UNLEASH YOUR EVENT SUPER POWERS

FROM PLANNING AND PROMOTION, TO EVENT TECHNOLOGY, FIND TIPS AND RESOURCES INSIDE TO PULL IT OFF.
Create content people love.

NewsCred's software powers content marketing for the world's best brands.

Learn how NewsCred can transform your brand.

🌐 newscred.com    ☎️ (212) 989 4100
The Three-Legged Stool Strategy

I started in the publishing industry almost 20 years ago. At that time, we used an antiquated publishing strategy called the “three-legged stool.” It meant that to be the industry’s leading content provider, we needed to be provide expertise online, in print and in person for our target audiences.

Funny thing is, the same strategy is now the basis of content marketing effectiveness for brands, which typically build an audience online, then diversify into events and print. (The reverse used to be true for media companies.)

Why is the three-legged stool strategy so important? The more we engage with our customers in multiple channels outside of product and service communications, the more loyal those customers generally become.

For us at Content Marketing Institute, our magic number is three subscriptions. That means our audience members who subscribe to three content offerings become better customers (i.e., they pay or pay more for CMI services). Ideally we want someone to subscribe to our e-newsletter, then graduate to reading our magazine (the one you are holding), try out our free webinars, check out our Tuesday #CMWorld Twitter chats and review our online training. If we truly provide value on a consistent basis to our audience, odds are we’ll see them at Content Marketing World.

Print and Events? Really?
We are in the experiences business. We create those experiences through valuable, consistent content. While most of your competitors are focusing on digital experiences only, savvy brands see the opportunities offline.

I want you to think about the greatest content marketing examples you know about—the Red Bulls, the LEGO’s, the Dells, the Marriotts. Do you know what they all have? You guessed it... world-class print magazines and amazing event experiences.

Of course, it’s not just about print and events. There are so many channels for us to communicate with our audiences. But what’s worked for the past 20 years are offline strategies, which are the exact ones so many marketing professionals forget about.

Today, the trusted content provider must continue to focus on the three key underpinnings—online, print and in-person. If you are having trouble getting the content marketing strategy you need, you may be missing a leg on your stool.

Yours in content,

Joe Pulizzi
Founder
Content Marketing Institute
@JoePulizzi

While most of your competitors are focusing on digital experiences only, savvy brands see the opportunities offline.
20 EXPERT INSIGHT
29 TECH TOOLS
30 SOCIAL WEB
40 UNSOLICITED ADVICE
42 IDEA GARAGE

08 HARNESS YOUR EVENT SUPERPOWERS
Find a social media plan to help promote the big day.

12 DESIGNING EXECUTIVE-WORTHY EVENTS
Strategize to attract upper-rung leadership.

16 EVENT MARKETING TECH GUIDE

18 BEYOND THE BASICS
Advice from an event marketing master.

24 Adidas Group aims to attract athletes at heart

34 Tracking down influencer heavyweights

37 Audience Choice Award Winner: Brightcove

38 Profile: Content Marketer of the Year

44 Creating Adaptable Personas
PNR: THIS OLD MARKETING PODCAST

News, Rants & Raves, and Example of the Week
Listen in while Joe Pulizzi and Robert Rose dissect the latest industry news and present an interesting case study to inspire marketers. Catch the one-hour podcast every week.
http://cmi.media/cco-pnr

REPORT

Content Marketing Research and Trends Outlook
Find new research released monthly throughout the Fall
http://cmi.media/research

TWITTER CHAT

#CMWorld Twitter Chats
Join us every Tuesday at noon U.S. Eastern to talk about content marketing topics.
http://cmi.media/twitterchats

KELSEY MEYER
How We Used Content to Hire 30 People in One Year
http://cmi.media/hire30

GUILLAUME DECUGIS
7 Ways Technology Can Make You a Smarter Content Marketer
http://cmi.media/smarttech

PATRICK GARVEY
How to Measure Performance to Improve Your Content Marketing
http://cmi.media/formance

ARE YOU HIRING?
WE CAN HELP!

Reach our audience of over 85,000 weekly newsletter subscribers to find your perfect candidate.

Visit http://cmi.media/jobs To Get Started!
FEELING POWERLESS BEHIND THE WHEEL?

Don’t find yourself losing control while you’re behind the wheel. Successfully executing an earned media strategy takes direction and a planned approach. Every day, we integrate earned media into content marketing strategies of brands like yours. Learn how we will help you create more customers, more revenue and more brand equity.

VISIT WRIGHTSMEDIA.COM AND START FILLING IN THE GAPS OF YOUR CONTENT MARKETING PLAN.
Once you have a confirmed date and location, start promoting your event through social media—even if you haven’t finalized all the details.

**PRO TIP!** Always use a visual to promote your event, and be sure to hit up speakers, sponsors and influencers via social to take advantage of their networks.

**TIMELINE** As soon as you confirm a date/city but at least four to six weeks before the big day.

**DASH OUT OF THE GATE** As soon as possible, spread buzz about your event. Develop social posts that include speakers, sponsors and influencers to help increase reach.

**INVOLVE YOUR EMPLOYEES** Don’t forget to create excitement among your closest stakeholders. Even better, arm them with tools to help with promotion. Make it easy for your co-workers to share the event by writing social posts for them. Share this via any internal communication tool—internal newsletter, Slack thread, Yammer channel or even an email.

**CREATE A PROMOTION-CODE PLAN** Invite your influencers by sharing a promotion code. The earlier you get them involved, the sooner they can help you promote your event.
2. LEVERAGE YOUR SPEAKERS

You engage speakers to provide original insights on the day of your event, but don’t forget they are also powerful allies to promote the big day.

**TIMELINE** As you book each speaker

**DESIGN SHARABLE SPEAKER CARDS** Ask a designer to develop a sharable social media graphic that includes room for a headshot, quote and brief event details. Then as you book each speaker, ask for a quote (or even better, script one based on their presentation deck).

**SHARE SPEAKER QUOTES** Use your speaker quote visual to promote the event and the speaker’s session. When you share the image, don’t forget to ping your speakers and their companies.

**REUSE SPEAKER CARDS OFTEN** Use your new graphics in all sorts of ways, from featuring them on speaker pages, tweeting visuals during the event, or even creating a SlideShare presentation of all speaker quotes. You could even do collectible, limited edition T-shirts if budget allows.

#HASHTAGS

Hashtags help users track conversations. Done well, they convene people with shared interests and foster online dialogue. Yet too few marketers take advantage of the full potential—particularly for events. To get the most out of your hashtag, treat it like a long-term asset, juicing it for all its worth before, during and after the event.

**CHOOSE WISELY, YOUNG GRASSHOPPER**

- Research whether any other hashtags in use sound similar. Do this every year, not just the first year you create it. Hashtag misfires abound. I worked at an organization that used the same hashtag each year until it suddenly was co-opted by a furry convention. Yes, those furries. I repeat, research your hashtag anew each year.
- Test your choice among a small group to ensure it is memorable and doesn’t cause confusion. And steer clear of complicated acronyms or odd spelling choices.
- Once you choose your hashtag, use it early and often on all promotional materials, presentation deck templates and every other spot you can think of. Think of it as your rallying cry.
- Recurring event? Consider using the same hashtag every year to build your following.
- Presenting at an event? Piggyback on the event hashtag by adding your brand at the end (e.g., #SXSWZendesk)

Sound familiar? Hashtag confusion is a missed opportunity for shared dialogue and community building.

**PRO TIP!**

Use your hashtag in every spot possible... even underfoot. People will take photos at your event to post on social media so give them plenty of opportunities to spread your hashtag.
3. ENGAGE INFLUENTIAL ATTENDEES

Don’t let speakers hog all the fun. Consider reaching out to high-value attendees to generate excitement and amplify your message.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIMELINE</th>
<th>At least two weeks before event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SEEK INFLUENCERS AMONG ATTENDEES</td>
<td>As RSVPs roll in, examine social profiles to find out if you’ve attracted influencers to your event (usually someone with over 1,000 followers). Then begin a conversation with those individuals beforehand, asking for a chance to meet IRL for a one-on-one conversation at the event. This kind of outreach can help you build a strong, lasting relationship with your influencers and their network.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHARE THE LOVE</td>
<td>Don’t let your social channels be all about you. Curate your influencers’ content to help create a diverse and interesting social feed for all to enjoy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONDUCT PRE-EVENT INTERVIEWS</td>
<td>Reach out to your attendees directly for interviews. Ask them simple questions about the event that others might be asking themselves. (You can publish the interview in a blog or even a podcast.) Why are they attending the event? Is this their first time attending? What are they looking forward to the most? Which session are they looking forward to? Do they have a conference crush on anyone? (OK, just kidding on that last one.) The goal is to create awareness about your event and increase reach by using attendees’ networks.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO BUILD ANTICIPATION

Attendees will learn about your event through a multitude of channels—website, blogs, email marketing, retargeting, social media and even word of mouth. The trick is to engage with them as soon as possible so that they know where to find you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIMELINE</th>
<th>As RSVPs roll in</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OPEN A CHANNEL</td>
<td>When attendees register, send them something via social that might be of interest to them, and only them. If you notice they are coming from out of town, share a local landmark they may want to visit. (Since I have #bacon on my Twitter profile, I’ve had event organizers recommend where to eat bacon close to the event’s location.) By acknowledging them, you help create an open dialogue that will last well beyond the event.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BANTER BEFORE THE BIG DAY</td>
<td>Even beyond the first touchpoint, keep the conversation going, particularly as the big day nears (e.g., What session are you looking forward to?).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Request a Twitter handle on your registration form so you can reach out to attendees via social.

