



orange Issue Thirteen

STRATEGY • CONTENT • DISTRIBUTION

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From press conferences to social news feeds, fake news and alternative facts are front and center. Even though the conversation is focused around journalism, it matters for content marketing.

The fake news debate is just one symptom of a growing trust deficit, and content marketers are caught in the crossfire. After all, we're encouraging organizations to create their own media. When people start to analyze their media sources with a healthy dose of skepticism, content marketers need to be more vigilant than ever about trust, transparency and credibility.

We've been thinking about trust for as long as we've been creating content. More than half the people who work at Imagination come from a journalism background. And, as you'll see in this issue's "Get Real" feature, there are tried-and-true methods for building trust and maintaining credibility with solid reporting—even in the era of conspiracy theories and rampant finger-pointing.

When a financial adviser shares savings tips with millennial customers, that's genuine service journalism; when a piece of content comes with a personal byline, there's an added connection and vouch for credibility. When an engineering association offers industry readers a tightly sourced long-form article exploring the nation's crumbling infrastructure, the result is both practical and trustworthy. When you share these types of stories with transparency—being clear about who it's coming from, offering third-party insights and expert context for why it matters, and acknowledging mistakes if you get something wrong—you earn credibility.

Start by recognizing that the best content marketing is the opposite of fake. You're serving a business goal, and most readers know that. But that doesn't prevent you from informing, inspiring, engaging, even entertaining them—and building genuine trust—along the way.

James Meyers
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Interested in learning more about how Imagination can help you achieve your content marketing objectives? Email Erin Slater, senior vice president of business development, at eslater@imaginepub.com.

#Storytelling

Influential insiders weigh in on the value of the much-hyped storytelling tactic

BY COURTNEY FISHMAN

What's the real story on storytelling in content marketing? We take a spin through LinkedIn, Medium and Twitter to round up opinions and best practices from media and marketing big shots.



"There are no outdated stories, only bad storytellers."

Ricardo Arias-Nath, CMO, PepsiCo



"SEEING THE WORLD THROUGH A STORYTELLER'S LENS IS AN ENRICHING WAY TO LOOK AT LIFE. IT IS ONE WAY TO BRING A SENSE OF MEANING TO AN OTHERWISE CHAOTIC WORLD."

Arnaud Collery, founder, Stand Up for Passion



"Storytelling is the best way to help people retain information. A story impacts our emotions & is 22 times more memorable than facts alone."

Matthew Luhn, animator, formerly of Pixar



"DATA SCIENCE IN MARKETING: MEASURE, OPTIMIZE, EXPERIMENT, SEGMENT, MODEL, STORYTELL AND PERSONALIZE."

Lynn Vojvodich, former CMO, Salesforce



"#Storytelling is not by definition strategic or effective, results-wise. It's just a tactic. Talent + creativity make all the difference."

Kim Caviness, chief content officer, Imagination



"Storytelling is more than just a trend. It is rather the possibility to raise marketing to a whole new level, stand out against competition and connect customers to the brand in the long term with their trust and emotions."

Monika Schulze, global head of marketing, Zurich Insurance



"THE KEY TO GOOD STORYTELLING IS NOT YOUR PERFECTION BUT YOUR HUMANITY."

Garr Reynolds, author, *Presentation Zen*



"In my view, storytelling isn't a fashion accessory that leaders can decide to wear or not. Very literally, leadership is storytelling, and leaders are storytellers."

Andy Raskin, NPR commentator



"Creativity and great storytelling alone are not enough. Though they are certainly prerequisites."

Steve Rubel, chief content strategist, Edelman



"Data cannot replace storytelling."

Paul Begala, political contributor, CNN



"You can't tell your authentic and unique story by Googling a topic. #storytelling."

Christoph Trappe, senior director of content marketing, MedTouch

AMBITION CAN BE A BITCH.

Seven years ago, two friends met for brunch in Washington, D.C. Somewhere in the midst of a bloody mary and a mimosa, inspiration struck. What if they started a blog about two 20-somethings brunching their way through their new city, in Capitol style?

Bitches Who Brunch launched later that week. A sassy riff on the ladies who lunch trope, the blog chronicled their foodie adventures. Almost immediately, co-founders Becca Loveridge (the one with the bloody) and Cori Sue Morris (she of the mimosa) increased the size of their brunch gang and number of content pillars as they sought out the best bottomless locales in town. Restaurants got wind of their big following and clamored for coverage. Advertisers came knocking. (Sponsored content, anyone?) The daily blog continued to cover brunch, yes, but also expanded to travel, recipes, fashion and culture in three cities.

Across its website and social channels, BWB today reaches hundreds of thousands of readers hungry for intel on “where to brunch, what to wear and where to party in New York, Chicago and Washington, D.C.” Next up: possible expansion to TV and books and figuring out which brunch-worthy city to tackle next.

So, Ms. Loveridge, what’s been a defining mistake on BWB’s road to success—and what did you learn from it?

Loveridge—who has since moved to NYC, where she’s a VP at Ketchum when she’s not fork-deep in eggs Benedict—thinks for a bit and points to a day-one decision.

Calling the site Bitches.
“We came up with this amazing brand name and bought the dot.com, built the site, came up with branding, trademarked the brand name and started a company with the name,” she explains. And then a year or so later, the co-founders decided it was time to scale. “So we went to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and tried to invest in paid media to

“It was a huge lesson for me because it forced us to build a content site and



media brand on multiple channels entirely organically.”

—Becca Loveridge, Bitches Who Brunch

promote our content to new audiences,” Loveridge recalls.

#Fail. The three social channels (this is before FB acquired Insta) turned the company’s money away “because they consider us an offensive word. Our name became a mistake in that we have never been able to invest in paid media.”

Not ones to be thwarted, Loveridge and Morris doubled down and hustled an audience the old-fashioned way: by earning it. “Thinking about it through the lens of a content marketer,” Loveridge says, “it was a huge lesson for me because it forced us to build a content site and media brand on multiple channels entirely organically.”

To survive sans paid, the Bitches relied on a tight email list and responded personally as often as possible. “We learned very quickly what type of content is very engaging and how frequently we should publish,” she says.

“A lot of influencers out there and media companies pay for their audience entirely, but our audience is 100 percent organic, which means they are very highly engaged with our content. They are very loyal. We have readers who have been reading our site for six to seven years now.”

Being locked out of paid helped the duo future-proof their brand. When Facebook, Twitter and, most recently, Instagram switched their algorithms to migrate brands to paid, the Bitches didn’t even flinch.

Outwitting algorithms also helped drive the company to early-adopt new social channels, attracting a fresh set of (presumably younger) followers along the way. “It forced us to experiment early with channels like Snapchat, where we now have a huge following.”

So, if she had to do it all over again, would Loveridge stick with Bitches?

“I would, yeah. It has certainly taught me about the value of really good quality content,” Loveridge explains. “There was a big pendulum swing toward relying on paid media for a lot of media brands and influencers in the last five years. While we weren’t able to participate in that, the pendulum is now swinging more toward micro-influencers, where they may not have a humongous reach, but their engagement with their audience is way higher because the quality of their content is better.”

Yes, the name “was kind of an oops,” she admits. But “it helped us grow in the right way in the end.”

What’s in a Name?

How the fail that almost sunk Bitches Who Brunch became the website’s calling card

BY KIM CAVINESS





Reality Check

Virtual reality and augmented reality are expanding beyond their native videogame turf. Yes, product development hiccups like Samsung's exploding Galaxy Note 7 debacle delayed mainstream adoption in 2016. The smartphone had been heralded as the best way to power the company's Oculus Gear VR headset, until, well, you know. Samsung was then stuck trying to get people comfy enough with its products to try out the VR gear. But IT research giant IDC is throwing down, proclaiming VR and AR marketing are about to come into their own—on their own timelines.

"The industry has addressed most of these early hardware challenges, and VR is set to see strong growth in 2017. Augmented reality hardware, on the other hand, will take longer to mature, but we fundamentally believe that AR represents a much bigger opportunity in the long term," wrote Tom Mainelli, IDC's VP for devices and AR/VR, in a December 2016 report.

IDC predicts 30 percent of consumer-facing companies on the Forbes Global 2000 will experiment with AR/VR as part of their marketing efforts in 2017.

