



**CHIEF CONTENT OFFICER**  
CONTENT MARKETING STRATEGY FOR EXECUTIVES

MAY 2012  
**OUR TECH ISSUE!**

# THE MECHANICS<sub>OF</sub> REAL-TIME CONTENT

**Case Study: Vail Resorts**  
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**@juntajoe** Joe Pulizzi

Have you booked your flight to Content Marketing World in September? #cmworld



## MECHANICS OF REAL TIME MARKETING

Documenting more than two dozen real-time tools for content marketers.

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## The Case of **VAIL RESORTS**

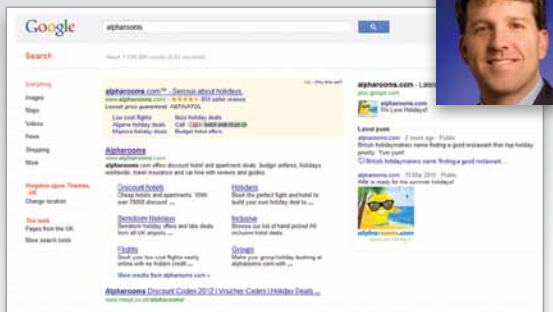
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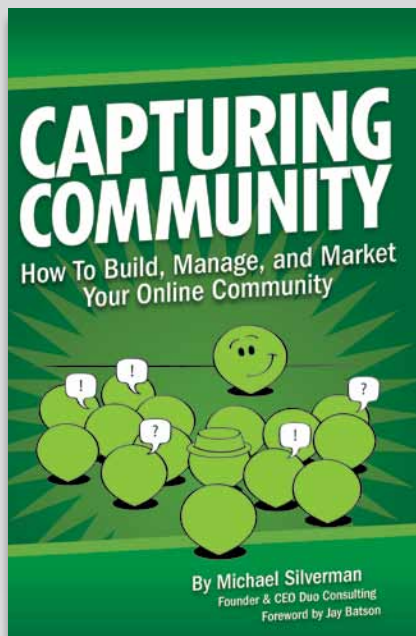
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## **JOE PULIZZI** talks to Mitch Joel—a founding father of blogging and president of Twist Image—about the art of the podcast and what ‘screen’ marketers should keep their eyes on.

**Joe:** You're an incredibly prolific blogger for Twist Image. Do you single handedly write it all?

**Mitch:** It is 100 percent human me. No one touches it but me.

**J:** What made you begin blogging and how do you keep up with the pace?

**M:** My background is in music magazine publishing. Prior to that, I was a music writer. I loved writing about things that were of interest to me. Back in 2002, I was wondering how Twist Image could get its message out there. At that point blogging was just coming into popularity and I thought, “This is unbelievable. I don’t need an editor. I don’t need permission. I don’t need a printer. I can just put my thoughts down and share them.”

If you go back to those terrible, early posts, the content was “navel-gazing” and narcissistic. But as it started build-

ing I realized blogging was a platform for me to be a journalist again, and to pursue the writing that I loved so much and missed. Eventually I expanded to podcasting. I’m going on 300 episodes this week. With the podcast, I realized that perhaps—like God—I needed a day of rest! The thinking was “I’m tired of writing all the time. One day per week I’ll talk. That will be easier.” Little did I know that an audio podcast is not at all easier than producing one blog post!

The blogging and the podcasting cumulatively have led to the point where I’m asked to write for traditional outlets, like a book deal and speaking. It’s led to a very strange model for us as an agency: Our business development efforts are cash-flow positive because of the speaking and the writing. We actually generate a significant amount of income, and all that still drives new business.

**J:** For a business starting out today (and let’s assume they have fantastic writers with interesting things to say), does blogging still have the same potential it did in 2002?

**M:** I just published a post called “How to start a blog in 2012.” In short, definitely yes. I look at someone like Michael Stelzner from **Social Media Examiner** and just think, “Wow, this

guy started a social media blog a few years ago. It’s a multi-million-dollar business now.” So yes, I’m a strong believer. The challenge is most businesses publish stuff that’s so terrible and narcissistic—about their updates and upgrades. That’s not value.

The majority of people who read my blog are not my clients. But when clients come to us to potentially work with our agency, the blog is social proof. They look at a blog post and think, “There are 60 comments on a single post. They’ve got to be good.”

**J:** Podcasting is a largely unexplored content marketing tactic. Tell me what makes it worthwhile for you?

**M:** I see it as a very simple way for me to corner a major thought leader and ask them everything I ever wanted to ask them. The listener gets to be the fly on the wall. I’m a massive fan of people like Charlie Rose and Howard Stern. As diverse as those two characters are, they are both excellent at engaging in conversations. When I interview Seth Godin, I’m not going to ask, “Why *Purple Cow*?” I’m going to ask what his day is like. What’s it like to be him? Where does he go to work? I would never say I’m at the level of Charlie Rose or Howard Stern, but I try to copy them a lot. I’m trying to give the marketing industry an in-depth conversation with really unique people, posing questions you may not have heard before.



# TALKING INNOVATION

with Joe Pulizzi



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If you've ever been on one of those [press] junkets in the music industry, they put the artist in a hotel room and they walk the interviewers in like cattle, one after another for short intervals. I always knew going in that the last reporter asked, "Tell me about the new album. Tell me about the producer. What are your touring plans?" I'd go in there and say, "Tell me why you first picked up the guitar?" I'd ask them questions that would spark a conversation. I never wrote down my questions, but I knew the artists and I actually cared about them and their music. When you parlay that to our world, the critical error is that the person creating the content doesn't care. They don't know the back-story. They haven't studied the subject. They write down their questions and read them one after another.

**J: Great. Now you're making me self-conscious because I have a bunch of questions written down.**

**M:** Just keep on going down the list!

**J: Marketers have this hunger to discover the next big thing first. It's a "gotcha" of sorts. What do you think that new big thing is?**

**M:** For me, it comes down to concepts more than tactics. One thing marketers don't understand well yet is the idea of "screens." Yesterday I spoke at a conference and the speaker before me was talking about "four screens." (I thought there were three. Turns out tablets are the fourth screen.) I talk about one screen. In a cloud-based, hyper-connected, super-untethered world, the only screen that's going to matter to the consumer is the screen that's in front of them.

Think of it this way: Say you read a page in your Kindle. You put it down then pick it up again on the subway on your iPhone app. You come to the office and maybe you read another page or two on your screen. It's asynchronous. As you move to a world where anything in front of us can become a screen—which is something else we are going to see—that changes the game! In the world today, I can see how you would say "four screen" or "three screen." Mobile is not the same as an iPod Touch, which is not the same as a computer. That's fine. But don't you see that the smartphone looks a lot like the iPad? The interaction is very similar, and becoming closer and closer. And as TVs are becoming more and more web enabled, they will be operated by voice or touch. It's all very obvious. So what are you going to do today as a content professional as we rapidly ascend to this one-screen world?

**Joe Pulizzi** is the founder of the **Content Marketing Institute** and **Chief Content Officer** magazine, as well as the co-author of **Managing Content Marketing**.