Find out the four secrets to building social momentum. http://cmi.media/4secrets
5. **HOST A PRE-EVENT**

Depending on the level of excitement about your event, you may be able to host a mini-event (or three) before the main show.

**TIMELINE** Weeks or days before your event

**ORGANIZE A TWITTER CHAT** Really get social by organizing Twitter chats with attendees before the event. Use an influencer as your speaker to help draw in more chat attendees.

**HELP ATTENDEES CONNECT FOR PRE-EVENT SOCIALS** When SXSW was in its early days, a few of us would get together to compare session notes and travel plans. People are always looking for smaller events before the main events. Companies can use this to their advantage by hosting small pre-event happy-hour days (or weeks if you have a big local contingent) before an event. Need budget for them? Ask your sponsors. This will increase their sponsor value and reach.

6. **ENGAGE SPONSORS**

**TIMELINE** Once confirmed, during and after event

**CULTIVATE A PARTNERSHIP** Go beyond the basics of sticking your sponsors’ logos on your website and carving out a spot for them at the event. Expand the partnership by mentioning your sponsors on social media. Let your audience know why you are excited to partner with each and every one of your sponsors. The goal here is to get your sponsors to retweet and share posts about your event—helping to increase your reach.

There are many ways to thank your sponsors besides the traditional nod at the podium. Consider these ideas:
- Share thank-you slide showcasing all sponsors with link to event.
- Share photos of gifts/swag at event.
- Ask for quotes to share.

With these simple strategical tactics, you can create the conversation about your event well before the main event takes place.

**Amy Higgins** is the head of content marketing at ZOZI. Follow her @AmyWHiggins.
The insights and experience that come from interactive, interpersonal exchange—be it a salon, forum, conference or a virtual roundtable—offer a unique experience that simply can’t be replicated in other formats and channels. Getting the right people in the room is key to your event’s success, and no audience is more challenging than the C-suite. The group is highly desired by marketers, but also frustratingly tough to convene. Top executives won’t take time away from the office unless they are convinced they’ll get significant value, and they will readily punt an invitation to their team if the case is not persuasive.

In my work helping companies bring executive clients to the table, I have found three core elements to boost C-suite attendance and participation. The principles hold true whether the event is in-person or virtual.

**Content**—or your event’s agenda—is the primary hook and it needs to be tailored specifically to your C-suite audience. Executives seek intriguing, surprising or useful ideas that address their greatest business challenges. They also crave solutions that push beyond common wisdom. Outcomes and impact matter; benefits and features don’t. Executives often shy away from events—particularly those held by vendors—because they fear the sales pitch. Keep the content focused on the two or three things they need to do to create value now, shared in the form of a story, and you will get their attention.

**Co-creation** is the most effective tool for creating a compelling executive event. What does it involve? Co-creation requires that you invest time and resources up front to collaborate with key, high-value participants; together you test, shape and vet the topic agenda, content focus, speakers and experts. Their advice will help you uncover the most timely and critical issues, and even develop a shared sense of ownership of the event. Co-creation also uncovers useful feedback to help shape the speakers’ presentations for maximum value. And participants who contribute to the program tend to promote and advocate for the event to their peers and colleagues, enhancing its appeal.

**Connection** to peers and experts makes the case for relevance. Executives value insights from those they consider their true peers, and they appreciate the opportunity to listen to and learn from the source. Craft the speaker roster with peer leaders who can share their case studies and lessons learned, and take the opportunity to engage your own executive clients as presenters. Also consider external experts whom participants identify as thought provoking and inspirational. Keep in mind that this is not the time to parade your product.
The bottom line is you can attract the C-suite to your events, and even make them look forward to coming again and again. But there are no shortcuts; convening worthy peers and valuable ideas is paramount. With the right strategy, setting and audience, you will find your events C-suite worthy.

Roanne Neuwirth helps companies engage their executive clients to build deeper relationships. She has worked with a wide-ranging client base, including IBM, GTE Sprint, Wells Fargo and Chevron. Follow her at @RoanneNeuwirth.
Seconds count.

Research shows the average human has an 8.25-second attention span. Your pet goldfish has a longer attention span.

So, in the time it took you to wonder what webinars have to do with goldfish, you may already have lost your audience.

Still paying attention? Good. Get started with webinars and connect in seconds.

GoToWebinar: Content That Connects
The numbers don’t lie.

Boost your webinar attendance with these proven tips.

- Bring in an A-list speaker. → 12.6X more attendees
- Include a list. → 10.2X more attendees
- Show your audience how. → 9.9X more attendees
- Make big promises (but keep them). → 4.8X more attendees
- Keep it simple. → 4.6X more attendees

Data collected from millions of webinars our customers host each year across the globe.

Create the perfect webinar invite.

- **Add a personal touch:** Invites with a photo and signature of the host beat emails from “The Product Team” by 67%.
- **Use your words:** Don’t be afraid to keep it simple. Text emails beat design emails by 41.8%.
- **Time to perfection:** A 5:30AM drop time beats a 10:30AM drop time by 12.9%, but 8AM beats 5:30AM by 8.9%.
- **Pick the right day:** Tuesdays are best for lead-gen webinars. Thursdays are a close second.

Running a successful webinar takes a team. With GoToWebinar, you have one.

- Detailed analytics, consulting services and CRM support
- Easy-to-use toolbar
- Top-rated customer service

GoToWebinar – a leader in online events – is one of the most effective ways to create a live, personal connection with your target audience. Generate qualified leads, establish thought leadership and build awareness for your brand. Trusted by start-ups to organizations worldwide, GoToWebinar helps businesses reach over 40 million people each year.

gotowebinar.com
Here’s a sampling of solution providers mentioned frequently by marketers at events.

**EVENT MARKETING PLATFORMS**

All-in-one event platforms may include event registration and management, as well as niche tools like event apps. Because many are so comprehensive, they may take a bit longer to learn to use.

**Cvent**
This event-marketing powerhouse has you covered from start to finish—from planning and promotion, to attendee registration, engagement and post-event analytics. You can even use the platform to manage the RFP process with new vendors/venues. Cvent integrates with Salesforce and Webex, among other marketing automation platforms.

**RegOnline**
Build, promote and manage your event in one spot. RegOnline’s product has a strong focus on event-registration management.

**etouches**
A full-service registration and event-management software, etouches offers simple oversight for your event details, including mobile check-in for attendees and post-event wrap-up features. Plus etouches integrates with Salesforce to simplify promotion and drive revenue.

**Attend**
An events platform with a focus on generating revenue, Attend helps you turn attendees into prospects, customers and loyal promoters. The tool includes special features for VIP guests.

**Bizzabo**
An all-in-one platform to build, manage and execute a first-rate event, the platform has a strong focus on social selling, helping turn attendees into promoters to grow your bottom line.

**RegOnline**
Build, promote and manage your event in one spot. RegOnline’s product has a strong focus on event-registration management.

**MOBILE APPS**

These stand-alone apps are designed specifically to boost engagement at events. They often include in-app networking, news and social feeds, live polling, Q&A features, survey tools, gamification and analytics.

**doubledutch**
This tech company sells an event-management platform, but it’s most known for its events app. Doubledutch includes features like gamification, surveys, live polling and attendee ratings/reviews. It also offers less common ones, like a feature that lets attendees direct message one another or one that allows meeting organizers to push out notifications about breaking news or upcoming sessions.

Finally, the app allows location-based messaging for attendees to connect and network.

**quickmobile**
The company promises “hyper-personalized” event management. In addition to the traditional portfolio of event-app features, quickmobile tracks real-time sentiments about your event and offers promotional opportunities for sponsors.

**CrowdCompass (by Cvent)**
The world’s largest developer of event apps, CrowdCompass offers solutions tailored to different types of events—from conferences and trade shows, to educational and sales meetings. Users can create personalized schedules through the app (no more scrolling through an endless agenda to find your sessions). Interactive maps let attendees zoom in to find information about specific places and exhibitors, and drop pins on spots of interest. Plus, the app includes a novel notification feature: Place virtual beacons throughout your event space (think walls, booths, doorways), then enable smart notifications to be transmitted to attendees in range of those beacons.

**ONLINE EVENTS**

Don’t limit your imagination to in-person events. Online events, webinars and on-demand educational programs are a great way to connect with customers short on time.

**GoToWebinar**
This tool manages everything from email invitations and reminders to audience interaction, post-event engagement and performance measurement. GoToWebinar also offers practice sessions before the main event, live polling to keep attendees plugged in and lets multiple speakers present seamlessly in a single meeting.