And the research firm expects the tech to reach mass adoption levels by 2021, when more than a billion people worldwide will regularly access apps, content and data through an AR/VR platform.

Retailers were among the first to pounce on the game-changing tech. Most of their VR efforts have focused on improving shopping experiences, but outdoor sports retailer Moosejaw used it to tell a story—and hawk some products along the way. Its branded cardboard viewer, VR app and on-demand 360-degree videos offer a first-person view of extreme outdoor stunts, presumably inspiring wannabe adventurers to invest in the gear they need to get going.

Even associations are getting in on the game. The Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Association, for instance, uses VR to share some of the city's wow experiences with out-of-towners tempted to typecast the city as a desert den of sin. There are now 30 videos on the association's Vegas VR app, including a helicopter ride, a NASCAR driving experience, and hotel and restaurant tours.

Ah, Good Old Email

88%

Percentage of B2B, consumer and association magazine publishing folks who rank email as one of their top-three most important marketing channels. Their top pain point? List growth.

Source: Folio: and WhatCounts, November 2016

Paging Google

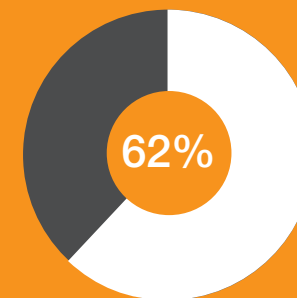
1,890

Average word count of a Google first-page result

Source: Backlinko, September 2016

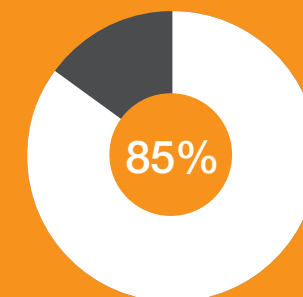
Happy and Content

B2B marketers in North America are feeling pretty darn good about their content marketing:

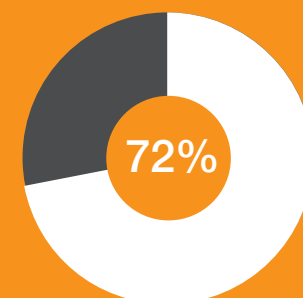


Portion reporting their programs have become more successful

The magical ingredients?



Portion saying more efficient content creation and higher-quality content



Portion citing strategy development or adjustment

Source: Content Marketing Institute, September 2016

Unsplash/Samuel Zeller, Thinkstock/tuuliumala



Thumb-Stopping Video Test

The world is addicted to video—and there's no going back. By 2020, IT behemoth Cisco predicts 82 percent of all internet traffic will be video.

But not all videos are created equal. To stop the scroll, online videos must give the people what they want. And what exactly is that, you ask? Twitter and Omnicom Media Group teamed up to figure it out with a test of some of the agency's brands across seven verticals. This wasn't just a focus group of hipsters watching videos and filling out surveys in a research company's office. This study tapped into neuroscience to measure brain activity as select Twitter users browsed their timelines. And here are a few of the takeaways:

- 1 Make sound optional.** Videos with text or subtitles are 28 percent more likely to be watched until the end.
- 2 Cut to the chase.** An early story arc makes a video 58 percent more likely to be viewed past three seconds.
- 3 Keep it current.** Topical content leads to 11 percent higher completion rates.
- 4 Introduce a hero.** Featuring people in the first three seconds of a video elevates the emotional intensity viewers feel by 133 percent.



Follow the Money

Baby boomers are loaded. No, really. They're reportedly the wealthiest generation in U.S. history. With the oldest boomers now in their 70s, that wealth is beginning to trickle down. And that trickle will soon be a raging waterfall. Despite their penchant for the finer things in life, ultra-high net worth individuals are set to fork over a show-stopping \$3.9 trillion worldwide over the next decade, according to a 2016 report by Wealth-X and NFP.

But the massive transfer of funds poses a risk for financial services companies if they don't pivot toward the future and build relationships now with the next (decidedly less wealthy) generation. Without a strong reason to stick around, these millennial and Gen X heirs may opt for fintech-friendly companies steeped in more innovative approaches.

"This is a fascinating time from a competitive perspective. There's going to be winners and losers, and market shares will shift," Gauthier Vincent, head of Deloitte's U.S. Wealth Management practice, told CNBC.

Looking to shore up its next-gen customer base, Chase is turning to journalism-driven content. The company's 10-person newsroom creates

a constant stream of articles and videos focused on money management strategies and success stories. The need-based content—positioned prominently on the home page—offers tips to help readers up their financial acumen. The pieces then link to Chase product pages that push (or shall we say, strongly encourage) prospects to take the next step.

The financial services behemoth is also partnering with younger-skewing media outlets, like theSkimm. Posting branded content on its site and featuring Chase-bylined stories in its newsletter could help the megabank connect with the startup's female millennial readership.

"We were an early partner of theirs and were attracted to working with them because of the demographic of their audience [and] the trust that they had built," Brian Becker, executive director and head of the newsroom at JPMorgan Chase, told Digiday.

Under the Influence

Brands and influencers got some new guardrails from the Committee of Advertising Practice in March. The new guidelines covering ads and other sponsored content on social media can't come soon enough for some.

"Brands have gotten away with surreptitiously advertising through influencers for too long and accountability is definitely needed," Felix Morgan, senior strategist and innovation lead at Liv-ity, whose influencer clients include Google and PlayStation, told The Drum.



Go Bold or Go Home

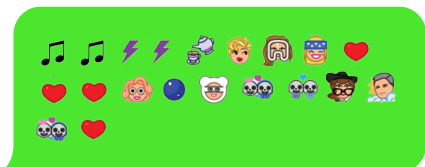
"Bold content is successful because it's explicit about why it matters. Taking a stance, making a powerful point, starting a necessary but potentially polarizing conversation—these are a few reasons it's important content be bold. It's about taking writing beyond the everyday news cycle and potentially making a difference."

—Cavan Sieczkowski, deputy director of news and analytics at the Huffington Post, to Mashable

Thinkstock/Jeffrey Hamilton, Valentin Volkov, Brian A. Jackson

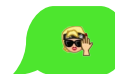
#RIP?

Social media is a lot like the nightclub scene. The cool kids pick the next hot spot—then everyone else lines up to get



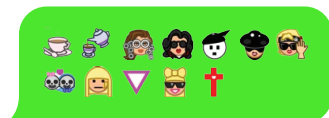
in. To keep up with the in crowd, brands need to watch where their target audience is going—and accept when a space (even one they've invested in) has died.

With its stock price plummeting and execs exiting en masse, many wonder if the end is nigh for Twitter. While



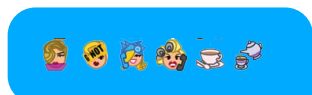
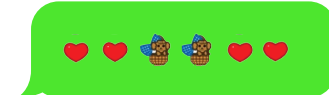
Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat duke it out in the visual content landscape, the 11-year-old Twitter is trying to revive its ad revenues by focusing on what it does best: connecting with users in real time.

T-Mobile CEO John Legere is a veritable case study in how this can work really, really well. When he's



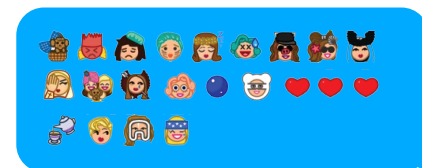
not trolling Verizon and AT&T, his always-on Twitter account personally responds to unhappy customers and rewards compliments with goofy GIFs.

Other big brands, including Pepsi, the NBA and Starbucks, are taking advantage of the social network's new ad offerings, such as custom emojis, live original programming and promoted moments, to bolster their marketing campaigns. Twitter also worked with Lady Gaga to create five custom emojis



and eight stickers that people could share running up to her 2017 Super Bowl #PepsiHalftime show.

The company's recent foray into sports livestreaming, paired with the March rollout of its live video API, has some analysts predicting that broadcasting revenues could breathe new life into Twitter. But not



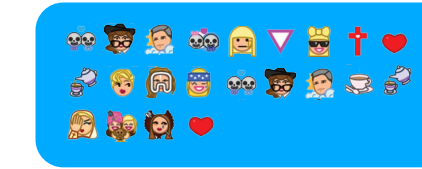
all changes are getting such a warm reception. When rumors hit about Twitter shifting to an "algorithmic" timeline last year, it was met with a flurry of #RIPTwitter tweets from diehard users who feared the Facebookification of their channel of choice.