About **Mitch Joel**: When **Google** wanted to explain online marketing to the top brands in the world, it brought Mitch Joel to the Googleplex in Mountain View, Calif. Mitch is president of **Twist Image**—an award-winning digital marketing and communications agency. He has been called a marketing and communications visionary, interactive expert and community leader. He is also a blogger, podcaster, passionate entrepreneur and speaker who connects with people worldwide by sharing his marketing insights on digital marketing and new media. **Mitch is also a keynote speaker at Content Marketing World 2012.**



► Read Mitch's Call for Bloggers:  
"How to Write a Blog in 2012."  
<http://dlvr.it/1SNn4W>



# TECH TOOLS

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## PR TOOLS



**Jon Gelberg**  
**@JonBFM**  
CCO  
Blue Fountain Media

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**Christine Dunn**  
**@SavoirMedia**  
President, Savoir Media LLC

### Constant Contact

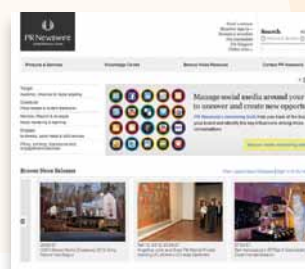
Use **Constant Contact** to distribute press releases and send out announcements on events. The service makes it easy to create email lists, incorporate pictures, and monitor opens. You can also seamlessly distribute through social media.



**Clare McDermott**  
**@soloportfolio**  
Editor, CCO Magazine

### PR Newswire

The press release should be considered essential for digital content marketing. Why? Because press releases are structured content that are easily optimized, distributed and consumed across the Web. And distribution such as that offered by **PR Newswire** not only reaches thousands of websites, search engines, social networks and the like, offering unparalleled scale and reach, but also includes manual editorial review to help ensure the authenticity of the content and to make sure it is targeted to the relevant media partners only. What's more, PR Newswire's ARC platform integrates text, video, multimedia, infographics and other content assets into a single platform that is distributed across the PR Newswire network, offering even broader storytelling capabilities across many more channels (each asset has a relevant distribution channel).



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### GroupHigh

Want to court the blogosphere more effectively? **GroupHigh** lets you search more than 1 million blogs in North American and the United Kingdom, identify the niche blogs you want to engage with and capture contact information for influential bloggers (including **Twitter** feeds and other social media contacts). The site also helps you manage your relationships with bloggers over time to help sustain the relationship and keep your name top-of-mind.

► To submit your **TECH TOOLS** ideas, contact [techtools@contentinstitute.com](mailto:techtools@contentinstitute.com).

# A Technology Inventory for **REAL-TIME** MARKETERS.

Breathe deeply. We're about to document the **25+ TOOLS** marketers need to know about if they're serious about real-time marketing.

By Matthew Schultz

**R**eal-time marketing—the ability to monitor, manage and guide your marketing efforts as they occur—is one of the most important areas of marketing today. Fortunately, new tools that show breaking trends on Twitter, revealing how an individual customer interacts with your content, identifying your brand's social influencers and making sense of all that data to make it actionable, are available to CMOs in 2012. The challenge most face: Where to begin?

The landscape of real-time monitoring tools is particularly wide and deep, so let's focus on digital channels. Further, let's divide real-time marketing tools into two categories: onsite and offsite. Onsite is any customer interaction that occurs on any digital property you own, such as your website. Offsite is simply everything else, including social sites such as Twitter and Facebook.

Most marketers already employ a suite of tools for onsite analytics reporting. Omniture and Google Analytics are two popular tools for viewing your site's visitor data. These standard site reports won't be phased out any time soon, but there is a relatively new breed of tools such as Woopra, Chartbeat and Clicky that offer the ability to view real-time interactions with your site. They answer, "How many visitors are on my site right now and which specific pages are they viewing?" (Google and Omniture also offer real-time tools, but they are not singularly focused, as with the others.)

While these real-time tools are an improvement over the previous generation, they still essentially provide a "web-centric" view of the data, meaning

they are designed more for technologists than marketers. Marketers want to know, "How many visitors, at what time, resulted in how many conversions?" Fortunately vendors now realize the importance of this data to marketers and are introducing software that add context to the raw site statistics.

## **Real-time analytics guides real-time content.**

Mixpanel offers sophisticated, real-time segmentation, funnel and retention analysis, while GoSquared provides real-time views of top content, top referrers, top searches and social media influence. GoSquared and Lexity also offer customer-centric views of your site. Both of these tools can report on a single individual in real time as the visitor arrives on your site, how he or she got there, what pages were viewed and if an order was placed ... or not.

Onsite tools are pivoting from passive monitoring to actively guiding the generation of socially relevant real-time content. InboundWriter monitors your audience's interests and online conversations, and then instructs you on how to craft content your audience will find compelling. It even coaches you on how to tailor your content for different mediums, such as blogs, Twitter and Facebook. This active shaping of content is very reminiscent of search engine optimization. But unlike SEO, it happens in real time and you can see the results immediately.

Offsite tools are evolving even faster than onsite tools, fueled by apps offering new social experiences. Marketers once only worried about

Twitter and Facebook. Now add Foursquare, Instagram, Path, Pinterest, Fancy and others.

### Real-time social media.

There are many tools for managing your social effort, such as HootSuite, CoTweet and TweetDeck (now owned by Twitter). I like to call these “meta-tools” because they add additional functionality on top of existing applications. These tools can post to multiple networks, schedule tweets and filter your stream so you can hone in on important content. HootSuite also provides niceties like CMS functionality (e.g. team collaboration, messages drafts, analytics) and offers a custom URL shortener, Ow.ly, which enables click-thru link tracking.

SocialMention is a stream aggregation tool. It monitors more than 100 social media properties and creates a single, searchable stream. Want to know what’s being said about your brand (almost) anywhere on the web? SocialMention might help you with that challenge. On the other end of the spectrum is PostPost, which is a surgical Twitter search scalpel. It only searches through content from your Twitter followers.

Other social monitoring tools worth mentioning are Radian6, BuddyMedia, BuzzMetrics and ScoutLabs, all of which provide the ability to monitor, measure and report on social activity.

Once you have identified who is talking about your brand, you would probably like to know how influential they are in the social media landscape. Klout and PeerIndex are attempting to attach some context to users’ online persona by monitoring their social stream, and then ranking their influence on specific topics and with other people. Both indexes are nascent, but it’s interesting to watch them try to establish themselves as the index of record.

### Making sense of so much data.

OK ... so you have tons of onsite and offsite data, and very likely a truckload or two of offline data. While linking the data is critical, making that data actionable in real time, whenever and wherever you see a user, would be the “killer app.” Well, this is possible right now with Data Management Platforms. DMPs are essentially large, fast, real-time data warehouses; they store and link together data based on cookie data or other unique keys, and provide an interface for asking questions against the data. You can import first-party data from your site and your offline campaigns; you can import second-party data from partners with whom you share data and you can import third-party data from providers like BlueKai, TargusInfo,

Bizo and Excelate.

Once the data is married in the DMP, you can analyze it, aggregate it, slice it, dice it, report on it and most importantly, make it actionable. For example, you can, in real time, identify the audience a visitor to your site belongs to (e.g. male, 45-50, divorced, kids, into cars and motorcycles) and then, again in real time, tailor the site (content, ads, even layout) directly to that visitor.