**ON24**
With a strong focus on delivering leads, ON24 offers webinar and video-marketing solutions. The webinar platform promises a highly customizable experience and a bevy of engagement tools—from live polling and an embedded media player, to social media widgets and group chats. You can also design breakout sessions to follow from a main event. ON24’s video solution lets you deliver on-demand content—from 60-second Vines to 60-minute training programs. A dedicated portal can show off your video library, and a performance dashboard tells you how well your video assets are performing.

**AUDIENCE-PARTICIPATION TOOLS**

Find your crowd is only half plugged in during a presentation? Consider these niche tools to keep people engaged.

**Poll Everywhere**
A simple polling tool to keep your audience engaged. Users can vote by text or Twitter.

**Crowd Mics**
Audience members use their phones instead of WiFi to ask questions and participate at live events—but you need a reliable WiFi signal to make it work.

**Glisser**
A nicely designed tool that enables real-time polls, digital Q&A, social sharing, likes and slide downloads.

**Mobilized Meetings**
Let attendees get all conference information in one stop: news, vendor maps, agendas, speaker profiles. The app can even handle ticketing and shopping integration.
KELLEY WHETSELL, THE MAGIC-MAKER BEHIND CONTENT MARKETING WORLD, INDEPENDENT EVENT PLANNER AND PRESIDENT OF MEETING DEMANDS, DISCUSSES WHAT IT TAKES TO ELEVATE LIVE EVENTS FROM MIDDLING TO MASTERFUL.

Clare McDermott
Elevate content above all else
If the goal of your event is to grow your audience or to make them more engaged with your brand, then offering stellar content is your primary focus—be it inspiring, educational or entertaining. Kelley Whetsell says some of the best events she’s been involved with focus on setting a future-looking agenda rather than simply reflecting current realities and problems.

How do you do that? “A lot of the events I’ve overseen have the benefit of an editorial team—something I strongly recommend,” she explains. These individuals understand your industry’s critical challenges, Whetsell says, and are experts at identifying exciting new ideas.

“I’ve been lucky to work with people who played this role: Joe Pulizzi and Robert Rose from Content Marketing Institute and John Brandt, former editor in chief of Penton Media’s IndustryWeek, among others. They are great listeners and analyzers. They identify trends before others do and even borrow ideas from other industries to describe what the future may look like.”

Engage attendees
You may be focused on content and logistics, but these days the mark of a masterful event is also how well you engage your attendees before, during and after the event. “Simply hosting an event isn’t enough to expand your brand anymore,” explains Whetsell. “You need to think about getting people to engage with you and with each other—things that go beyond ordinary networking.” Engagement can come in the form of Twitter shout-outs to registrants, apps for gamification or even platforms that help attendees interact with speakers during sessions. (See page 17 for a rundown of event-marketing and execution technologies.)

Match technology to your attendee profile
Having planned events for pharmaceutical companies, economic-development agencies and media companies to name a few, Whetsell notes that to get technology right, you need a deep understanding of your audience. Some people and industry sectors still “have a death grip on paper,” she says.

For less tech-savvy attendees, a basic app with an agenda, maps and attendee list will suffice. If it’s a digital marketing audience, then your app should include more dynamic features, such as personal agenda management, interactive sponsor showcases and features for attendee interaction. “I find it worthwhile to help less tech-savvy attendees transition to digital technology,” says Whetsell. “Don’t throw them into the deep end of the pool. Phase in technology to replace hard copy in stages.”

Consider alternative formats
Content Marketing World follows a more classic event format: general session, break-out meetings and an expo hall for sponsors. That format is effective and successful for many events, but don’t rule out non-traditional formats, says Whetsell. For example, if you work for a venture-capital firm, you might host an event heavy on one-to-one access—or what Whetsell calls “speed dating for business.” Or for complex topics, you may consider a deconstructed conference session, where attendees receive homework ahead of time and come prepared to encounter more of a workshop-style curriculum.

“To pull that off, you need the right speakers who can adapt quickly to their audience’s interests and sophistication,” says Whetsell.

Take evaluations seriously
Most events hand out surveys for attendees to rate speakers and venue-related experiences. The mark of great event planning, says Whetsell, is the extent to which these results guide future decision-making.

“I find organizers may read surveys initially, but then don’t revisit them as they plan for the following year,” she says.

For Content Marketing World, Whetsell and her team poll attendees about individual speakers, sessions and overall experience; the group also surveys event staff and company attendees to get behind-the-scenes feedback. “With all this input, we come together for a debrief,” she says. “We discuss and document our goals for the following year, and what we need to do differently next year. Then we continually revisit those goals as we put together the coming year’s agenda and experience.”

Also important, says Whetsell, is maintaining a high bar for speaker evaluations. “We offer a five-point scale for evaluations, and we will not invite a speaker back unless they score a four or higher,” she explains.

Don’t forget small details
“The atmosphere you create adds to the energy of your event,” says Whetsell. By tending to seemingly smaller details, you can incrementally improve attendees’ experience not just of the event, but of your brand. For Content Marketing World, those small details range from how the venue and culinary team make use of the signature orange color, to the sunny disposition of all event staff who return year after year and become part of the experience for repeat visitors. Whetsell also underlines the absolute drop-dead importance of running on time. As she says, “It’s a sign of respect to attendees that we take very seriously.”
Scott Berinato is the senior editor of Harvard Business Review and author of Good Charts: The HBR Guide to Making Smarter, More Persuasive Data Visualizations. He is passionate about the transformative power of data visualization inside organizations. We spoke to Berinato about how he uses data visualization at Harvard Business Review and why he thinks we are living on the cusp of a visual data revolution.

Clare McDermott
To do that, Tesla needs to visualize data in a way that makes it accessible, otherwise there would be too much data to make sense of. Based on seeing how people behave with the cars, Tesla can adapt everything from engineering to customer service and marketing. Everything.

That’s a great business case for data visualization. Why should publishers—whether traditional publishers or companies with content marketing focus—use data visualization as part of their storytelling efforts?

The amount of information coming at us is insane. It’s overwhelming. So visualization serves two purposes.

First, it serves a prosaic purpose. It gets people’s attention. We can’t help this. It’s how the visual-processing system in our heads works. Our eyes see pictures and want to go to those pictures and make sense of them. So when you’re fighting for attention, whether in a Twitter feed or even in a presentation, visuals work. Visuals that offer information in a digestible way are appreciated.

Second, it solves the problem of relaying complex information. Consider something as simple as trying to understand the gun debate in America. There are so many people saying so many things about guns. Visualization is a way of making sense of all the data, ideas and information.

There are many industries that benefit from data visualization. I talked with the electronic-health-records company, Athena Health. It’s starting to see the power of visualization to help customers understand complex personal health-care data.

Why is it so few do it well?

My sense is companies have recognized it’s powerful and valuable, but they think they can hire unicorns to figure it out. By unicorns I mean people who have the design skills, the data-wrangling skills and subject-matter expertise. Finding all those skills is one person is a hard thing to do. There are not many unicorns out there.

Data Visualization Mastery
Scott Berinato points to a video depicting World War II death tallies as among the most recent compelling cases of great data visualization.

Why is it so memorable? It’s not the software the author uses, but the manner of telling the story. He explains: “Those who are amazed by it want to know what tools they used. I always reply that what makes the video incredible are just three things:

1. The author constructed a narrative. He turned data into a story with a setup, conflict and resolution.
2. He used animation in the right way—to demonstrate change. He’s not decorating with animation.
3. He only uses three types of charts: stacked bars, unit charts and stacked area charts.

When people think about the future of data visualization, they think about three-dimensional and crazy chart forms. This video shows you can tell a gripping, contemporary visual story with just three chart types, basic animation and a simple narration.

View The Fallen of World War II by Neil Halloran http://cmi.media/fallenWWII

Continued on 22
Also, marketers have an easier time grasping on to the “get-someone’s-attention” part, and a harder time with the “tell-a-story-well” part. You end up with a lot of things that are very eye-catching, but not terribly useful or informative. It’s relatively easy to make things eye-catching, making information useful and informative requires training.

In recent years, marketers have had a love affair with infographics. Unfortunately, the quality of research behind those graphics is often a dud. That can be frustrating. When visual information is powerful and shows something dramatic, we want to believe it. But if the facts behind the data don’t hold up (e.g., small sample size, misleading conclusions), then you’re giving people a false impression of a trend that isn’t there. Visualized data posters were popular for a while, but what you found is many were exercises in typography rather than in great chart-making.

Are there particular companies or industries that you believe are ahead of the crowd with data visualization?

There are a couple of industries getting good at it. Management-consulting firms are one. Accenture, for example, even has a digital-literacy curriculum for its consultants. The other type of companies doing well in this space are those with a science or engineering background, such as aerospace, health-care, and agriculture companies. These organizations use data visualization to make sense of complex physical realities, such as measuring nutrients in the soil, gauging the efficiency of an engine at take-off or improving throughput rates at a hospital.

What role/person can rally all these different disciplines within an organization?