The furor died down, but questions linger. And even the so-called Trump



Bump may not be enough for the beleaguered company, which has posted 10 straight quarters of declining revenue growth.

"It's been a whirlwind of uncertainty," wrote *Wired* tech blogger Davey Alba in February. "Twitter's intrinsic value to users is still as a fast-moving, news-based feed, a function



that's seemingly at odds with pushing pre-roll ads."



Watch Out, Siri

Much like Google Android and Apple iOS have done with mobile, Amazon is positioning its AI assistant Alexa as the go-to OS for the Internet of Things.

And it's working. Tech startups are using Alexa to offer voice-operable apps that run the 8.4 billion things research giant Gartner expects to be part of the IoT in 2017. That means brands will have access to more data than ever before, giving marketers the ability to track and record consumer behavior in real time. Companies can then create more targeted and compelling content—if they can figure out how to access, mine and leverage that data in an intelligent way.

"You've got to be elegant here," Adam Marchick, CEO of VoiceLabs, one of three analytics tools recommended for Alexa developers, told *Ad Age*.

"This ain't no IAB banner opportunity."

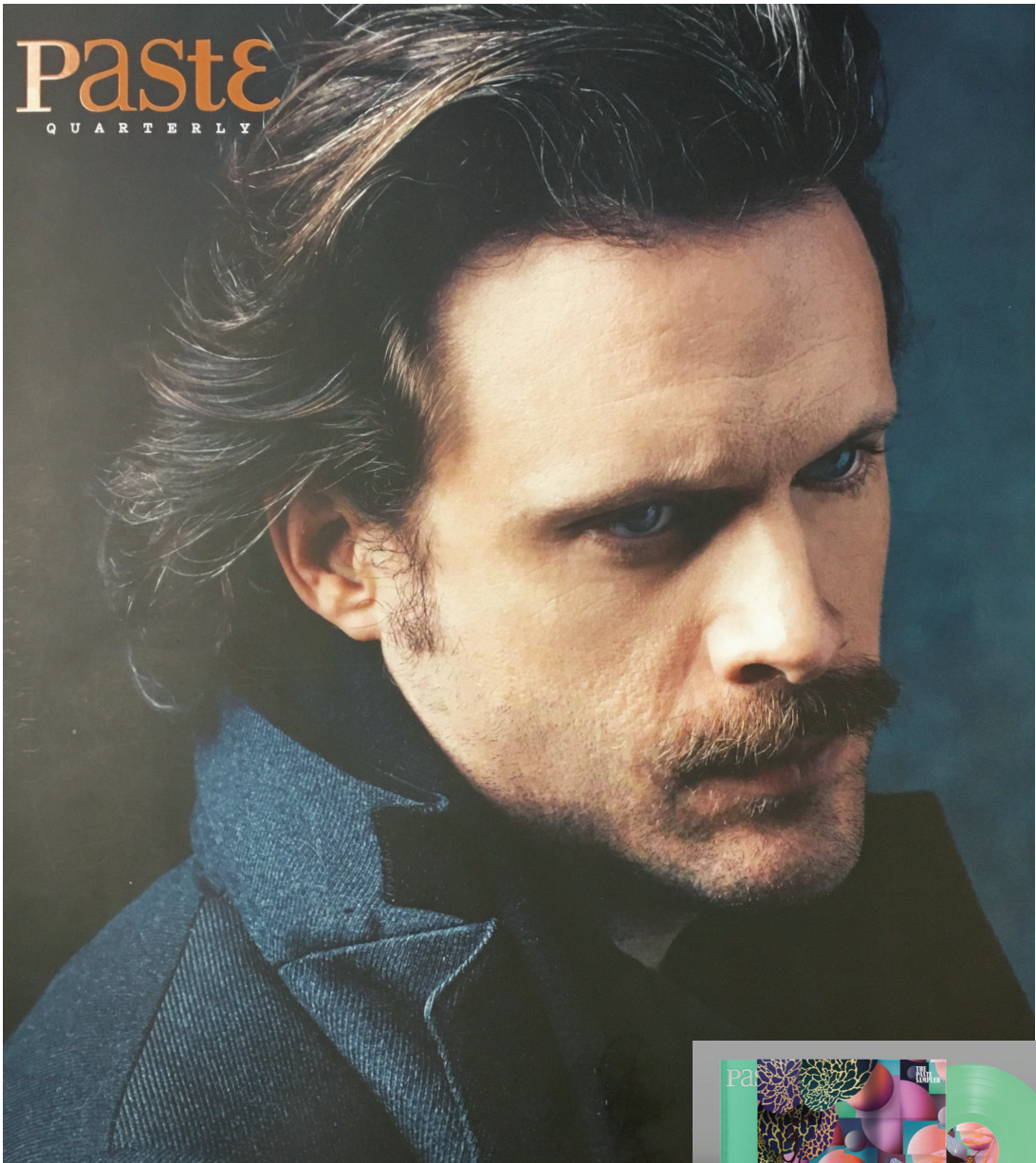
Renewal Notice

Print is back—yeah, yeah, yeah. But that doesn’t mean you can just rely on the same old formulas. Take it from two recent reincarnations in the print world.

After a seven-year hiatus, *Paste* relaunched a quarterly print edition in March, upgrading to a mega 12”-by-12” format and a lush, heavy paper stock. Publishers of the culture and lifestyle mag promise each issue will not only offer “insightful long-form content,” but also a vinyl album with exclusive tracks recorded at the Paste Studio in New York.

“We’ve embraced the realities of our new digital world and are thankful for all the new ways it allows us to present stories to our readers. But we still love the tangible,” wrote co-founder and Editor-in-Chief Josh Jackson about the relaunch. “We love the smell and feel of a magazine fresh off the printer, the sound of a needle traveling the grooves of a vinyl album. We love the luxury of sitting down with something special to read, completely unplugged from the devices that so often have us at their beck and call. We love a clever illustrated spread, stunning photos bleeding off the edge and long-form stories that pull you in page after page.”

Mr. Jackson, **orange** is



right there with you.

Music magazine *Spin* also made a brief trip back into the print universe for the first time since 2012. Launched in October, the free, one-off edition was sponsored by Amazon Studios to promote its show *Good Girls Revolt*. About 10,000 copies of the 28-page issue were distributed at retail outlets, hotels and live concert venues, according to *Variety*.

The experiment was

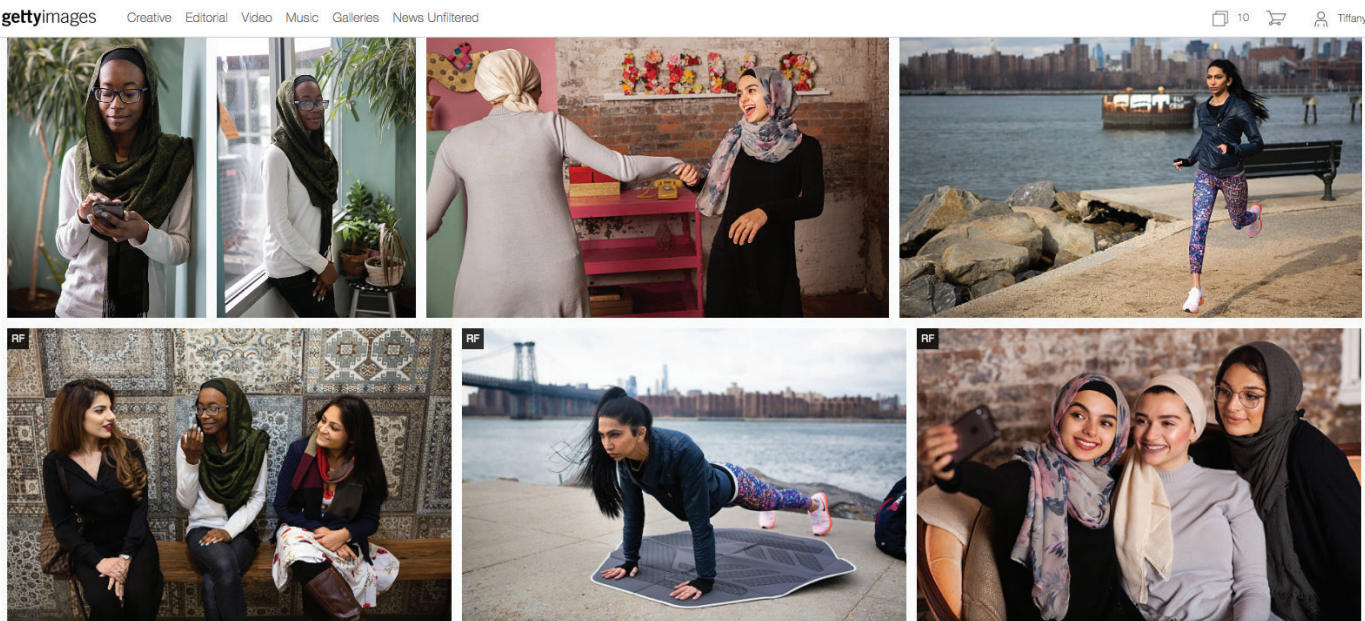
successful enough that *Spin* now plans to offer special print editions as an advertising option to other partners.