## REAL-TIME MARKETING

### REAL-TIME SOCIAL MEDIA

HootSuite • CoTweet  
TweetDeck • Ow.ly  
SocialMention • PostPost  
Radian6 • BuddyMedia  
BuzzMetrics • ScoutLabs  
Real-Time Reputation  
Klout • PeerIndex

### THIRD-PARTY DATA PROVIDERS

BlueKai • TargusInfo  
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Omniure • Google Analytics  
Woopra • Chartbeat  
Clicky • Mixpanel  
GoSquared • Lexity

### REAL-TIME CONTENT GENERATION

InboundWriter  
Skyword

You’re a marketer. You’re familiar with audiences, demographics, psychographics and now on/offsite social data; but up until recently, it was a passive undertaking, requiring long cycles of content planning, months of site design and development, weeks of deployments and days of generating reports. With DMPs, you can leverage all of the social data you’re collecting, combine it with your offline data and act on it all in real time. Right now.

Technology alone will not run your marketing strategy. The best tools are only as good as the people using them. CMOs who put together the right combination of talent and technology will have the edge in today’s real-time world.



As vice president of technology, product strategy, Matthew Schultz leads iCrossing’s product development strategy, owns the agile development process and runs a team of agile business analysts who keep iCrossing’s software at the top of the industry. With more than 16 years of experience in web tech, Schultz has served as the lead technologist for Agency.com and IMG Media in consumer, social and enterprise technologies. He can be found on Twitter @ByteEngine.



## Two Content-Focused Startups Aim to Solve an Age-Old Problem:

# How do Advertisers Achieve **SCALE AND RELEVANCE?**

The number of niche media sites—whether mommy blogs or car discussion forums—is growing at a staggering rate. Until recently, a brand wanting to reach one of these communities had two choices: work with an ad network for immediate reach or individually with blogs using “sponsored-content” posts.

Two technology startups are aiming to make the connection easier.

### PostRelease

While ad networks offer brands and bloggers the benefit of instant scale, brands are relegated to small, peripheral ad widgets. **PostRelease gives brands the scale and ease of an ad network, with the relevancy and positioning of content.** Big brands use PostRelease to publish sponsored posts instantly across thousands of placements—from small but revered mommy blogs to massive media networks and forums. And unlike “dropped-in” ad widgets, sponsored posts match the design of the existing site seamlessly. Currently PostRelease is the only company that places content inside forums as well as blogs and content sites.

Bloggers like PostRelease because they can still use their existing ad units. Brands like PostRelease

because sponsored posts are contextually matched and get prime positioning, so campaign performance can be five to 10 times greater than through-ad units. Brands using PostRelease include Ford, Intuit and Clorox Corp.

### BlogFrog

BlogFrog has tapped into the surging popularity of “mom blogs” by harmonizing content, community and advertising. Bloggers add a BlogFrog app to their existing publishing platform to create an insta-BlogFrog community. **BlogFrog’s technology allows readers to ask questions, share photos and even participate in live chats and broadcasts—a much more versatile community tool for bloggers than Facebook and Twitter.** The site has 125,000 active members and reaches 10 million parents per month, making it the largest mom-blogger network in the country.

For bloggers, BlogFrog amplifies conversation and increases revenues. For brands, BlogFrog’s more intuitive connection between content and conversation is already attracting big names like Procter & Gamble and Kraft.





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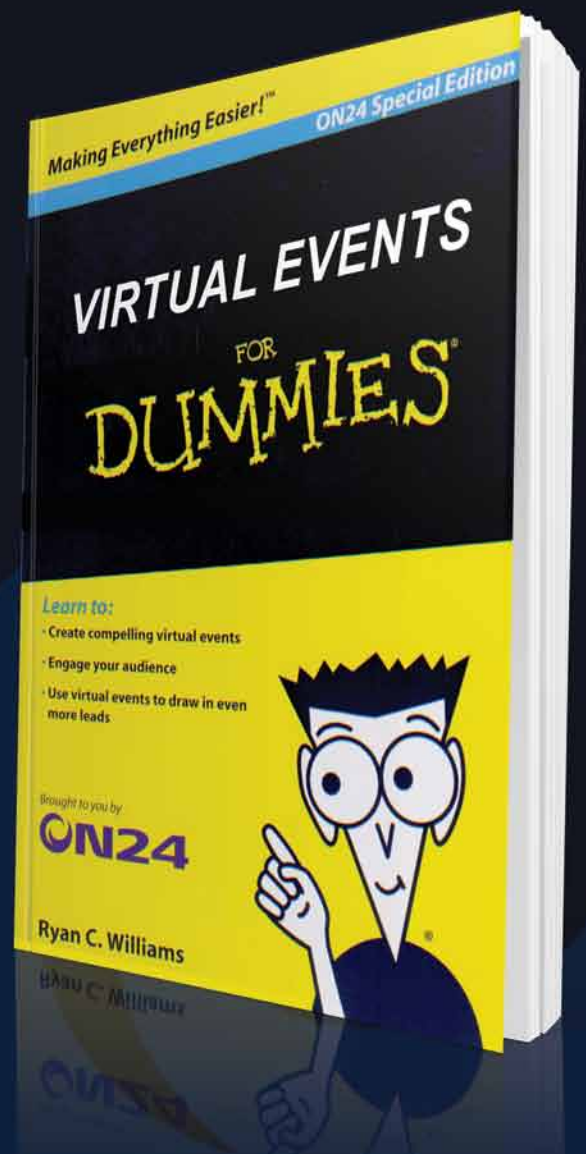
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# Digital Content Seeks PR For Something More

A web design company illustrates how to court “old media” with grace and gravitas.

By Clare McDermott

**B**lue Fountain Media operates in a cut-throat, crowded field: website development and design, and online marketing. From 2007 to 2010—years that were downright cruel to most U.S. businesses—revenues at Blue Fountain Media grew 620 percent.

The company was named an *Inc.* 5000 high-flier in 2011—reaching number 541 on *Inc. Magazine’s* annual list of fastest-growing U.S. companies—and executives write columns for among the most recognized media properties in the world, including the *New York Times*, American Express OpenForum and *Inc. Magazine*.

Despite appearances, the Blue Fountain Media’s publicity engine is fairly young. “Just five years ago, the world didn’t know much about us,” says Jon Gelberg, chief content officer. “We created a content marketing strategy because we felt people wouldn’t take us seriously until we were recognized by the media as experts in our field.”

And it’s obviously doing something right; the company has a growing roster of high-profile brand-clients, including, Walt Disney Resorts, Procter & Gamble, Oppenheimer Funds and the NFL.

How does a web marketing company stand out from the tens of thousands of companies offering similar services? According to Blue Fountain Media’s chief content officer: gravitas. (We’ll get back to that in a moment.)

## Using content to fuel a heady climb.

Gelberg joined the company in 2009 and recounts that Blue Fountain Media was producing very high quality web designs and online campaigns, but little promotion was in place to build momentum and brand recognition.