In some organizations it’s been the data person. In others it’s the design/creative content people. I think in marketing and in content businesses, it’s a person like myself—a subject-matter expert who’s interested in communicating visually. Someone who wants to get data and design people together. The subject-matter experts are going to tell the most effective visual stories because they know the subject.

What do you find fascinating about the future of data visualization?

What I get excited about is making visualization more interactive in real time. Right now, when I talk about presentations in the book, we think about showing charts or getting the message right.

What I’m seeing more of is how people can represent data, then with an audience present, manipulate it, update it and interact with it. I can imagine a presentation getting more interactive in the future. For example, a budget update becomes: “Here’s some numbers. Let’s workshop it right there. What would happen if we changed these assumptions?” That’s really exciting to think about.

Tools for Data Visualization

Scott Berinato advises that no tool can replace the people you surround yourself with: “The most important thing you can do is have a data friend and a design friend who can help you do the process I outline in the book.” If you don’t have access to those people, or if you simply want to practice your own data-visualization skills, Berinato says the key is to play and experiment with the vast ecosystem of tools out there. “I’m trying to learn as many as I can. The tools change so fast it’s unbelievable—but they are getting better all the time,” he says.

For non-professionals wanting to create better basic charts, Berinato recommends Plotly, Datawrapper and Quadrigram. For visual exploration, he says Tableau is a good go-to, but old-fashioned sketching practice is most important.

Continued from page 21
Looking for Content Marketing Strategy?
COM**E & GET IT**!

Join Joe Pulizzi & Robert Rose on their 6-city tour when they take their show **ON THE ROAD**!

The **Content Marketing Master Class** will send you home with the strategy and know-how you need to create exceptional content that will engage your audience and grow your business.

- **Washington DC** - November 7
- **Chicago** - November 9
- **Dallas** - November 15
- **San Francisco** - November 17
- **New York City** - November 29
- **Boston** - December 1

“A refreshingly exciting, high-energy workshop complete with top-notch speakers and actionable information. Highly recommended to any professional looking to breathe new life into their content marketing and approach their efforts (and stakeholders) more confidently. You’ll leave feeling reenergized and anxious to test out some great new tools and techniques.”

**Kristen Pettersen**
Subscriptions Marketing Manager, Institutional Investor

**contentmarketingconf.com**
Adidas Group’s corporate communications team recently launched a new content platform for athletes and athletes at heart. We spoke to the group’s senior director of content strategy and creation, Kirsten Keck, and senior manager of content strategy, Frank Thomas, to understand the strategy behind the new venture, and how the company plans to differentiate itself in a crowded field.

Clare McDermott

FUELED BY AN ATHLETE’S HEART

Adidas Group’s corporate communications team recently launched a new content platform for athletes and athletes at heart. We spoke to the group’s senior director of content strategy and creation, Kirsten Keck, and senior manager of content strategy, Frank Thomas, to understand the strategy behind the new venture, and how the company plans to differentiate itself in a crowded field.

Clare McDermott

ABOUT adidas GROUP

Often erroneously thought of as a single shoe brand, adidas Group is a product design and development powerhouse that owns a bevy of athletic brands including Reebok, TaylorMade, CCM and the eponymous Adidas brand. Its new content platform, GamePlan A, supports the company’s strategic goals, such as attracting talent to work for adidas Group and advocating for its corporate brand.

Kirsten Keck is senior director content strategy and creation, adidas Group corporate communication. With her team, she is responsible for the corporate content strategy, marketing, planning and creation. This includes concept, analytics and evolution of all internal- and external-owned corporate channels such as adidas-group.com, GamePlan-A.com, associated social media channels and the adidas Group’s award-winning social intranet and collaboration platform a-LIVE.

Frank Thomas is senior manager of content strategy, adidas Group corporate communication. He helps enhance the company’s reputation worldwide by creating, governing and evolving an integrated communication framework. He’s the key architect of both GamePlan-A.com and the content marketing strategy behind it.

CCO: Your new platform, GamePlan A, targets what you call “creators and entrepreneurial minds with an athlete’s heart.” What’s the significance of that statement?

Frank Thomas: Our audience is made up of creative, confident and collaborative people who instinctively know that sport has the power to change lives. They strive to incorporate sport into everything they do—in work and in life. Our research shows our audience’s three big areas of interest are business, sport and lifestyle; GamePlan A addresses the sweet spot among all three.

Our group faced a common challenge: As corporate communicators we serve a variety of target groups, such as business journalists from many industries (e.g., finance, HR, sustainability), NGOs, employees, future employees and corporate brand advocates. To stay relevant, our content needed to become much more focused.

First, we eliminated those groups we knew we didn’t want to serve with a content marketing approach. Then with the groups left—which included employees, prospective talent, and corporate brand advocates—we worked hard to find shared interests and aspirations. And even more, we aim to attract those with values that overlap with the values adidas Group stands for.

We know content on GamePlan A is resonating because our engagement rates increased 150 percent, and the feedback we’re getting has been very positive.

How did you convince people inside adidas Group that you needed to move away from the product-based approach?

Kirsten Keck: GamePlan A embodies a new strategic approach for us, one that emphasizes content marketing as a part of the communications mix. For us content marketing doesn’t necessarily mean moving away from a product-based approach—in our industry people want to know when the latest shoe drops, what it looks like and where they can buy it. But we also know some want more than that. They choose what they
Author and speaker Andrew Davis, once said, “Content builds relationships. Relationships are built on trust. Trust drives revenue.” Our primary focus is not on driving revenue but building trust. GamePlan A is our way to add genuine value to our target audience’s lives, build relationships with like-minded people (we define them as “creators and entrepreneurial minds with an athlete’s heart”) and nourish our own culture by intensifying the connection between our external and internal target groups.

Having a clearly defined target group and content strategy makes our job easier because it gives us focus. The more people you try to talk to, the more generic and meaningless your content becomes.

Good content marketing isn’t about reaching all people, but about reaching the right people with relevant information.

Our stakeholders understand that people’s trust, admiration and appreciation (and eventually advocacy) for the adidas Group influences their decision to work for us, invest in us or buy our products. Managing the company’s reputation (as a measure of trust) has a direct impact on business results.

I love the focus on the “athlete’s mindset”. Can you tell me more about how it informs your editorial strategy? How do you ensure you don’t stray too far afield?

Thomas: An important task of a coach and his staff is to develop a strategy and a unique perspective of the game. But in the end it’s all about how well they organize, educate and prepare the team for execution. It’s the exact same thing here.

In content marketing it begins with a documented, data-driven strategy. To guide the team towards achieving our mission (to inspire people to tackle work

athletic and entrepreneurial minds with an athlete’s heart”) and nourish our own culture by intensifying the connection between our external and internal target groups.

Having a clearly defined target group and content strategy makes our job easier because it gives us focus. The more people you try to talk to, the more generic and meaningless your content becomes.

Good content marketing isn’t about reaching all people, but about reaching the right people with relevant information.

Our stakeholders understand that people’s trust, admiration and appreciation (and eventually advocacy) for the adidas Group influences their decision to work for us, invest in us or buy our products. Managing the company’s reputation (as a measure of trust) has a direct impact on business results.

I love the focus on the “athlete’s mindset”. Can you tell me more about how it informs your editorial strategy? How do you ensure you don’t stray too far afield?

Thomas: An important task of a coach and his staff is to develop a strategy and a unique perspective of the game. But in the end it’s all about how well they organize, educate and prepare the team for execution. It’s the exact same thing here.

In content marketing it begins with a documented, data-driven strategy. To guide the team towards achieving our mission (to inspire people to tackle work

athletic and entrepreneurial minds with an athlete’s heart”) and nourish our own culture by intensifying the connection between our external and internal target groups.

Having a clearly defined target group and content strategy makes our job easier because it gives us focus. The more people you try to talk to, the more generic and meaningless your content becomes.

Good content marketing isn’t about reaching all people, but about reaching the right people with relevant information.

Our stakeholders understand that people’s trust, admiration and appreciation (and eventually advocacy) for the adidas Group influences their decision to work for us, invest in us or buy our products. Managing the company’s reputation (as a measure of trust) has a direct impact on business results.

I love the focus on the “athlete’s mindset”. Can you tell me more about how it informs your editorial strategy? How do you ensure you don’t stray too far afield?

Thomas: An important task of a coach and his staff is to develop a strategy and a unique perspective of the game. But in the end it’s all about how well they organize, educate and prepare the team for execution. It’s the exact same thing here.

In content marketing it begins with a documented, data-driven strategy. To guide the team towards achieving our mission (to inspire people to tackle work

athletic and entrepreneurial minds with an athlete’s heart”) and nourish our own culture by intensifying the connection between our external and internal target groups. 

Having a clearly defined target group and content strategy makes our job easier because it gives us focus. The more people you try to talk to, the more generic and meaningless your content becomes. 

Good content marketing isn’t about reaching all people, but about reaching the right people with relevant information. 

Our stakeholders understand that people’s trust, admiration and appreciation (and eventually advocacy) for the adidas Group influences their decision to work for us, invest in us or buy our products. Managing the company’s reputation (as a measure of trust) has a direct impact on business results. 