Stephen Blackwell, chief strategy officer of The Hollywood Reporter-Billboard Media Group, told CNBC he sees nostalgia as a driving factor behind the print resurgence. But it’s not just baby boomers. Print’s handcrafted, authentic vibe pulls even the young’uns.

People under 35 reported reading an average 8.5 print magazine issues in the previous month, the same as the 50+ crowd, according to a fall 2015 study by GfK MRI.

“There is a totally different experience bouncing around a print component,” he told CNBC. “It forces you to focus in on what you are doing.”

On the downside of the so-called print-naissance: Magazine newsstand sales in the United States and Canada dropped more than 12 percent in 2016. And popular print magazines, including *Popular Photography*, *Mental Floss* and Condé Nast’s *Self*, joined the ranks of digital-only pubs in the last year.



Now in Stock

We’ve all been there: You’ve got this fantastic feature or post—and then it gets saddled with the same old stock imagery. Looking to offer commercial content producers more diverse options in portraying Muslim women, Getty Images teamed up with MuslimGirl.com. The new stock images include females with and without a hijab, shown doing everyday activities, at home, with friends and in the workplace. “Keyword searches for Muslim have gone up 107 percent on GettyImages.com over the past year,” said Pam Grossman, director of visual trends at Getty, on the company’s site. “So it’s even more important to ensure images like these are surfaced at the top of our results.”

#PictureThis
74% of consumers in the United States and Europe say they’ve uploaded a photo hashtagging a brand.

Source: Olapic, Q4 2016

Contributing editors: Tegan Jones, Cyndee Miller



Pass the Podcasts, Please

Upscale meal-delivery service Blue Apron is ordering up more podcasts—and letting go of the reins. “It’s allowing [hosts] freedom and flexibility and not being precious about your brand as opposed to jamming a message down their throats,” Greg Fitzgerald, director of acquisition marketing at Blue Apron, said on The Drum.



SheTube
The time women spent watching YouTube content related to small business, business news and business services more than tripled in 2016 versus 2015. Female watch time for entrepreneurial videos more than doubled YoY.

Source: YouTube, March 2017

been there, done that

Podcast Pioneer

Six Pixels of Separation’s Mitch Joel offers up lessons learned after 550-plus episodes of picking people’s brains

BY CHRIS BLOSE

In his 11 years hosting the podcast *Six Pixels of Separation*, Mitch Joel has amassed quite the collection of free-flowing conversations. He’s had Nicholas Carr riffing on fake news, Catharine Hays talking advertising and Morgan Spurlock diving into branded content.

With that kind of material, it’s not too hard to see why the podcast on innovations in digital marketing has lifted the profile of both Joel and his global agency, Mirum. But it all started with simple curiosity. “It was the most selfish thing I could do,” he says. “Who can I coerce to spend an hour with me that I really want to pick their brain?”

Now, the Montreal-based Joel offers would-be podcasters some advice on getting started.

Forget about lead gen.

If you’re trying to tie podcasts to sales or leads, it’s time to rethink your ROI.

“Podcasting, it’s not for direct response or lead gen,” Joel says. “It’s more about social proof and showing competence

in the market.”

For Joel and Mirum, *Six Pixels of Separation* projects an identity to help them both stand out in the morass of marketing agencies. “People latched onto the character, the persona, the speaking, the books,” Joel says. “If you’re trying to define what Mirum is, it’s easy to point to *Six Pixels of Separation* and say, ‘This is who we are.’ It’s what makes us different.”

Find your format.

Podcasts can take many forms: scripted narratives, interviews blended with planned segments or simply conversations.

Joel landed on the latter for *Six Pixels of Separation*. “I wanted to capture the feeling of taking someone out to coffee and talking about a book I read or something I thought.”

New podcasters should avoid falling back on the same old, same old or going the copycat route. “I’m not the type of person to look at the marketplace and say, ‘I could do that, too,’” Joel says.

“I think that’s a common mistake. Instead, look at a

marketplace and say, ‘No one’s doing this like I would do it.’”

Learn how to listen.

Joel spent years as a music reporter, lined up with countless journalists, waiting to get a crack at, say, Tommy Lee of Mötley Crüe. That’s when he learned he had to get creative to get beyond canned answers.

“I had to figure out something different to bring to this conversation,” Joel says, “to get this guy energized, to get something out of him he hasn’t shared before. That’s a learned, tough communication skill.”

So is the value of silence in an interview. “As soon as the person has given their spiel, if you sit there and wait, they’re going to say something, ‘You know what else,’ or ‘I was just thinking’ or ‘I would like to add,’ and I promise that everything after that sentence is going to be gold.”

Play to your strengths.

Joel advises podcasters to search for the three things they know best, and focus on them. For Joel, that’s brands, consumer technology and marketing. This mix is how *Six Pixels of Separation* has stayed relevant as other marketing podcasts have come and gone.

Still, Joel sees room for improvement. The podcast is so well established he doesn’t do much promotion and distribution, something new podcasters must do. He doesn’t have an email database. His success has allowed him to remain a one-man show, from booking and interviewing to production.

“I’m sure in the future I’ll work on those things,” Joel says. “But after 11 years, I just kind of tinker.”

Unsplash/Alice Moore



3 podcasts content marketers need to hear

See p. 2 for app info



“Podcasting, it’s not for direct response or lead gen. It’s more about social proof and showing competence in the market.”

—Mitch Joel, agency exec and podcast producer

Snap Decision

In the mad rush to reach millennials and Gen Z, should associations use Snapchat?

BY JAIME ANDRIOPOULOS



We've all seen them—vertical vids of our friends, family and co-workers filtered into adorable dogs wagging their tongues or morphed into creatures from another planet.

It's official: Snapchat has gone from teenybopper app to mainstream personal publisher.

And now you're wondering if Snapchat might be your association's new secret weapon to get content to your next generation of members (or prospects). You're not alone.

Some backstory: When it launched in fall 2011, it was easy for brands to dismiss the

ghost-icon social channel most associated with racy sexting. After all, what could content that disappears in 10 seconds do for a thought leader? But the rising traffic did the talking, and minds started changing. Within five years, Snapchat's mobile video numbers skyrocketed to 10 billion videos views per day.

According to Nielsen, Snapchat now reaches 41 percent of all 18- to 34-year-olds in the United States—the very audience demo topping the wish lists of almost every association marketing director out there.

Snapchat's impressive stats made a lot of association execs sit up and pay attention. Gen Z and millennials have long challenged the traditional association membership model, and most organizations have trouble connecting with these audiences. With visions of hip, young members joining in droves, they pondered whether snapping to it could be the magical solution.

Some, like early adopter Association of Surfing Professionals, were a no-brainer. The group was an association pioneer when it tapped Snapchat several years ago to showcase dramatic shots

of waves and surfers—connecting fans and members to boarding events with tons of colorful, interactive snaps and stories.

But is Snapchat still a good fit today for groups a little more serious than the surfer crowd? Heads turned last fall when top-tier and oh-so-serious *The Economist* and *The Wall Street Journal* started publishing stories in Snapchat's Discover section. If those two mighty gods of thought leadership are on Snapchat, many associations wondered, should we be too?