The first move was to pre-fill an online “learning center” with more than a dozen articles on popular marketing

topics, such as “What Should My Web Design and Development Project Cost” and “How Social Media Marketing can Enhance your Bottom Line.” With a solid—but very small—library in place, Gelberg began an intensive campaign to pitch stories and expertise to the media. He explains, “We would contact a newspaper or magazine and say, ‘We see you’ve been writing about how to use Facebook. We have that area of expertise.’ Then we linked to an actual story with ready-made quotes for journalists to use.”

Slowly and steadily, the combination of digital content plus PR campaigning began to pay off. Blue Fountain Media gained access to smaller, regional media companies, publishing columns and winning interviews. Those stories in smaller publications were picked up by aggregators like Yahoo, and before long, Blue Fountain Media executives-turned-authors were climbing the media rungs, reaching bigger and bigger media properties with bylined articles, interviews and regular columns.

When asked how the company measures the results of its PR offensive, Gelberg is decidedly circumspect. “I can recount for you the number of clicks or calls to our office mentioning our press coverage,” he explains. “But as a company we also get a big boost from the respect or gravitas of our content marketing program. Our column in the *New York Times*, for example, bestows a lot of credibility and respect on us, particularly when anyone can call themselves a web designer or SEO guru.”

## Don’t bother if you don’t actually possess real expertise.

“Content has gotten a bad name for a good reason,” says Gelberg. He’s referring to what many call “content farms,” or agencies and technology companies that staff up blogging

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## ALL ABOUT: BLUE FOUNTAIN MEDIA

### STATS:

3-year growth ..... 620%  
2010 Revenue ..... \$6 million  
2007 Revenue .... \$827,304  
Employees ..... 68  
Employee Growth ..... 56  
Founded ..... 2003

### BUSINESS MODEL:

Offering web design, development and online marketing to clients from start-ups to major corporations.



platforms with hundreds of writers who are paid-per-click for branded media sites. He explains that if you hope to get the attention of media companies, you need to have something valuable to share (i.e. insightful expertise) and high-quality writing, not SEO-stacked cotton candy. Without value and quality, your public relations push, no matter how hard you work, will amount to nothing.

Ultimately, catching the attention of top media outlets takes more than great content. It also requires a bit of grace when developing and executing on the all-important pitch. Gelberg offers a few pointers for content marketers with PR aspirations:

**Craft your pick-up line:** Remember top media editors receive dozens of pitches per day. How will you break through the clutter? Do you have an insight into a current problem that is unique, practical and valuable?

**Focus on the editor's needs:** Don't babble about yourself. Show you are interested and knowledgeable about them—both the publication and the reporter. Point to a specific story and offer an additional insight for a future story on the topic.

**Keep your chin up:** You will be rejected. Repeatedly. Get over it. Be

persistent; if someone doesn't answer a call or email but you're convinced it's a good fit, follow up multiple times, stopping just shy of pestering.

**Give and take:** Be specific about what types of insights and information you have to offer. After a media outlet has relied on you, become a trusted resource by saying "thank you" and keeping in touch with additional insights and story ideas. Follow editors and journalists on Twitter and LinkedIn to see their latest bylines; keep up the social banter to ensure your name is top-of-mind.

What's ahead for Gelberg and Blue Fountain Media? Consistently executing more of the same. "In our business, staying on top of technologies and trends, and studying online user behavior is the most important thing we do across the company," explains Gelberg. "By keeping up with and growing our expertise, we serve our clients well and produce intelligent, high-value content." Touché!

► Interested in elevating your PR game? Check out Tech Tools on page 9 to learn which tech companies and social platforms Jon Gelberg recommends.



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# IN DETAIL

Sam Sebastian, director of local and B2B markets for Google, answers questions about the future of search.



**Marketers have long been told by SEO consultants that long-tail search was ‘where it’s at’. What is your take on the quality of content vs. quantity of content—especially as it pertains to B2B and local business content marketers?**

Both are important and can vary by the type of content considered. An industrial distributor may have a massive catalog of SKUs with related content (pricing, specs, etc.) and should allow as many of those SKUs to be indexed for purchase-oriented searching. For professionals seeking knowledge, original/quality content such as research, in-depth reports, thoughtful analysis and so on will go a long way in achieving better ranking.

**In your opinion, what are the fundamental SEO initiatives B2B marketers should be undertaking?**

**Do something cool:** Make sure your site stands out from the competition in a good way. For example, more professionals are looking for rich content online, so make sure your library of amazing video content is indexed using Rich Snippets.

**Include relevant words in your copy:** Try to put yourself in the shoes of searchers. What would they query to find you? Your business name, location, products, etc., are important. It’s also helpful to use the same terms in your site that your users might type (e.g., you might offer “next-generation marketing tools” but most searchers might type “marketing automation software”), and to answer the questions they might have. It helps to know your customers.

**Be smart about your tags and site architecture:** Create unique title tags and meta descriptions; include Rich Snippets markup from schema.org where appropriate. Have intuitive navigation and good internal links.

**Sign up for email forwarding in Webmaster Tools:**

Help us communicate with you, especially when we notice something awry with your site.

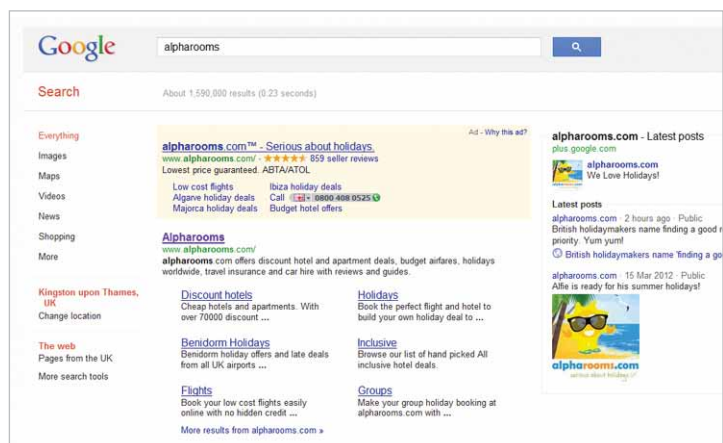
**Attract buzz:** Natural links, +1s, likes, follows ...

In every business there’s something compelling, interesting, entertaining or surprising that you can offer or share with your audience. Provide a helpful service, educate people, be a thought leader and users will share and reshare your content.

**Stay fresh and relevant:** Keep content up-to-date and consider options such as building a social media presence (if that’s where a potential audience exists) or creating an ideal mobile experience if your users are often on-the-go.

**Go mobile:** Mobile searching and browsing in B2B is growing rapidly due to the adoption of high-end mobile devices. Make sure you have a mobile-optimized site/content and that it is getting indexed accordingly.

**We’ve seen Google search results start to show “latest posts” at the top of the list—but there’s some confusion about which posts will show up there.**



So, to start, it sounds like you are referring to “Search Plus Your World” (see screenshot), which as I’m sure you know, was Google’s latest update to the search results to make them more “social.”