I love the focus on the “athlete’s mindset”. Can you tell me more about how it informs your editorial strategy? How do you ensure you don’t stray too far afield?  

Thomas: An important task of a coach and his staff is to develop a strategy and a unique perspective of the game. But in the end it’s all about how well they organize, educate and prepare the team for execution. It’s the exact same thing here. 

In content marketing it begins with a documented, data-driven strategy. To guide the team towards achieving our mission (to inspire people to tackle work
EXPANDING THE EDITORIAL TEAM

Kristen Keck and Frank Thomas rely on outside influencers and contributors to include different ideas and opinions, and to help widen their social network. In addition to in-house writers and editors, the group also relies on industry influencers, sports figures and community members.

Influencers
Operator of world’s largest YouTube football channel, freekickerz, Konstantin Hert, offers advice about how he turned his hobby into a business.

Sports Figures
Grand Slam winner, Angelique Kerber, gives insights into her personal game plan.

Community Members
The editorial team collects ideas and inspiration from its readers through a dedicated community page. “GamePlan A is an invitation for everyone with an athlete’s heart to take an active role. We want it to be their go-to place to connect with like-minded people and get support in combining an athletic lifestyle with creative and entrepreneurial ambitions,” says Keck.

Your content on GamePlan A is all about setting goals, coaching yourself through inner dialogue and even using relaxation techniques. Does the team use these ideas in the everyday life of running the platform?

Keck: Through sport, we have the power to change lives—this core belief unites all adidas Group employees around the globe, not just our editorial team. Sport helps us to be confident, collaborative and creative in everything we do. It’s who we are and the culture we live each day. The content does not influence our behavior, but our culture and shared mindset of being athletes at heart shapes our content. Our ambition is to take an incubator role for the community and the idea behind GamePlan A; we want to fuel those who are fueled by sport.

We get the conversation going by activating our own colleagues, partners and athletes. They share their experiences of mixing their athletic lifestyles with their creative and entrepreneurial ambitions. Ultimately, it’s about getting to know, understanding and inspiring each other. Strong relationships are built on showing genuine interest in the other person and opening up yourself, too. The same is true for content marketing in general, and GamePlan-A.com in particular.

This is why we created a digital hub that promotes tackling work-life with an athlete’s heart, be it at the adidas Group or
Content Marketing Management for Teams.

Streamline Your Entire Content Marketing Practice with Brandpoint HUB®

See why our customers love using BrandpointHUB® to efficiently produce more effective content.

BrandpointHUB.com 877.374.5270
WHAT CAN MARKETERS LEARN FROM THE ATHLETE’S MINDSET?

Frank Thomas: Athletes surround themselves with the best team (coaches, physiotherapists, etc.) to focus on what they can do best. Knowing your strengths and weaknesses at work and setting up your team to balance them will help you reach your goals.

Kristen Keck: Athletes enjoy challenges and focus relentlessly on getting better. If they fail, they get up and try again. They analyze their game only to learn and get better. That’s an inspiring attitude in business, too. Don’t spend time on blaming yourself or someone else if something doesn’t turn out the way you wanted. Briefly looking back to identify what didn’t work is OK, but focus your effort on giving the best for what lies ahead of you.

WHAT HABITS MAKE YOU MORE PRODUCTIVE?

Thomas: An important one is to not neglect recovery. We only can perform well if we plan for breaks as well as for meetings, etc. Mental work can be just as exhausting as physical training … would you train non-stop, without a break, for a marathon?

Keck: Continuously creating relevant and engaging content while keeping up the frequency is never easy since we produce the majority in house and we challenge ourselves to avoid stock imagery. Also, the ever-changing social media landscape needs constant attention. New channels pop up every day and we check them carefully to avoid getting sucked into a hype, but choose the ones that really help us achieve our goals. After all, jumping on new channels means having the resources to maintain them or using automated publishing in a clever way.

Individually, due to my role (overseeing both technical development of our corporate digital platforms and content creation) it’s sometimes hard to understand why some content performs and some doesn’t. It’s weird; there’s content that ticks all boxes and still is a benchwarmer, and then there’s content that you’d never have expected to perform that well and it’s hard to find out why. That’s why A/B testing is so critical.

We want to fuel those who are FUELED BY SPORT.

On GamePlan-A.com

Frank Thomas shares how to use a sports mindset to juice creativity.
http://cmi.media/gameplana
What’s your favorite webinar tool?

Bench • UseBench.com

I love Bench for small groups. It functions like a virtual room stocked with collaboration tools instead of a two-dimensional slideshow. Set up a virtual space where your attendees can join you in real time. Then you can share files, a whiteboard, collaborative notes, and your screen or screengrabs from other tabs.

Kathleen Smith, The Content Canvas, @1KathleenSmith

---

On24

Thanks to On24, our webinar program is a primary channel for getting leads in the door, but even more critical in helping us move existing leads further down the funnel. Since switching to On24, we’ve generated 40 percent more leads and over $150,000 in pipeline.

Jeff Perkins, CMO, Qasymphony @JeffPerkins8

---

Crowdcast.io

I used Crowdcast.io to co-host a 2,000-person online event called #GetTraction. It helps us keep conversations going, interact with other attendees, and even find and follow attendees on social channels. The platform also makes it easy to vote, take questions and tweet answers.

Derric Haynie, Rebrandly, @SixPeppers

---

GoToWebinar (Citrix)

The benefits of using GoToWebinar are many. It’s a product experience that most thought leaders are already comfortable with, which is a big win when you’re depending on guest presenters to bring their A game.

We can download and distribute the video content from other marketing channels. It also integrates with Marketo, our marketing automation platform, meaning we immediately get all of the data we need everywhere we need it.

Stef Miller, Everwise, @SupahStef

---

Adobe Connect & MegaMeeting

Adobe Connect is a good, affordable tool to accommodate smaller audiences. It includes interesting features, such as the ability to function on mobile devices, analytics and tracking, etc.

MegaMeeting is great for webinars when attendees are eager to “take something home” at the end. You can share PowerPoint presentations and documents, and text chat (which is beneficial for attendees who might feel too timid to talk and ask their questions). The tool works well across platforms and devices. Plus, there’s no attendee limit.

Alexander Grosu, Insegment, @AlexanderGrosu

---

Google Hangouts On Air & Facebook Live

Google Hangouts On Air integrates with YouTube and immediately provides a link to view the program after it stops being live. It also doesn’t require downloading software.

Although not technically classified as a webinar program, Facebook Live is my current favorite way to broadcast to followers, fans, and customers. It easily allows users to watch live or catch up on the program later.

Natalie Bidnick Andreas, Digital Consultant, @NatalieBID

---

Chief Content Officer | Chief Marketing Officer | Content Marketing Institute
Brexit, Algorithms and Filter Bubbles

Our social media feeds are increasingly personalized, and this presents a major challenge for anyone hoping to reach the right audience with the right message. Just ask Alice …

Jonathan Crossfield

In Lewis Carroll’s fantastical tale Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There the eponymous heroine discovers a very different world on the other side of a mirror, occupied by people and creatures she never imagined could exist.

Yet, were we to look into the same looking glass, we would see ourselves reflected. Any different realities, ideas and viewpoints of another world would remain out of view.

Welcome to the world of social media filter bubbles—where what you see is very definitely NOT what you get.

“Sometimes I’ve believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast”

I can’t trust my social media feeds anymore. My various streams, timelines and news feeds made it easy to believe it was impossible that the United Kingdom would vote to leave the European Union; that Australia would re-elect the Liberal government; and that Donald Trump would become the Republican nominee.

In reality, the EU referendum was decided by a very narrow margin, reflecting a far more polarized and divided country than most people realized. Meanwhile, the Australian election was so close that at the time of writing, I still don’t know who will be the new Australian prime minister. As for the U.S. presidential race, well I’m clearly missing something.

I don’t rely on social media for my news and current affairs, so I was aware from other sources that the EU referendum and Australian election were going to be much tighter than any social media commentary might suggest. Yet many demographics increasingly get most of their news and opinion...
from social, without always clicking to read the
detailed analysis behind the slogans and headlines.
No wonder so many Remain voters were shocked
and surprised by the outcome of the EU referendum.
These trends also make filter bubbles open to
politically motivated manipulation.

There are always at least two sides to any debate.
Yet instead of providing a window onto the world,
social media has become a massively distorted and
personalized fantasy. Our own social media access
increasingly reflects our own views, values and
opinions, strengthening our resolve and justifying
our beliefs, while hiding or distorting any objective
appreciation of the alternatives.

“What I tell you three times is true”
We are bombarded with so much content
and information every day that conscious or
unconscious filters are not only inevitable but also
necessary to help us make sense of it all.

Unfortunately, human nature being what it is, we
are less likely to follow, read and engage with those
with whom we disagree. Be honest: whether you vote
Republican or Democrat; Leave or Remain; Left or
Right—are you more or less likely to follow someone
with polar opposite views?