Not really, it turns out. Discover is an exclusive club:

Snapchat negotiated deals with a group of just 20 or so publishers, and those limited partnerships come with a sky-high price tag. (Rumor has it they go for as much as \$5 million per year and demand intense ad-revenue minimums.)

This leaves most associations with two choices. One: Open an organic Snapchat account, which makes discovery difficult and demands long-term commitment to see gains. Or, two (the option most associations have chosen): Don't play on the platform at all.



Associations are also discovering they've got some alternatives for reaching the younger folk. Last August, Instagram launched its Stories feature, a near-clone product allowing users to share videos with lively emojis and text. Per the company's stats, Instagram is up to more than 600 million users as of December—running rings around Snapchat's active user count, tallied in Q4 at 158 million.

Instagram's Stories don't offer the full range of filters/geofilters and fun factor of Snapchat, but there are some big advantages to the platform:

- You can tag and hashtag, allowing you to connect your Stories with other organizations, brands and individuals. Associations are in the business of connecting like-minded people, so it's a natural fit to be a part of a larger conversation organized around membership topics.
- Insta's core design and UX make it far easier for members to discover people, brands and content in general—especially compared to Snapchat.
- If you're an association

that already has a captive audience on Instagram, why reinvent the wheel on Snapchat when you can reach members through a platform they're already familiar with?

The verdict: Sure, there are super-cool things your association can do with Snapchat's filters and personalization. But the simplicity, audience size and convenience of using Instagram and its Stories feature is way more attractive—and within closer reach—for most associations.



Good or Just Meh?

In search of insights and smarts worth your while, we dig deep into recent industry publishing and rate it. Because life’s too short to waste time and money on bad content marketing resources.



The Content Trap: A Strategist’s Guide to Digital Change

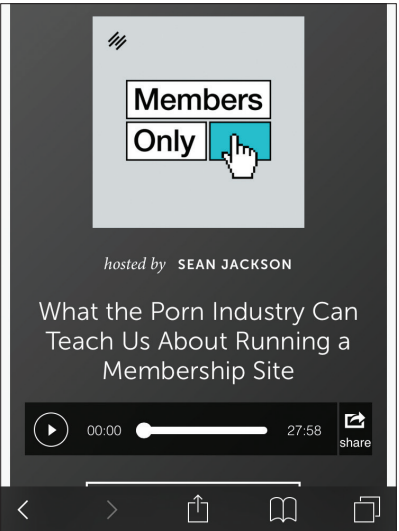
by Bharat Anand
Random House, 2016

I read this whole book. Well, most of it. And I’m still not sure what “the content trap” is. The author gives three indications that you’re falling into it without ever saying what “it” is. It’s “a mindset,” is as close as Anand comes to a definition. Two-thirds of the book is about content distribution. Why is print dying? The content trap. Why are cable bundles a good thing? The content trap.

Essentially what the author says—I think—is that content doesn’t matter. Connections do. We fall into the trap—I think—of seeing the trees rather than the forest. (There’s a long intro about the 1988 forest fires in Yellowstone Park.) We see individual readers and tailor content and distribution reader by reader. We have fallen in love with digital’s ability to hyper-target and persist in talking to or even at the reader instead of enabling readers to connect with each other through content. I think.

Traditional hub-and-spokes marketing doesn’t work in a networked world. I get that part. And I get that we should “create to connect,” as Anand writes. But I dispute his point that content quality is not the key to success. Bad content gets shared but for the wrong reasons. You’ve created and you’ve connected, but you’re also a joke. Which won’t do a thing for your whip-smart B2B audience—except turn them off you.

The book’s examples are better—excellent, in fact—than its rather opaque thinking. Schibsted, the Scandinavian media publisher, is one of the brightest spots in a challenged news industry and how it succeeds is pretty wonderful. However, “Success ... comes not from mimicking competitors’ best practices but from seeing choices as part of a connected whole.” Hmmm.



“What the Porn Industry Can Teach Us About Running a Membership Site”

Members Only podcast
Hosted by Sean Jackson
Rainmaker.FM

Membership associations tend to live in a little industry bubble. They’re so used to their exclusive and therefore exclusionary business model and so convinced that they are unique that they’re blind to ideas from outside the association world. To take an extreme example, this episode from the *Members Only* station (targeting the hot subscription economy) on Rainmaker.fm analyzes successful ideas from the porn industry that are easily transferrable to less, shall we say, compelling content.

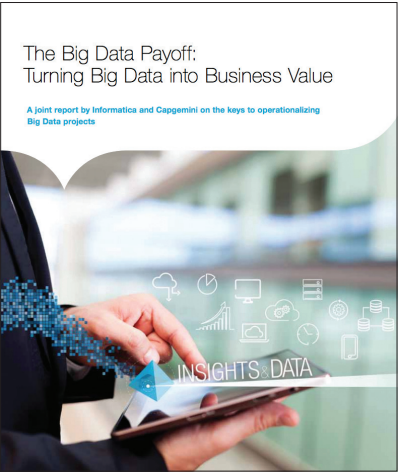
Porn turns the challenges of extreme competition and significant distribution limitations into opportunities. A few ideas:

PAY TO PLAY. Create highly niched products and services for extremely specific member needs, and charge more for them because “where else are they going to go?”

OFFER INTIMACY. Within those niches, create highly personalized products and services: a one-to-one PDF attachment to the standard enewsletter, for instance.

GET PERSONAL. The more interactive, the more expensive. A webinar costs one thing; personal access to the instructor costs a lot more.

TURN THEM INTO REGULARS. Revenue is revenue but be sure that membership prices make à la carte purchases less attractive.



The Big Data Payoff: Turning Big Data Into Business Value

Cappgemini and Informatica white paper

Content marketing ranks as the top trend for digital marketing in 2017, among the top three for the third year in a row. But No. 2 is big data. Organizations have moved past the “we’ve got it, now what do we do with it” stage. Many have made the decision between cloud-based storage vs. a data lake. And, according to this white paper, 27 percent (of 210 executives surveyed, half in the United States, half abroad) say their big data initiative is profitable.

Buried in the second to last page of the report is the finding that the communications industry is further along than retail or packaged goods in operationalizing big data and realizing business value. Packaged goods suffer from budget constraints, and utilities, chemicals and energy from poor data quality. Retail is so focused on direct ROI—increased revenue and improved productivity—that it’s missing the improved decision-making and market agility that communications companies say they are realizing.

Extrapolating beyond the report’s executive summary, communications companies are using big data for long-term results, making it an integral part of how they do what they do. Retail on the other hand wants the instant gratification of short-term profit.

According to a late 2016 report by tech research giant IDC, the banking industry will be one of the largest investors in big data through 2020. Wonder where financial services will land on the short-term vs. long-term payback spectrum? In other words, is big data still IT’s newest and biggest toy or a viable strategic tool that non-tech executives can actually use? Financial services executives have a penchant for data-driven decision-making that—once they solve the privacy challenges—should mean the start of a long, profitable love affair with big data. And that will reveal target audience insights, opening the door to savvy content programs.

As with everything reviewed here, this white paper’s true value is not in what it says but in what it makes you think about. It’s not what you learn, but what you do next that matters. All of which further proves that content marketers are smarter than much of the so-called advice they’re being fed.

RETAIL UNDER PRESSURE

With the barrage of news about once-glorious retailers shutting down stores, it may seem like the death knell for retail. Spare the eulogies. Smart retail brands aren't just in the mall. They've created sites that keep 'em coming—and buying. They've got tricked-out apps to hit consumers on their phones. And they're all over social feeds. Omnichannel's the name of the game, but there's still work to be done. **Only 12 percent of retail CEOs say they provide a seamless shopping experience across channels.**

Illustration by Nick O'Mara — Text by Lindsay Roseman

IN-STORE

Foot traffic at brick-and-mortar stores plummeted from 34.3 billion visits in 2010 to 14.2 billion in 2016. And sure, big-name brands like Macy's and J.C. Penney are closing stores left and right, but then you've got Amazon and Wal-Mart investing in real-life spaces.

WHY?

79% of retailers identify the store as their top channel for generating sales.

BUT SHOPPERS ARE LOOKING FOR AN EXPERIENCE—

59% want an inviting ambiance.

And they like picking up their stuff their, too.

DO YOU BOPIS?