1. **Personal Results** - Pictures/posts relevant to your search, which are your own OR have been shared with you via a circle.
2. **Profiles in Search** - People in your circles OR people we think you might be interested in following.
3. **People and Pages** - Any brand or people pages related to your search query that we think you might be interested in based on your search query. It sounds like this is the focus of the question and we've been seeing a lot of this lately with advertisers concerned that they see their competitors in this space and want to know how they can show. You have to meet a certain, undisclosed, threshold number of +1s in order to be eligible to show in this spot.

**For Google+ posts, is it just publicly shared posts or will it show up for those in my circles? And does this also affect Brand pages?**

Both. It is any post shared publicly OR shared with you specifically by someone in your circle. Yes, posts by Brand pages can also be included in this space.

**How important is social for B2B and local?**

I'd say it's becoming more and more important. Two themes stand out with Local/B2B and social:

**Users trust recommendations** - Personal recommendations are trusted more than any other source—90 percent trust these. Also, 77 percent of brand content is created by consumers—if people feel connected to a brand, they share that. So people want recommendations and we know they're looking online. We also know now that this certainly includes B2B and Local. (Quick Plug: Google+ and "Search Plus Your World" are designed to share those recommendations with your potential customer at the right time.)

**Market via conversation** - A Public Storage or an Orkin will probably never have tons of Google+ or Twitter followers but those who are looking for that service and click through to their Facebook page or Google+ page can get an idea for the company's identity and how it does business. Do they have good ratings? How are they engaging their customers? How are they handling complaints? Are most posts positive or negative?

**What are some of the challenges you see marketers tackling in "closing the loop" between their Google-based marketing and their ROI from customer sales?**

We are seeing progress. This is probably the first thing we push with customers—tracking. We don't want them to invest with us unless they have a sense of what traffic is worth to them. Once they've built out a value model, any digital advertising can be compared to the expectations and then a customer can double down or pull back accordingly. I'd say customers are getting better in this area, but it's still the early days. Most of the issues are on the sales fulfillment process at a customer. Once a digital lead is generated, how are they tracking it internally, how are sales people compensated, how do they round robin a lead, how do they pre-qualify a lead, etc.

**The pace of innovation in digital marketing vehicles—from Google alone, but then multiplied by all the other growing channels and services out there—is truly dizzying. How do you suggest that regular marketers keep up?**

Keep it simple and focus on the big impact areas first. Define your marketing or customer acquisition model for online or offline and then test certain platforms and determine how they work. But try to compare all platforms on an apples-to-apples comparison as much as possible. Then slowly build out your marketing mix focusing on the biggest impact components. I have many customers asking me all about social, or advertising on Pinterest or Pandora, but they still don't have a basic search engine marketing campaign built out or they don't have the basic tracking in place. Start with the basics, master the components that can have the biggest impact, define your value model, then test new areas once you have the fundamentals in place.

**What's your favorite perk working at Google?**

The people. I think we hire the best people in the world and it's a privilege working alongside smart, dedicated, disciplined and fun people, who always try to do the right thing.

About **Sam Sebastian**: For six years, Sam has been responsible for leading Google's Local and Government Markets sales and operations organizations in North America. Sebastian's Local Markets team helps locally driven marketers—such as real estate, coupon, legal and home services firms—utilize Google's ad platform to realize greater efficiencies and returns from local advertising. Sebastian's Government, Politics & Non Profit team helps the federal government, non profits and advocacy organizations, political candidates and causes execute multiplatform digital engagement strategies.

**Sam is also a keynote speaker at Content Marketing World 2012.**

# Banishing Short-Term and Shiny: A LOOK AT VAIL RESORTS

Clark Kokich, chairman of **Razorfish**, says companies chasing shiny new technology and novel tactics are barely nudging the needle.

**R**obert Katz was becoming frustrated. The year was 2009, and Katz was CEO of **Vail Resorts** during what was turning out to be the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression. He needed revenue, so not surprisingly, he turned to his marketing team for ideas.

Katz was well aware of the explosion of new marketing channels. He had been to a number of meetings where he was bombarded with facts and figures highlighting the rapid rise in mobile, social, gaming, digital-out-of-home and online video. In these meetings, his people described an always-on, connected consumer who was snacking on content across an ever-increasing number of devices. They argued persuasively Vail's success would depend on being able to deliver the right content to the right customer on the right device at the right time. For the most part, it all made sense to Katz.

That's where things got sticky. Vail did what almost every company does today. Its internal mobile people met with mobile agencies and technology providers. Its internal social people met with social agencies and technology providers. And so on. In the end, Katz was presented with a mobile strategy, a social strategy and a content strategy. But here's where the story took an interesting turn. Katz said no.

Why? He understood this channel-up approach would lead to a lot of "clever ideas that don't matter." Why don't they matter? They don't matter because Vail Resorts is a billion-dollar company operating multiple ski resorts. They don't matter because a steady stream of one-off ideas won't move the needle on the bottom line of such a large enterprise. And above all, they don't matter because

Katz was looking for an idea to fundamentally alter the competitive landscape. He was not looking for another short-term promotional push, but wanted a long-term strategy to enhance Vail's ability to attract and retain customers. In short, a transformational business idea.

## **Give customers more of what they like best.**

After Katz said no to the "channel-up" approach, he gathered his team and led them in a process to use all of these new channels to fundamentally improve the Vail experience. First, they searched for a business idea. Only then did they think about how to use all of these channels to support that idea.

**More than 50,000 Vail guests activated their EpicMix profiles during the first five weeks of the program's trial season, posting an average of four updates on Facebook.**

The solution, it turned out, was in the 800,000 RFID (radio-frequency identification) chips Vail embeds in its passes and lift tickets each year. If the passes could be scanned automatically, and if RFID readers could be placed at different points on the mountain, then Vail would have a great deal of information about each guest—information that could be used to develop content and fuel a social experience. All that was needed was a way to display that information and share it with resort guests.

That way to display was EpicMix. Launched in the



fall 2010, EpicMix provides a personal scorecard of each customer's accomplishments on the mountain that can be viewed on the web or via a smartphone app. The idea is similar to the location-based social network **Foursquare**, but with one big difference: Customers don't have to drag out their phone to check in or even to sign up. The data is already collected, ready for viewing, when and if they want it.

In a classic example of gamification, the most competitive skiers were now galvanized to get to the top of the EpicMix leaderboard by skiing the most vertical feet. As the first season with EpicMix drew to a close, the ironman atop that leaderboard had spent 140 days on the mountain at three Vail Resorts properties, chalking up a ridiculous 5.8 million vertical feet of skiing.

Knowing that every resort visitor isn't made of 100-percent testosterone, Vail wisely built other, more accessible challenges and rewards into EpicMix. Resort visitors can also earn digital pins – inspired by the colorful metal lapel pins that have been part of ski culture for decades. These coveted 87-by-85 pixel icons, and the accomplishments they represent, can be displayed on guests' personal EpicMix pages and shared via **Facebook** and **Twitter**.

Some pins are bestowed for purely athletic accomplishments, such as the "Millionaire" granted to those who manage at least 1 million vertical feet in a season. The "Conqueror" is awarded to those who ski every lift at a resort in a single day. The opportunity to win these few thousand square pixels of recognition has driven skiers to try new things and to push their personal limits.

