offers marketers a chance to engage deeply with customers over a longer cycle.

The most compelling examples of interactive content programs use multiple digital touchpoints to educate and influence an audience, says Justin Talerico, CEO and co-founder of Ion Interactive, a developer of interactive content services and software.

In contrast to static, pass-fail marketing tactics like white papers, articles and webinars, the interactive experience is intended to be participatory and ongoing via a series of calculators, self-assessments and other user-involved content. For example, a user may take a quiz on online safety from a cyber security firm, then move on to a more detailed self-assessment. In a matter of minutes the user receives a customized report on computer security recommendations.

Marketers generally assume interactive content development is both expensive and time-consuming. In fact, interactive browser-based experiences need not be built from the ground up. Ready-made solutions and templates from companies like Ion Interactive can be customized to your needs. What's more, interactive projects can repurpose content you already produced.

An in-house research report, for example, can live on as a series of quizzes, interactive e-book or self-assessment. "A company's first inclination is to do a familiar e-book or white paper," says Talerico. "They're not used to thinking about how a research report can be flipped into an assessment."

Ultimately, breaking through the noise requires companies to consider lead-generation tactics a step beyond filling out a form to get an asset. As more consumers are using digital channels to research products and services, the onus is on marketers to provide increasingly useful and consultative interactions. 

WHAT IS ONLINE INTERACTIVE CONTENT?

A web-based experience that lets users interact with content in a novel way. Interactive content not only increases engagement and increases conversions. Done well, interactive content, such assessments, also offers marketers invaluable information about their user base.

JUST GETTING STARTED?

Calculator: Have a multi-input pricing model? Use a calculator to help your customers estimate costs.

Quiz: Use it to test your customers' knowledge, then generate a report card that compares their results to their peers.

Interactive e-book: Do you publish long-form content, such as white papers or research reports? Consider a navigable version that helps readers locate the most relevant sections. Embed quizzes and assessments inside an e-book to keep readers engaged.

READY TO DO MORE?

Assessments: Particularly for complex sales, consider a comprehensive survey that offers personalized recommendations or benchmarks.

Interactive infographics: Create a navigable infographic that can drill down into stats and offer more information about each.

Content wizards: An online tour guide to your content library, content wizards use an initial assessment to customize what content is served up to users.

THE GEEKS GUIDE TO LONDON

London Technology Week stands as a celebration of tech innovation and entrepreneurial talent. To connect with the event's tech insiders, Ion Interactive created an online map of London's hidden science and technology gems, and an interactive event planner for soirees all over the city.





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