MORE THAN HALF of retail CEOs say they offer or plan to offer a “buy online, pick up in-store” service in the next 12 months.

CONTENT IN ACTION

GO Sport uses in-store sensors that trigger **video content** about a particular product.

ONLINE

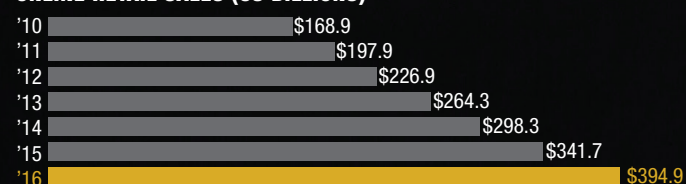
Online retail sales have been rising dramatically since 2010—and there's no stopping the digital machine.

INCREASE IN ONLINE RETAIL SALES

133.8%

from 2010 to 2016

ONLINE RETAIL SALES (US BILLIONS)



2020 WEB SALES ESTIMATE

\$632 BILLION

CONTENT IN ACTION

Tory Burch's **content hub** serves up the tony designer's take on everything from her runway playlists to satchel savvy—with a push to purchase one online or in-store, of course.

MOBILE

INVASION OF THE SMARTPHONES:

3% of consumers shop using their mobile every day—the same percentage shopping by PC. Top UX constraints? Screen size and ease of use.

RETAILERS ARE JUMPING INTO ACTION:

54% say mobile is one of their top initiatives in 2017.

AND 75% PLAN TO USE WI-FI TO

IDENTIFY CUSTOMERS

with mobile devices in the store by the end of 2019.

CONTENT IN ACTION

Home Depot's **app** uses augmented reality, real-time inventory and visual search to let shoppers locate products in store and check out how virtual products would look at home.

SOCIAL

ALL THOSE FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM POSTS MATTER:

47% of shoppers pick social networks as their main online media source for inspiring purchases.

Social interactions with favorite brands led 46% of shoppers to endorse a brand more than they usually would. And 44% said they

SPEND MORE.

THE RETAILER RESPONSE?

31% say they're investing in social media to drive awareness.

CONTENT IN ACTION

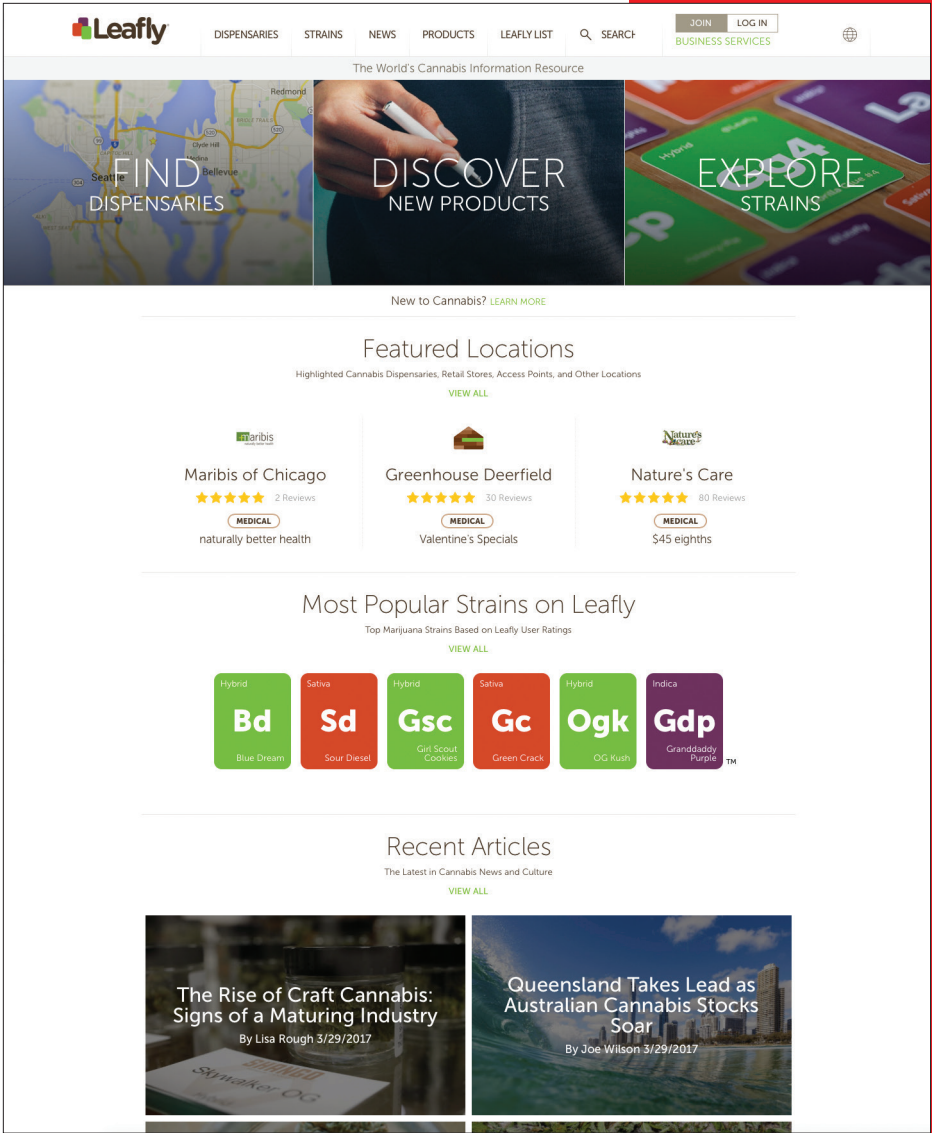
Luxe fashion brand Ted Baker created a sitcom, *Keeping up with the Bakers*, to play in episodes on **Instagram Stories**, complemented with a 360-degree **shoppable film** hosted on the site.

Sources: CEO Viewpoint 2017; The Transformation of Retail, PwC, 2017; U.S. Department of Commerce, Business Intelligence, 2016; Global Retailing in the Digital Age, SapientNitro, 2016; Total Retail 2017: 10 retailer investments for an uncertain future, PwC, 2017; The State of Retailing Online 2017: Key Metrics, Business Objectives and Mobile; National Retail Federation's Shop.org division and Forrester, 2017; POS/Customer Engagement Survey, Boston Retail Partners, 2017



Marijuana gets high marks, and the dictionary has defining moments, while soft drink content goes flat, and fake marketing fails

BY LIBBY ELLIS



Weed Wins

How do you pique consumer interest for something that’s illegal to sell or advertise in much of the country—while building brand equity as regulations loosen up? Leafly, a Seattle “cannabis information resource” is on the right track. With reviews of marijuana strains and dispensaries, and location-based product search, the site has surpassed 10 million unique visitors per month, according to a November 2016 report by Privateer Holdings, which includes Leafly in its portfolio. Looking to further solidify its cred, the site even launched the Leafly List, a quarterly publication to single out exceptional dispensaries. To scoot around advertising regulations while boosting traffic, it registered its news feed with Google News. We’ll keep an eye on this budding content strategy.

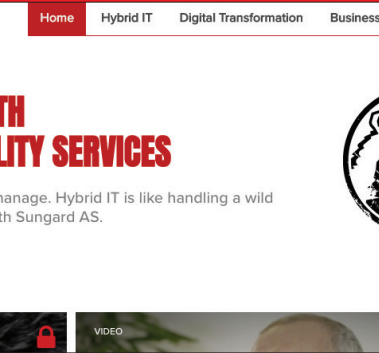


Use Your Words

The dictionary is so hot right now—huge, in fact. Merriam-Webster has been trolling Donald Trump and friends for months, offering helpful information on Twitter, the president’s preferred pulpit. The M-W defined “fact” after the famous alternative facts debate. And then it issued this tweet after Trump’s now-infamous first official visit to CIA headquarters in January: “If you’re part of a group that’s paid to applaud, you’re a ‘claqueur.’” That one got more than 7,500 likes and nearly 5,000 retweets. Merriam-Webster is proving that it has all of the words. The best words. Media outlets and the public are taking note, putting the 186-year-old Merriam-Webster in the big league. Not bigly, although, thanks to one of its tweets, we now know that actually is a word.