This gamification of snow sports via the rewarding of status to Vail Resorts' guests has paid some immediate dividends in terms of customer loyalty. "The real value of this program is to drive increased sales, increased days of participation and increased loyalty from our core customer segment," Katz says, "and all indications are that people are responding to it that way."

The net result is far-reaching promotion for Vail Resorts that hits some very desirable targets: the like-minded friends of current customers. The math is compelling. More than 50,000 Vail guests activated their EpicMix profiles during the first five weeks of the program's trial season, posting an average of four updates on Facebook. According to Facebook, the average user has 130 friends, meaning those 200,000 posts translated into 26 million-plus potential impressions for EpicMix and Vail Resorts. Participation tripled since the launch, and so far this year, Vail has seen more than 1.8 million



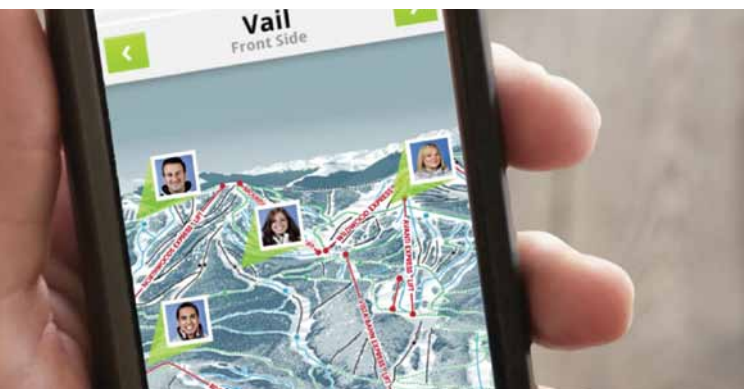
*The EpicMix dashboard provides a visually compelling summary of a skier's progress and accomplishments.*

social posts from EpicMix members.

While one of the ultimate aims of EpicMix is to spur this kind of unbiased promotion, Vail Resorts doesn't look at the program strictly as a marketing expense. Katz explains that EpicMix is designed to enhance the quality and fun of a visit to the resorts, so Vail looked at the investment in EpicMix as essentially the same as adding lifts, snowmaking equipment or a new restaurant.

And it's not a one-off. Katz is committed to expanding and enhancing the EpicMix experience over time. This year Vail Resorts posted professional photographers on their mountains to take candid photos. A quick scan of the skiers' passes and their photos are waiting for them when they get home. Most guests quickly post the photos to Facebook.

It's no wonder Katz is continuing to support EpicMix as a core differentiating strategy. Despite continued softness in the economy, Vail Resorts managed to increase revenue 31 percent between 2010 and 2011.



*Vail Resorts' customers use EpicMix while skiing to locate their friends on the mountain.*

### Think cross-channel and long term.

We all have a lot to learn from Katz, Vail Resorts and EpicMix. The essential lesson: Stop thinking about channel strategies. Instead, start thinking about transformational business ideas. Dig into your customers' needs. What do they love about our brand? Can we enhance it? What do they hate about our brand? Can we fix it? What deeper need do they have that we can satisfy?

Be relentless. Don't be satisfied with clever one-off ideas that live alone within a single media channel. Keep digging until you uncover a real problem you can solve. Once you've done that, and only after you've done that, should you engage your mobile and social content experts. Find an idea then unleash the horses.

So how to proceed? There are many ways to approach it, but here's my favorite prescription for success:

First, take it easy for a few days (this is going to be a lot of work). Then next Monday, pull together the widest possible team. From the client, include people from marketing, IT, product development, finance, stores, and customer service. Include all of your agencies—traditional, digital, social and mobile. Ask the new team this question: "What do people dislike about being our customer, and how can we use digital to fix it?" Force them all to help define the problem and generate ideas. Threaten to fire anyone who acts like a prima donna or seems more worried about his or her own empire as opposed to the success of the group. When you decide on a direction, sell it to your CEO and get it funded. Once the program is launched, act quickly by testing, learning and refining everything you're doing. Don't relax until your customers are telling each other what a great company you are.

Oh, and make sure you do something that matters.



Clark Kokich is the chairman at Razorfish and one of the premier thought leaders in the world of digital marketing. He has been quoted frequently in the *Wall Street Journal*, *Ad Age* and the *New York Times* among others. A popular speaker, he brings his unique perspective on the future of marketing

to business audiences worldwide. In fall 2011, Clark wrote and released *Do or Die*, the world's first business book published exclusively as a fully interactive iPad app. In *Do or Die*, Clark outlines a clear strategy for businesses to survive and thrive in a world of never-ending technological change. Follow him @clarkkokich.

## The Rise of the Scatterbrained Brand.

Unfortunately in business today, management team members too often say yes when they should be saying no. Too often, brands spend millions of dollars on individual, channel-specific programs. Too often, companies tout the efficacy of their social strategy or mobile strategy or content strategy. Why too often? While each may deliver a positive ROI, they don't add up to anything substantial in terms of the larger goals of the brand.

Is it any wonder in a recent survey, more than 70 percent of CEOs said they don't believe their marketing people can adequately justify their investment in new media initiatives? I experienced this firsthand when a CEO told me, "Sometimes I feel I'm jogging in a swarm of gnats. There are all these new marketing ideas swirling around. They're full of energy and extremely distracting, and I keep thinking I'm going to choke on them. And they sure don't help me run any faster."

Those of us who have bet our careers on the success of these emerging channels need to take heed. Senior leadership will never embrace our ideas unless we let go of our myopic focus on individual channels and instead solve real business problems. We need to do things that matter.

| Rank | Name       | Days on Mtn | Most Visited | Total Pins | Latest Pin |
|------|------------|-------------|--------------|------------|------------|
| 100% | Charles A. | 171         | 109          |            |            |
| 100% | Shawn C.   | 160         | 72           |            |            |
| 100% | Gregory C. | 153         | 68           |            |            |
| 100% | Sandor F.  | 161         | 77           |            |            |
| 100% | Steven N.  | 147         | 54           |            |            |
| 100% | Jeff B.    | 146         | 73           |            |            |
| 100% | Mike I.    | 110         | 64           |            |            |

*For competitive skiers, EpicMix provides a way to see where they rank compared to others.*

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# DIAGNOSIS

## Managing Large Teams of Writers Under Short Deadlines (Or Lessons from My Big Fat Content Marketing Project)

By Sarah Mitchell

Last year I led a content marketing project involving more than 700 pieces of original content developed by 15 writers across three continents in 60 days—a careers and industry guide for the **Australian Mines and Metals Association** (AMMA) online jobs board. In two short months, I learned the do-it-or-die essentials for a large-scale content marketing kick-off.

### Writer guidelines are essential

Well-written writer guidelines keep a diverse group of writers moving in the same direction and should be tackled first.

### Distributed workforces rock

We used writers in several time zones, an unplanned but happy accident. With 15 writers spanning 15 time zones, someone was always working on the project, day and night. Importantly, I was able to write copy briefs and edit submissions while most of the team was in bed, avoiding the normal editing bottleneck that occurs with a large team of writers.