While we may have some alternative voices in
our networks, chances are that they are far fewer
and often tolerated only up to a point. If you’ve ever
blocked, unfollowed or hidden someone’s posts
from your newsfeed because you don’t want to see
any more of their objectionable-to-you views, then
you’re already guilty of reinforcing your filter bubble
in the name of comfort.

Echo chambers are nothing new. We’ve always
had a choice of which news sources or media pundits
to follow—Fox News or CNN, Glenn Beck or John
Oliver. Each choice usually has a clear bias. The one-
way broadcast nature of mass media, however, is very
different from the free-for-all, shout fest of social.

Social media has allowed us all to become media
pundits, shouting loudly about whatever beliefs are
most important to us right this moment to a much
wider audience than we may realize.

Social media algorithms also have the potential
to further reinforce and amplify filter bubbles by
tracking our behavior to give us more of what we like
and less of what we don’t. If we regularly click “like”
on news stories that align with our views, we’ll see
an increase in similar stories from similar sources.

And filter bubbles aren’t confined to political
beliefs. They can be shaped by religion, science, even
our individual sense of humor—whatever our beliefs
and values are. For example, my wife’s social media
environment is starkly different from my own, even
though we share many of the same beliefs. Our
individual social media environments have become
personalized far more than broadcast mass media
ever could.

“Well, now that we have seen each
other,” said the
Unicorn, “If you’ll
believe in me, I’ll
believe in you. Is
that a bargain?”

The Unicorn to Alice,
Through the Looking Glass,
Chapter Seven

“You know very well you’re not real”
What can marketers learn from this? Can filter
bubbles prevent your content or message from
getting through to the very people you hope to
reach? The short answer is “yes,” and it’s probably
only going to get harder as increasing social media
dependencies, algorithms and the sheer amount of
competing content further change the landscape.

Marketers can learn from the ways in which the
EU referendum played out in social media.

1. Are you trapped in your own filter bubble?
Businesses and marketers can be just as blinded
by filter bubbles as anyone else—particularly when
guessing at the beliefs, wants and behaviors of their
target customers or audiences.

One clear example was the excruciatingly painful
social media campaign by the Stronger In Europe
camp that targeted young voters. The #Votin
campaign (“Vote In”, get it?) worked on the not-
very-deep-nor-accurate insight that young people sometimes drop their “g” when talking. A video was pushed in social that combined grating third-rate electronica beats with fast edits of “yoof” stuff like partying and graffiti; overlaid with chunky captions such as WORKIN, EARNIN, RAVIN, CHATTIN, SHARIN, LIVIN, GOIN, etc.

Not exactly cutting to the heart of the political debate. Instead, this embarrassment of a campaign seemed to carry the simplistic message that votin’ was sorta cool and hip, yeah? This was a view of youth as seen from inside a very different filter bubble.

I’ve certainly worked with and for a few companies over the years that developed similarly distorted and unrealistic views of what the customer experience should be, because the decision-makers within the business lived inside a different social media filter bubble to the rest of us. This can lead to products, content and customer experiences that might seem logical internally but leave customers cold.

2. Will your information even be trusted inside someone else’s filter bubble?
What might make perfect logical sense in one filter bubble might seem like nonsense in another, particularly when it draws upon differing assumptions.

A strong theme among Leave voters in the EU referendum was a deep distrust of economists, experts and elite politicians, summed up by Leave campaigner Michael Gove’s infamous statement that “people in this country have had enough of experts.” Yet, the Stronger In Europe campaign continued to rely on those same economists, experts and elite politicians without first addressing the reasons for that distrust.

What sources of information will your audience trust? Can you use influencers to gain authority?

3. Are you addressing the right issues?
Different audiences may have very different ideas of the key issues in a particular debate. For some, the EU referendum was about immigration. For others, it was about business. For yet others, it was about sticking it to the bureaucrats. Each required a very different approach to address those concerns.

Similarly, your perception of customer needs, expectations and values may be very different from what your intended audience perceives from the other side of the looking glass.

Most marketers already use customer personas to gain some understanding of these differences. However, many merely note which social networks each persona uses so they can plan where, when and how to distribute their content.

Instead, consider the different ways in which each persona will form distinct filter bubbles within those networks, shaping their attitudes and opinions. Will your content be welcomed or ridiculed? Will it even reach them at all or might it be filtered out for not appealing to the opinions and themes of that particular bubble?

Before we can understand the filter bubbles of our customers, we have to recognize and admit to our own. We are all trapped in filter bubbles of our own making and they’ll only become stronger and more distorted by algorithms and personal preference over time.

Yet, by using data and detailed analysis, we might be able to see the world through different eyes. In the end, there is no true reality: There’s just how each one of us perceives the world, recalling the final line of Through the Looking Glass, “Life, what is it but a dream?”
ICC is Returning to Las Vegas in 2017!

We’ll help you answer your biggest content challenges:
► How do I best manage my content?
► How am I going to get this all done?

ICC is the one event that focuses exclusively on how content is planned and managed as a strategic business asset through its whole life cycle, including people, processes and technology.

If you want to be more strategic with your content, you need to be at ICC on March 28-30, 2017!

www.intelcontent.com
Influencers work hard to cultivate relationships and maintain their position as leaders within their niche, so partnering with them can help you expand your audience and accelerate conversions.

Yet an influencer strategy is not without its challenges. A whopping 75 percent of marketers considers finding the right influencers the most challenging aspect of an influencer strategy. [See chart at right.]

My team recently took a closer look at 21 marketing influencers based on a combination of follower count, regular Twitter usage and percentage of marketing-focused tweets. Why marketing influencers? Because this crowd understands the science of influencer marketing more than most; we used them as proxies for influencer-marketing experts—even if they don’t refer to themselves that way. By analyzing the last 100 links each of these marketers shared over two days (excluding links to their own sites), we uncovered three key insights you can apply to elevate your content marketing strategy and amplify your influencer outreach efforts.

Identifying Influencers

How to track down heavyweights in your industry in 3 painless steps.

Andrea Lehr

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Challenges of Influencer Marketing</th>
<th>% of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify the right influencers</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find the right engagement tactics</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure the performance of your programs</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep track of your influencers’ activity</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automate your engagement processes</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find budget for your campaigns</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find/train qualified staff</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Find and follow as many experts as possible

There are a ton of tools to help you identify the best individuals to target regardless of vertical or industry. Two of my favorites are BuzzSumo and individual social networks. Regardless of what tool you use, the key is to find individuals who have an established voice and social presence. By following them, you can ensure that you’re connected to stay on top of the latest trends to help your brand maximize every influencer relationship.

Reciprocity is essential

The concept of reciprocity is simple: If someone does something for you, you naturally want to do something for them. Our study indicates marketing influencers understand this lesson based on the sheer volume of content they’re sharing directly from their colleagues. When we looked at the top three shared sites of each influencer, nearly 50 percent included other influencers’ sites or personal blogs.

In terms of your own strategy, this is a good time to remind you not to get so bogged down by traffic, leads or any other metrics. What really matters are your relationships. A blog post can become outdated and a tweet can be forgotten, but genuine connections that you create with influencers will last. To ensure high levels of reciprocity, figure out how to contribute so the relationship is mutually beneficial. In other words, ask yourself how you can bring value to the relationship and not just your brand.

Some of my favorite ways to return the favor to influencers include the following:

• Exchange an email unrelated to any content you’re promoting. For example, if you saw that their blog was nominated for an award, send a brief congratulatory email.
• Thank the influencer in a tweet for any help they offered you that week.
• Offer to collaborate on projects so that they have more ownership of the content you want them to promote.

Although every influencer is different, when developing these relationships, remember to be as authentic and personable as possible. Respect and genuine interest ensure these valuable partnerships last.

Ask yourself how you can bring value to the relationship and not just your brand.
Final thoughts

There are a lot of online resources to help you outline an effective influencer strategy. No matter your end goal, however, remember that highly focused targeting and quality content are what generate a mutually beneficial relationship that will make your influencer strategy work. 

Andrea Lehr is a brand relationship strategist at Fractl. Follow her @AndreaMLehr.

Don’t confuse reach with influence

Brands frequently fall into a trap of believing that number of followers is the most important metric to consider when identifying influencers. Not so. Behavioral scientists call this the “majority illusion,” or the idea that based on the crowd you run in, an idea or person may appear to be much more popular than is generally true. Put another way: you only need a handful of key and vocal influencers to give the impression that everyone is talking about your brand.

The marketing influencers we studied seem to understand this networking trick as well: industry-specific sites like Content Marketing Institute, Moz and Convince & Convert earned spots on the 10 most-shared list alongside bigger publishers like Inc., Entrepreneur and Forbes.

How can you measure influence? The following three-step process hasn’t failed me yet when vetting a potential target:

- **Relevance:** Figure out whether the content shared by the influencer connects with your brand. If the connection is a stretch, move elsewhere.
- **Engagement:** Take a look at some of the influencer’s top posts (i.e., those which earned high social shares) to get an idea of their overall engagement. The goal is to determine whether the influencer interacts with the audience (if yes, your chance of conversions from this influencer improves).
- **Quality:** Get a feel for how often they post and what kind of content they’re promoting. Are they spammy posts or posts just to post? A good indicator of quality is how an influencer’s site ranks in search. A high ranking for particular keywords indicates that their blog has been deemed influential in that category by Google.