Selfie on Steroids

Everyone loves being at the center of the story—it’s the whole me, me, me theory of content. So *The Atlantic* launched the Life Timeline tool to connect readers with content from its 160-year history—giving old stories new life while creating an utterly user-centric experience. Entering her birthdate, this **orange** staffer saw she was one of the last people to go to grade school without a computer and cringed slightly when she saw how old she was when the Berlin Wall came down. Each fact connects to related content from *The Atlantic*—driving views and presumably ad sales. The CTA offers a summary and all the social buttons needed to say: History happened all around me, courtesy of *The Atlantic*. The magazine’s print counterpart is making some history itself, with newsstand sales up almost 15 percent in 2016, according to Media Wire Daily.



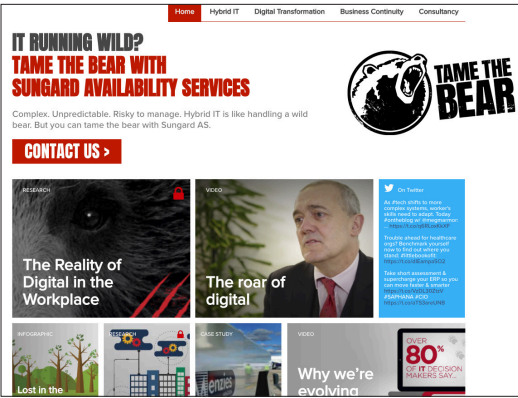
Losing Its Fizz

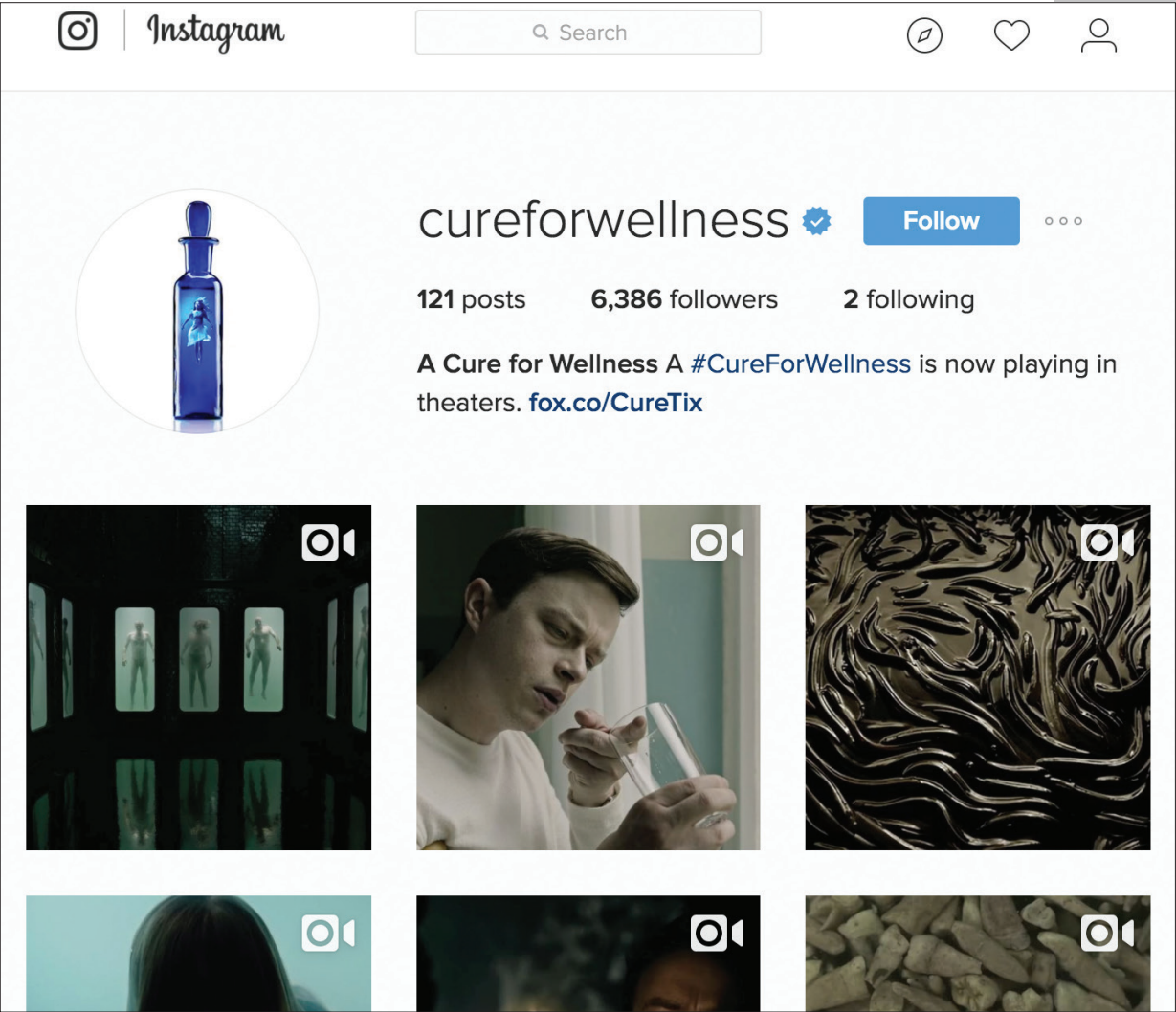
Coca-Cola’s CMO has been blinded by the light. Former Coke veteran Marcos de Quinto told an audience at a beverage industry conference late last year that although TV wins the creativity race and out-ROIs digital content, the brand would not cut its digital marketing spend. Since then, its content hub can hardly be called one anymore. Instead of valuable content to consume and share, it’s all PR all the time. For an industry-leading darling, this is an unexpected miss. Unless there are a lot of people out there eager to read about the 16 Coke innovations that killed in 2016 (as determined by the soft-drink company), this content hub will fizzle just like New Coke.



From Zombies to Bears

SunGard, a B2B IT consultancy, picked up some fans a few years ago with its infographic comparing surviving a zombie apocalypse with moving an enterprise to the cloud. It was a blatant rip-off of the concept from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Today, SunGard is trying the anti-wonky IT marketing technique again on the subject of hybrid IT. Its lean content hub, Tame the Bear, has a small selection of videos, an infographic, a case study and some research (although you only get that last one if you fork over your email). There are also odd social posts, including one with a bear in a trap. Without elevating the theme beyond, “IT is a real bear, huh?” this one falls flat.



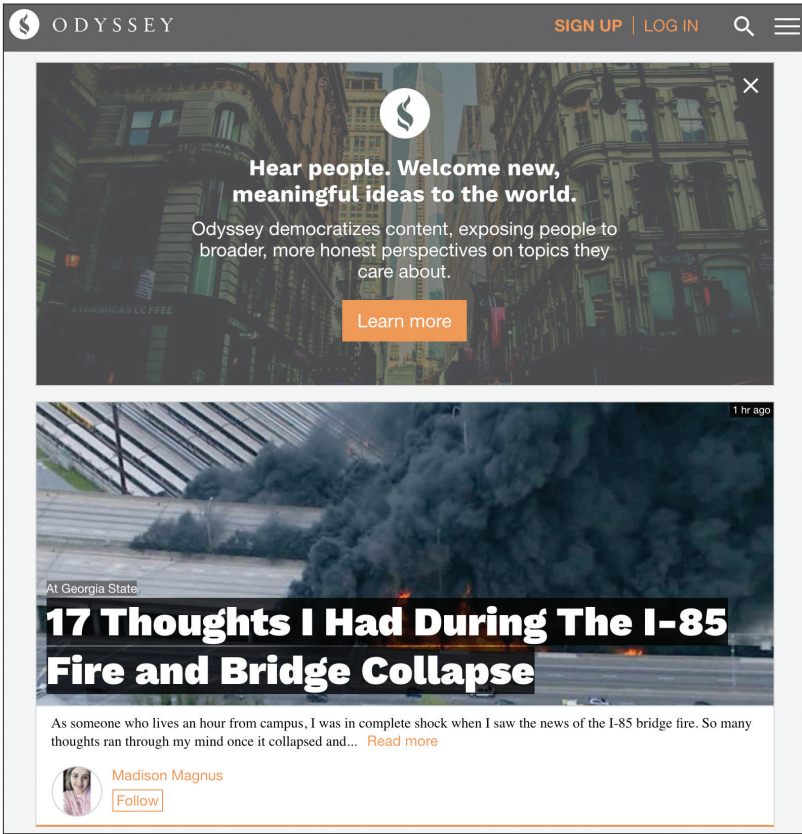


F Is for Fake—and Fail

In a world where social feeds are on fire with accusations of fake news, it probably wasn't a great time for 20th Century Fox to set up a group of alternative-fact sites to promote its new suspense film, *A Cure for Wellness*. The digital properties were masked as local news outlets—*The Sacramento Dispatch*, for example—that published faux features. One story cited sanctuary cities as President Trump's reason for refusing federal support for California when 188,000 citizens were evacuated as the state's massive Oroville Dam threatened to burst. Not so funny. After that one went viral on social media, 20th Century Fox issued a long apology, calling the sites "inappropriate on every level." And the content blitz certainly didn't help pull in viewers—the movie tanked at the box office.