### “Horses for courses” applies to writers

We used a majority of freelance writers, a couple students and one full-time employee to develop the content. It became apparent very quickly different writers had different strengths—and most of my assumptions about individual writers were wrong. Head off surprises by giving a mini assignment before full-blown production begins.

### Money can’t buy you love

I learned quickly hourly rates do not equate to talent. The most expensive writer on the team was my biggest headache and required the costliest rewrites. Conversely, a couple of young turks turned out to be lifesavers. One even became my “fix-it” writer for the team when I needed rewrites.

### Rush jobs cost

Most good content producers—writers and designers—are booked six to eight weeks in advance. While I had some of my best people on standby, they still expected top money to drop everything and work on our project along with a 50 percent deposit before starting. If you want things done well and done quickly, expect to pay a premium to your service providers.

### No one does it like you would

With 15 writers developing copy and a couple designers working alongside, I had no choice but to relinquish my inner control freak. Not a single one of the 700 articles was the way I would have written it. But you know what? So many of them are better. The ones that weren’t could be brought up to speed. It’s entirely liberating to let your team do it their way.

## WORKFORCE COMPOSITION

Getting the right mix of skills and talent on your team is integral to success. I never want to do another project without these skills on my team.

**Web Journalist** – You can’t beat a journalist when it comes to telling a story and working to a deadline. They can crank out quality copy like no one else.

**Researcher** – We didn’t hire any researchers but we did have a couple writers who love the research end of writing. They were assigned articles requiring a lot of in-depth industry information.

**SEO Copywriter** – If you’re developing online content, having at least one heavy-duty SEO writer on your team is a big help. Get them to do the keyword research for the whole project.

**Generalist** – If you’re up against a hard deadline, you need as many writers as possible who willingly write to spec on any topic.

**Editor** – Even if your writers are providing professional editing as part of the service they provide, you still need an overall editor if only to ensure consistency and adherence to guidelines.

### Nothing is ever done

I had visions of a big launch followed by a good break to catch up on sleep. That never happened. No matter how clear your vision, a large piece of content like the Careers and Industry Guide needs constant attention. Our audience is driving a lot of the change but we also see things we want to do differently every day. We’re also seeing early indicators the investment AMMA made in content marketing is paying off. That’s one thing that hasn’t surprised me.



Sarah Mitchell is “Director – Site Content” (that’s Australian for CCO) at AMMA [miningoilandgasjobs.com](http://miningoilandgasjobs.com). She also edits the Australian edition of CCO magazine. She never sleeps; ask anybody. @globalcopywrite





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## Creating Content that Connects with the C-suite

By Roanne Neuwirth

**C**ontent marketers spend lots of time and money creating just the right content to engage their customers and prospects, but much of it goes unheeded by the most coveted of audiences—the C-suite. Executives are a challenging audience, but because of their clout and buying power, it is well worth cracking the code on executive content. This is particularly true for B2B marketers, where executive relationships are so core to big ticket, ongoing spending.

### The Executive Challenge

Why are executives different? From our work interviewing hundreds of C-level executives every year, we have extracted the key elements that define the C-suite difference. As the figure below shows, their relentless schedules and need to sell and defend decisions make them very focused on outcomes and a clear path to value for the time invested. This group relies even more heavily than others on the advice and perspective of their true peers and those they perceive to be authentic experts. They know the information they need and value, and do not want to waste time with “salesy” pitches and lightweight stories.

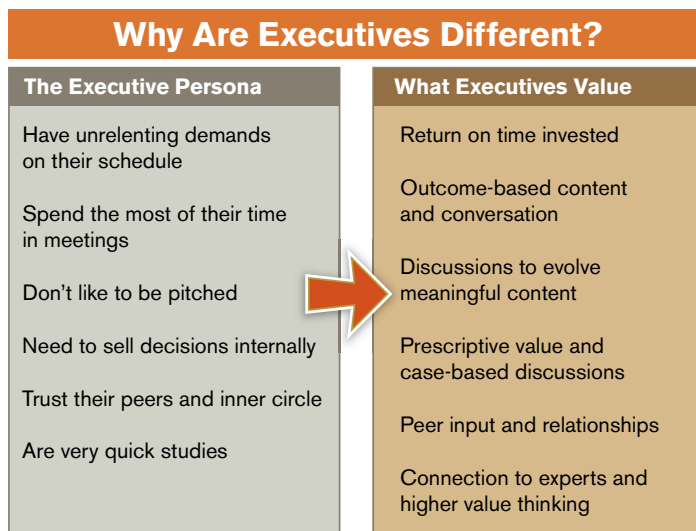


Image: Farland Group

So how does this translate this into successful content for executives? Focus on these elements to start:

### 1. Hard facts drive credibility ... and credibility is key.

Content based on data makes an impression on executives; peer-based insights and stories add to the credibility of the data collected. Invest the time to do the research and gather input if you want your story to be heard and respected. Data can come from surveys, conversations, third-party analyses. Just make sure it helps to make the case on why your points matter to executives and provides supportable and thought-provoking insights.

### 2. Provide actionable and timely information on issues that matter, in formats that allow ready extrapolation.

There has to be a “so what” that comes out of the data and it needs to be up-to-the minute, on topics relevant to the executive’s business, role and current challenges. Case studies, use cases, pointed summaries of key actions all gain attention from executives if they are built on a credible perspective.

**3. Summarize, summarize, summarize.** Executives have short attention spans and need to get to value quickly. Deliver your ideas with targeted summaries, succinct points, where the bottom line ideas and actions are easy to extract and consume.

**4. Channel matters.** With executives in particular, the content has to be easy for them to access, wherever they are—during a flight on their iPad, in a printed paper to peruse after dinner or in a short video while waiting for a meeting to start. And executives’ interests change as channels change so stay on top of what’s new and what works.

**5. Push beyond the common wisdom and top-of-mind trends.** Executive content needs to present a provocative vision for future possibilities. Executives seek intriguing, surprising or useful ideas that highlight opportunities to come in areas that tie to their greatest business challenges. Find consistent ways to gather insights from executives

## Match Content and Format to Channel.

When you publish executive-level content, take a multi-media approach. Ideas can be presented, pulled apart and repackaged in different formats—online and offline, audio, video, the written word—to reach the audience where and how they most prefer it. Just make sure that the content is appropriate for the channel. A few examples:

- Executives like to hear from peers in a select number of high-value, high-touch, in-person events; use cases make very effective fodder for these venues.
- White papers can work with executives but they need to be short, to the point and contain compelling data.
- Third party publications—if they are the ones C-level executives actually read—are great to place compelling stories of what other executives have done or detail data that shows it's time to pay attention to a trend or an opportunity.

on both problems and solutions, and then invest in extracting the most useful output and data to create a story of action and innovative ideas.

**6. Evolve from technical to strategic.** Executives care about how they can solve business problems and enhance revenue and profit. They are not interested in reading about technologies and products—those are only a means to the end and are readily delegated to others to review and purchase. Position solutions in terms of the bottom line, and what can help grow the business. Bring in peer stories to lend credibility to these business cases.