Remember that each step is bringing you closer to an influencer’s level of authority. The more trust they have within their industry, the more likely they can push your prospect further along the buyer’s journey.
What helps content creators raise the bar to new levels of excellence? Who has their finger on the pulse of content marketing's future? You need only take a look at the technologies that emerged from our readers' responses to find out.

You can find the category winners listed individually on this page, but we wanted to take a moment to share a little more about the technology that you chose as the recipient of the Audience Choice Award: video marketing platform Brightcove.

With a twelve-year track record in the video space, Brightcove’s far-reaching vision into content marketing’s future needs little introduction. They were literally doing video before it was cool. Caren Cioffi, Brightcove’s senior vice president and general manager of digital marketing and enterprise business, has been there since day one. “We had zero customers,” she recalls. “Just this notion that video would one day be as ubiquitous as text on the web.” Brightcove believed in the power of video to move people, to evoke emotion, and, as Cioffi puts it, “to make the intangible tangible.”

Brightcove’s early bet has paid off, with video playing an increasingly important part in content strategy. Yet while video continues to grow in both reach and adoption, it can still be a tough hurdle for some marketing teams unfamiliar with the medium.

Believing that video is crucial to marketing success, Brightcove has worked hard to create a one-click solution for teams that are a little intimidated by hitting the digital airwaves.

“Our Video Marketing Suite is a cloud-based platform that makes it really easy for marketers to publish, distribute, analyze, and optimize compelling video experiences,” Cioffi explained. Better yet, she says there’s, “No technical expertise required.”

Given their strong showing in our Audience Choice voting, Brightcove’s commitment to simplifying video for novices while still creating advanced solutions for sophisticated media publishers has clearly endeared them to the content marketing world.

So what’s coming up next for your favorite video marketing solution?

Cioffi told us there’s an exciting release currently in beta that lets marketers publish video content to multiple social networks simultaneously, then track each network’s performance individually in Brightcove.

The platform is also making it easier to reach audiences no matter where they might be. Whether it’s researching a purchase during their morning commute or learning a new skill from their couch before bed, Brightcove wants to help brands be a meaningful part of their audience’s day.

And Cioffi is confident that their customers will keep driving Brightcove to improve: “We have the most forward thinking customers. Every day they’re pushing boundaries, and that pushes us to keep innovating.”
When asked what she thinks is the coolest part of her job, Amanda Todorovich explains, “We’re not driven by a top-down mandated goal.” Instead, she and her team dream up big audacious “what-ifs” and set ambitious goals for themselves. The fun, she says, is seeing the self-driven, aggressive approach pay off year after year.

Todorovich joined Cleveland Clinic, a top-ranked medical center, in 2013 as the manager of digital marketing. She and her three-person team grew its Health Hub blog (now called Health Essentials) from 200,000 visits per month to 3.2 million per month in 18 months—all by writing and publishing three to five original blog posts each day. Today, Health Essentials has over 4 million monthly visitors, making it one of the most visited health-care destinations online. Its social media following is impressive, too, with more than 1.5 million Facebook fans and 550,000 Twitter followers.

The pace of publishing hasn’t changed since the blog’s early days, says Todorovich. “What has evolved are our standards, and how we decide what to publish and when. It’s been about refinement, and listening to the data,” she says.

Among the ideas that impressed the judging panel most about Todorovich’s work:

**Content as an asset:** Once Health Essentials’ readership reached a critical mass, Todorovich says serious discussions with the CMO began about how to start monetizing the traffic. They began by incorporating Google ads on their pages, which was a low-risk way to test reader reaction. Once they saw progress, the group explored options for strategic partnerships, and formalized a major one in the first quarter of 2016 with About.com. “They handle the selling of ads, but we worked with them to define a policy and list of advertisers we would not allow. It involved the legal team, another layer of complexity,” she says.

Although monetization is not the main driver of their content marketing strategy (brand awareness still rules) it’s empowering to contribute to the marketing budget and the bottom line in a meaningful way, Todorovich says.

**A cohesive team and strategy:** Todorovich says she couldn’t be more thankful to work with a team that shares a passion for good content: “We all want our work to be world class—that’s the big unifier.” Training, cross-functional team projects, and team-building exercises and retreats have helped the groups bond as well.

Among the assets that keeps the team on the same page is Cleveland Clinic’s microsite called OnBrand, which provides a detailed manual on voice, style, tone and writing guidelines for Cleveland Clinic. OnBrand is continuously updated with the guidelines and assets for all content producers, including the physicians who write. “We’re a big enterprise and we work with a lot of agencies and vendors. We wanted our brand story out there and to make it accessible to everyone,” she says.

**A silo-busting approach:** Todorovich’s team has partnerships with several groups throughout Cleveland Clinic. For instance, they talk to the corporate communications team each day to understand what issues that team is covering. The partnership is such that the blog team can tap into the spokespeople used by the communications team to help with their stories, and they can offer existing pieces to supplement what is being shared about the daily topics.

As Todorovich is called into more non-marketing meetings to share her insights, it solidifies her belief that it’s a great time to be a content marketer. In fact, she says, the number of cross-departmental projects her team touches has increased year over year. From human resources to recruiting to public relations, content conversations are happening throughout the enterprise.

All that being said, perhaps the biggest career lesson Todorovich has taken away from her years at Cleveland Clinic is that you can’t do it all yourself. “Trust your team. Use their expertise. The more you can share successes with your team and leadership, the more support you will get,” she says.

Our business is growing your business

Since 2009, HiP has built and refined a unique, content-centric approach to demand generation. In the process, we helped a wide range of business and technology clients deliver targeted content to the contacts who matter most.

HiP offers a comprehensive suite of demand gen and data services, including email-based lead generation campaigns, contact data purchases, and historical behavior scoring.

From producing campaign creative to validating campaign results, HiP takes strides to deliver the highest quality outcomes with the greatest possible agility. We work directly with our clients to produce affordable solutions, tailored to their unique demand generation needs.
Dear Event Organizer,

Your panel discussions suck. They do. They’re terrible.

In principle, a panel discussion should be great. The ingredients all appear to be there: get a few intelligent people on stage, invite them to discuss a given topic, and let the insights, information and ideas flow.

There’s only one thing missing.

As someone who has attended more than 200 events in the last four years, I have yet to see a panel discussion that captures, maintains and piques the audience’s interest. The discussions are not enlightening, and the banter is anything but entertaining.


Eight years ago in a hotel ballroom in Nashville, Tenn., I saw the greatest panel discussion I’ve ever witnessed. Four of the most innovative publishers in the world sat on stage to discuss the future of print magazines. The four luminaries agreed on nothing. The discussion was civil. The debate was intense. And the room was mesmerized.

The Future of Media panel ran 30 minutes past its allotted time at the insistence of the standing-room only crowd and at the end of the day the debate continued at the hotel lobby bar. Why? The debate brought out new ideas and never-before explored concepts. The audience heard why each person chose a viewpoint. And maybe most importantly, we learned about our own perspectives when we saw them debated on stage.

If you want your panel discussions to compete with—and even outperform—your keynote sessions, add some conflict.

I stopped participating in panel discussions three years ago. They’re poorly executed, pathetically planned and sadly boring.

Here’s the deal: if you decide to embrace a debate and add some conflict to your next panel discussion, I’ll pay my way to your event. I’ll even speak for free. Just let me participate in a conflict-laden panel discussion. I guarantee it will be the best panel you’ve ever organized.

What do you say? Do we have a deal?

Whether you wanted it or not,
Andrew Davis
Contently

“Best Content Marketing Platform, 2015”
—Digiday Signal Awards
Snapchat recently funded a digital “magazine” about technology, but Real Life won’t focus on tech-industry news—instead the magazine is about living with technology, and “the emphasis is more on living.” Real Life publishes “one essay advice column, reported feature, or uncategorizable piece of writing a day, four or five days a week.” Snapchat employee and social media theorist Nathan Jungerson serves as editor in chief of Real Life, which lives online, not in the app. And for now, at least, Real Life content is primarily text instead of the photos and video stories for which Snapchat is known.

Living the Real Life with Snapchat

Absolut partnered with DJ and electronic music producer Deadmau5 to create a virtual-reality game in which players visit Deadmau5 in his studio and help him arrive on time for a concert. Designed using live-action, motion-capture and the latest CGI technology, the experience culminates in a performance of the musician’s latest track. While the game app is free, Absolut experimented with selling limited-edition Deadmau5 Google Cardboard headsets for the experience (although fans can use any compatible VR headset). This is the second VR experience from Absolut Labs launched by the vodka brand to “redefine and reimagine nightlife.”
#WhatIReallyWant for Girls and Women

**The United Nations**’ global goals for sustainable development campaign is promoting girls and women with the #WhatIReallyWant music video set to the 1996 Spice Girls hit “Wannabe.” Featuring footage of girls across the world dancing and lip syncing to the song, the video answers the song’s “what I really, really want” question with responses that include quality education for all girls, an end to violence against girls, an end to child marriage and equal pay for equal work. After watching the video, the viewer is encouraged to use the #WhatIReallyWant hashtag to share a photo of themselves holding up a sign that says what they “really, really want for girls and women.” The campaign is collecting the photos to share with world leaders at the United Nations.

Backcountry Stories

From a story about fly fishing for steelhead trout in Russia’s Kamchatka peninsula to a profile of 81-year-old barbecue pitmaster Tootsie Tomanetz, a new content microsite from Yeti (makers of the legendary ice coolers) tells beautiful stories—both narrative and visual. Each one captures the essence of the adventurous life, adding to the back-to-nature allure of the Yeti brand. We just wish Yeti’s marketing team didn’t put intrusive product placements in the middle of each story. #awkward

GET GLUED TO COMCAST XFINITY

Glued, a new series about a couple’s binge-watching addiction, was created, perhaps unsurprisingly, by Comcast Xfinity. The show is produced by Sharon Hogan (known for her binge-worthy Amazon comedy Catastrophe) and stars Jamie Denbo and John Ross Bowie, whose credits include Orange Is the New Black and The Big Bang Theory. The three- to five-minute webisodes deal with modern relationship issues—from spoiler alerts to “TV cheating” on your spouse. The six-part web series, a first for the brand, debuted on Xfinity On Demand and YouTube.

ORGANIZING EVENTS FOR EMPLOYEES

How does a company known for its software design and development work attract top talent? By embracing and celebrating its nerd culture. The Nerdery, based in Minneapolis, works hard to ensure it’s “the best place in the world for nerds to work.” To that end, it organizes an Overnight Website Challenge each year to rally employees (and would-be employees) around a worthwhile cause. Volunteer web experts form teams of 10 to knock out amazing websites for nonprofits in a 24-hour blitz. Since The Nerdery’s first Overnight Website Challenge in 2008, volunteers have given more than $6 million worth of professional services to 175 nonprofit organizations in communities in which the company has offices.
When marketers discuss personas, we’re often talking about static, pristine, hyper-detailed profiles that we approach with reverence, eyes averted. These are marketing artifacts that should be seen, but not touched. After all, when you invest dozens (or hundreds) of hours into creating something, you don’t want somebody coming along and getting their fingerprints all over it. The problem with the persona-as-artifact approach is that our audience members aren’t static, unchanging automatons. They’re real people, and real people change. If we don’t change with them, our content will soon find itself on the road to irrelevance.

One of the best ways to keep up is to stop thinking of our personas as finished works of art. Instead we need to adopt an iterative approach to persona creation, one that embraces and compliments the agile nature of modern marketing.

Marketing as Market Research
Iterative personas sound complex, but they’re actually based on a simple idea: each and every piece of marketing content we release is an opportunity to learn something new about our audience.

Our marketing isn’t just a way to add value or sell a product; it’s also guerrilla market research.

Teams using iterative personas start with a core value they know is important to a segment of their audience. Then they create content that focuses on that core, expanding and adding to their personas based on what really happens when real people consume real content.

IBM’s Iterative Persona Success Story
For Centerline’s chief strategy officer John Lane, creating personas isn’t a matter of just filling out all the fields and checking all the boxes. After all, when you meet someone new you don’t assume you know everything there is to know about them during your first conversation. It takes time (and a willingness to actually listen) to flesh out the finer points of someone’s personality.

Traditional, fixed personas often make the assumption that we can know everything about our audience up front—a way of thinking that can impose limits on your content’s potential.

When Centerline partnered with IBM on its new brand LinuxONE, the rapid launch schedule made a typical weeks-long persona research project untenable. Instead, it drew on IBM’s existing persona database as a starting point.

Among the most important groups for IBM to reach were open-source evangelists who had long been stalwart Linux advocates and important thought leaders in the space.

During the first phase of the brand launch, Centerline monitored which content generated buzz with open-source evangelists, listened to the words they used to talk about the content, and continued to hone in on the specific characteristics of the persona.

Based on how the open-source evangelists were responding to the content, the IBM team decided to target Wired.com for content distribution, a channel that was definitely outside the box for LinuxONE.
IBM did a site-wide takeover of Wired.com, which included homepage and section native ads, custom announcement content and a livestream webcast event. Centerline took point on producing content for IBM that would speak to Wired’s audience. Initial estimates were that the campaign would bring in about 150 qualified leads; the final count was 417.

Less than six months after the Wired campaign, LinuxONE had 1.2 million views on YouTube, 31,300 Twitter mentions, and over 350 full-length media articles, including coverage by The Wall Street Journal, Reuters, Forbes and The New York Times.

All thanks to taking an agile, iterative approach to learning about their audience.

Small Moments of Reflection
Lane believes iterative personas simply need to be part of a team’s mentality: “For every action we take, there has to be a small moment of reflection of not just, ‘Did it work?’ but also, ‘What does that mean for our persona?’”

These small moments add up quickly, creating a picture of real people who have real reactions to content we produce. Since agile marketing teams already use retrospectives as opportunities for this kind of introspection, they “get” iterative personas much more quickly.

For those who may be unfamiliar with the concept, retrospective meetings occur at the end of each sprint or marketing iteration. These typically last two to three weeks.

During a retrospective the agile team members discuss what went well, what went poorly and what they as a group can do to improve their process next time. When agile teams use iterative personas, they can also include a review of what they learned about each audience segment.

In this way the new characteristics of the personas become institutional knowledge that the whole team can use to connect more effectively with their audience.

Agile teams may find implementing iterative personas easier, but even traditional marketing teams can speed up their responsiveness by taking time to examine how their personas really interact with their content. They’ll just have to work a little harder to make space in their processes to pause and listen.

Not the Answer
When creating personas, there’s a strong temptation to look for The Answer. We want to get check, “make persona” off our to-do list so we can move on to the next thing.

But, instead of checking off boxes and locking down our personas, let’s base them on questions: What don’t we know? What don’t we have enough information about?

When you ask insightful questions, and really listen to the answers, there’s no limit to what you can learn.

Iterative Personas Made Easy
If you’re curious about how to replicate IBM’s success, follow Centerline’s John Lane’s step-by-step guide to getting your own iterative personas up and running.

Step 1: Create a “skinny” persona.
Start with the basics, and nothing more. Lane suggests four characteristics with no more than a couple of sentences of description. Be sure to include questions or gaps in your understanding, like knowing your audience uses social media, but being unsure about which channels they prefer.

The goal here is to have just enough of an outline to drive the creation of your first piece of content.

Step 2: Release content around the topic.
Save the big pieces of anchor content like e-books for later when you’ve dialed in your personas. Early content should be what Lane calls “ad hoc.” These are bite-sized pieces like blog posts and social media postings that you create in near real time and inject into conversations around your personas’ interests.

Step 3: Monitor the content closely.
Keep a close eye on what your audience does with your content. Where did your content perform the best? What kinds of words did people use when they talked about it? Did it migrate to channels you hadn’t anticipated?

Above all, what did this outcome teach you about your audience?

Step 4: Move from ad hoc to anchor.
As you release more and more pieces of ad-hoc content, you should build up to the release of something much larger, known as anchor content. This is a bigger bet, one that requires significant investment and therefore presents a bigger risk.

Ultimately, iterative personas and traditional ones require similar amounts of work. But, iterative personas spread that work into small investments out over weeks or months, while traditional personas front load the effort into one large project.

Andrea Fryrear is a content strategist and the editor in chief of TheAgileMarketer.net. She tweets about content and agility @andreafryrear.
Regardless of your marketing challenges — from branding to lead generation to customer retention — the Content Marketing Institute offers a host of media solutions to tackle all of your objectives!

Opportunities include:
- Event sponsorships at CMWorld and ICC
- Consulting
- Content creation services
- Dedicated email campaigns
- Enewsletter banner and text ads
- Benefactor opportunities and online advertising
- Podcast sponsorships
- Print in CCO magazine
- Research, webinars & white papers

Get ahead in 2017 with CMI Marketing Opportunities!

Our 2017 media kit is now available! Let us know how we can help you.

cmi.media/advertise
Data-driven content marketing simplified.

Moz knows content marketing and what tools content marketers need. Moz Content delivers clear answers to critical content marketing questions with content analysis, tracking and research tools in one place.

Discover top-performing topics, authors, and content types that generate links and shares.

Monitor your success and validate your content strategy with ongoing performance reporting.

Uncover competitors’ strategies to attract and engage.

Try It Free: moz.com/mozcontent/lander
MARK YOUR CALENDAR
FOR OUR IN-PERSON EVENTS!

November 7, 2016 - Washington DC • November 9, 2016 - Chicago
November 16, 2016 - Dallas • November 17, 2016 - San Francisco
November 29, 2016 - New York City • December 1, 2016 - Boston

March 28-30, 2017
Las Vegas

September 5-8, 2017
Cleveland