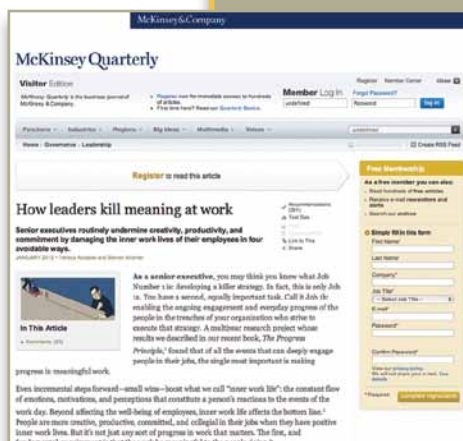
The bottom line: get out and listen to your executive audience, research and understand their challenges and needs, link your story to value and reach them where they are.

Roanne Neuwirth is a senior vice president at Farland Group, a firm that helps companies engage their executive customers and build deep relationships. She has more than 20 years of B2B experience driving business value through client-focused marketing and research programs. Neuwirth has worked with a wide-ranging client base, including IBM, GTE Sprint, Wells Fargo, and Chevron.

## McKinsey Quarterly: Zen Masters of C-Suite Attention

One of McKinsey & Company's most powerful marketing tools is its business journal publication *The McKinsey Quarterly*. It has expanded from a print quarterly journal into an ongoing content series on key global business topics, and is now considered a must-read by many senior executives at the world's largest companies. It is the focus on the following four elements that contributes to the success of this content in connecting to the target executive audience and demonstrating the power of the ideas.

- ▶ **Data-driven credibility**—Whether a survey of hundreds of technology executives or interviews with 15 chief strategy officers, McKinsey starts with peer insights and gets compelling facts on which to build their content.
- ▶ **Actionable, relevant, timely information**—McKinsey focuses on leading-edge management topics that are top of mind for executives and shares cases, examples and stories of how other executives have taken action on the opportunities and challenges presented. It's easy to see how to take these ideas into other environments.
- ▶ **Succinct insights**—McKinsey extracts the key points, the most relevant highlights and the most provocative ideas in the layout and design making the key take aways easily identifiable and consumable.
- ▶ **Channeling their audience**—McKinsey moved its model to a stronger focus on online formats (audio, video, print) and shifted the print publication to quarterly round-ups. It has integrated a strong social and email strategy to ensure that the content gets to executives in formats that matter.





# IDEA GARAGE

THE WORKSHOP OF CONTENT MARKETING PROJECTS.

## THE BARTER ECONOMY: How a Bike Company 'Spins' Free Content

By Michael Bay

**T**wo years ago, Rick Vosper faced a challenge familiar to many: Marketing what he calls “a fairly generic product” on a tight budget. His novel solution was to put his customers to work creating his content.

Vosper was director of Airborne Bicycles, a subsidiary of Huff, which builds “real solid, entry-level performance bikes.” Huff’s agency, Brunner, came up with the idea of a team of brand ambassadors called “The Flight Team,” made up of bicycling enthusiasts. “I wanted to take it another step,” Vosper says. “I wanted them to be our content marketers.”

The chosen team members included

writers, photographers and videographers, who in exchange for an Airborne bike and some gear, were asked to document their experiences on their own blogs. They were given some basic content marketing training and told “to talk not just about Airborne, you’re here to talk about riding bikes.”

Customers responded enthusiastically. Members of The Flight Team aren’t necessarily professional racers, and Vosper says “the notion that just some regular guy could be sponsored the same way a pro athlete was is incredibly intoxicating.”

The result was “more content than I could manage,” Vosper says, then laughs

and adds: “You have to give up the illusion of control because you never had it anyway.” Vosper left Airborne in February to focus on his own company, Rick Vosper Marketing Services, but The Flight Team lives on, recruiting its next set of ambassadors. If you love biking, sign up on the Airborne website.

Michael W. Bay, a former CNN journalist and producer, is co-founder of Real Content, an Atlanta-based content strategy and creation agency. Michael won an Emmy in 2004 for his role in CNN International’s coverage the southeast Asia tsunami. Follow him @Real\_Content.



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# COLLAGE

A CONTENT SMÖRGÅSBORD.

## JUST EAT, WILL YA MATE?

**S**ocial media darling of the healthy fast food set, Australia-based **Grill'd Burgers** has bitten the proverbial hand by demanding a moratorium on typical “foodie” behavior. What, exactly, is Grill'd complaining about? In a new campaign designed to skewer celebrity chefs and connect with the average Aussie, Grill'd launched three gourmet burgers, coupled with messages like “F#ck celebrity chefs” and “foodies worse than hipsters.” Yikes. Confused? So are we!

Grill'd enjoys a whopping Facebook fan base of more than 28,000 (and more modest Twitter following of 6,400). The inevitable backlash has set in, with customers blasting the campaign online. Is this a savvy business strategy or a ploy for attention gone awry? We're scratching our heads trying to figure out how angering a Twitter-crazed foodie is going to work for them.



## WAKE UP AND SMELL THE MARKETING

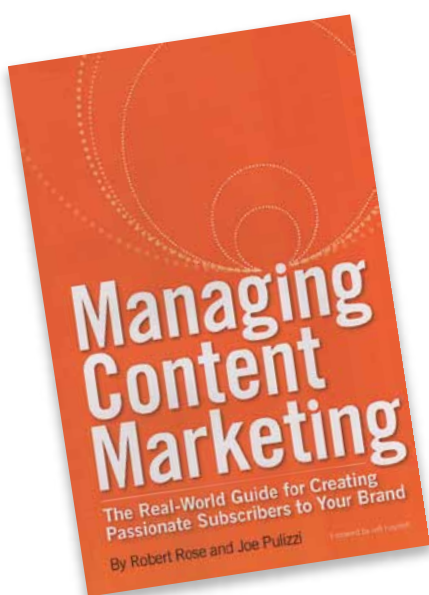
**F**or those who can't afford the plastic surgery they've always wanted, there's a new alternative: making a music video. Miami plastic surgeon Dr. Michael Salzhauer is marketing himself with “A Nose Job Love Song Giveaway.” Also known as “Dr. Schnoz” and “The Nose King of Miami,” Salzhauer is offering free rhinoplasty, airfare to Miami and lodging for the contestant whose video gets the most views on YouTube.

“I wanted to create something no other plastic surgeon has done before. Rhinoplasty is my favorite and most desired procedure. I found a way to incorporate my work into a fun and creative way to attract more patients,” says Salzhauer.

Walking a fine line between funny and offensive, the plastic surgeon's marketing campaign has landed him in hot water. The American Society of Plastic Surgeons has initiated an investigation under its code of ethics.

# Managing Content Marketing

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World-renowned content marketing experts Robert Rose and Joe Pulizzi have teamed up to help marketing pros and business owners develop a content marketing plan that goes beyond theories, and explains it in a way that can actually be implemented.

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### DEPARTMENT EDITOR

Natalya Minkovsky (@hejhejnatalya) is a senior strategist and content strategy lead at **Rock Creek Strategic Marketing**, a branding and communications firm in the Washington, DC, metro area. She spends a lot of time thinking about grammar, plain language, open source and user experience.

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