Odyssey to Nowhere

Odyssey presents itself as a community content platform, aiming, we imagine, to be something like Medium. The site entices brands with a promise seemingly too good to be true (and it is): 100 pieces of content for the price of three from a pro agency, as the former SVP of sales and marketing described it to Backchannel. Red Bull, Starbucks and Victoria's Secret all took the (click)bait and trusted underpaid (or unpaid), presumably disgruntled (given the quality of their work) college students with their brand stories. Some student editors' efforts to minimize fluff led to a barrage of emails from an Odyssey content strategist demanding quantity. No mention of quality. Searching for Victoria's Secret on the site, one of the posts that pops up criticizes the retailer for discontinuing its swimwear line, and another starts, "I have never left Victoria's Secret feeling confident or sexy." Probably not what Vicky was after. The takeaway: You get what you pay for.



Doggy Style

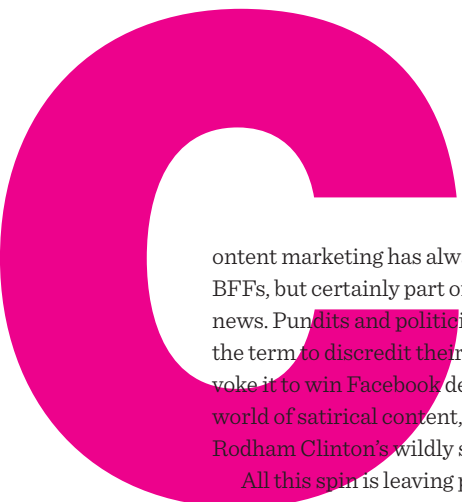
Snoop Dogg fans may recall the rapper's shout-out to Tanqueray on the classic track "Gin And Juice." The spirits company is shouting back, enlisting his help as a brand ambassador. Along with the usual appearances, Snoop will be releasing exclusive content inspired by his song and will lead 10 curators he's selected as influencers to drive content creation for the beverage brand.

Snoop and his influencers were introduced on the brand's Facebook page in February with this post: "Meet the #TanquerayTEN, a group that raises the bar on creativity and excellence at everything from hip-hop to fashion. Our boy @Snoopdogg chose them, so trust." Time will tell what the rapper and his army of creatives come up with, but it could be the shiznit.

Get Real

BY TEGAN JONES

Fake news has real repercussions for content marketing—and they go way beyond how annoying your Facebook feed has become



Content marketing has always had a squishy relationship with journalism, not quite BFFs, but certainly part of the inner circle. And then came the onslaught of fake news. Pundits and politicians—including the leader of the free world—readily sling the term to discredit their opponents’ arguments. Friends and family members invoke it to win Facebook debates. The situation gets even more surreal with the rich world of satirical content, including one imaginative website dedicated to Hillary Rodham Clinton’s wildly successful fake presidency.

All this spin is leaving people deeply skeptical—turning the established power structure on its head. The 2017 Edelman Trust Barometer reported the largest-ever decline in trust across the once-mighty institutions of media, government, business and NGOs. Media took the biggest dive, dropping from 48 percent in 2016 to 43 percent in 2017. Even *The New York Times* felt compelled to take out an ad blitz, including a TV spot during the Oscars with the tag, “The Truth Is Hard.”

“The idea is to be a part of that discussion about what does it mean to find the truth,” *New York Times* branding exec David Rubin told CNN. “What does that mean in a world of ‘fake news’?”

For big brands, it probably starts with deciding what truth they want to tell. With customers more likely than ever to distrust the marketing part of content marketing, companies need to offer information people feel they can trust. It must be beyond reproach—backed by credible sourcing and legit research. Or else.

“We’re headed toward a world where people are going to be a lot more aware of the sources of the information they’re getting,” says Michael Hickins, director of strategic communications at tech giant Oracle in New York and a former editor at *The Wall Street Journal’s CIO Journal*.

Brands better double-down on authenticity—or risk pushing people away. They have to show they’re reliable to connect with their customers. And that relationship shouldn’t be rushed, says Hickins.

“From a native-content producer standpoint, your stakeholders want you to drive people into the trust part of the funnel pretty quickly,” he says “But it’s kind of like old-fashioned dating. You have to slow down a little bit.”

Trust Me

Content marketers—even those aiming for thought leadership grandeur—are constantly balancing facts and the message they’re trying to get out there. And that may require a new rigor to content marketing’s relationship with sourcing and reporting—moving far beyond plopping the company president in front of a teleprompter for a video or having a board member write some dead-on-message blog post. Because although trust in media is on a downward spiral, Edelman’s barometer shows it’s even worse for members of the C-suite gang, who often take a starring role in content marketing. The report shows just over one-third of people trust CEOs and boards of directors, while 60 percent trust their peers, academics and technical experts. This is not the time for larding up on corporate voices—look beyond the brand bubble.

To tap into the trust people have for independent third-party sources, brands must take a more journalistic approach to marketing, says Sherri Chien-Niclas. Until March, she served as director of enterprise content strategy and storytelling at Symantec, an IT security marketer in Mountain View, California.

“Journalists are trained in getting the facts and understanding what is actually going to be relevant to the viewer or the audience,” she says. “They’re really focusing on what’s important and making sure they’re bringing out the truth versus just

Thinkstock/edwardolive, Wavebreak Media Ltd



Damage Control

Fake news doesn't just scuttle political campaigns. It firebombs brands, too.

Last fall, supporters of Donald Trump, president-elect at the time, boycotted Pepsi when a fake news story reported the CEO had said they should “take their business elsewhere.” And liberals boycotted New Balance after fake news tied the sports apparel brand to a white supremacist group.

But content marketing can also be a powerful weapon in a counterattack campaign.

IT security giant Symantec hasn’t been the victim of a fake news attack, but its industry is closely tied to the crisis. (Along with creating click-based ad revenue, fake news profits as a gold mine for hackers.) As a result, fake news has raised the stakes as both businesses and consumers look to Symantec for information to help them navigate the threat.

“The fake-news backlash in the security industry is a double-edged sword,” says Sherri Chien-Niclas of Symantec. “It requires marketing teams to become more agile and responsive to out-breaks, yet it adds more scrutiny and levels of approvals—therefore adding more delay—to the content creation and publishing processes.”

Symantec employs a team that monitors global news and social media for information about potential threats. “Around the world, as soon as we get up in the morning, there’s an email with all the incidents and issues that we might want to look at, how many mentions there are, and what the competition is doing,” she says.

If a high-level threat is identified, the enterprise content team will get involved. For example, when a distributed denial of service (DDoS) attack caused a major internet outage across the United States in October 2016, Symantec stepped into action.

We actually took about three days reviewing and confirming details of the attack with internal teams to decide what we wanted to say about it .

Because the attack was carried out using an IoT botnet, Symantec used social media to point people to an existing white paper that discussed IoT devices and DDoS attacks.

“That got picked up quite a bit,” she says. “In the following week, everyone was talking about IoT devices in relation to that.”

Planning ahead and building a stockpile of educational content that addresses potential customer concerns helps brands prep for unpredictable moments. “Evergreen content helps you respond in real-time, because you actually have all of that ready.”





making something up.”

Looking to create more meaningful, trusted content, Symantec hired Emmy award-winning news reporter Sue Kwon to build out its content strategy and storytelling team all the way back in 2013. The group’s content is still promoting the company’s internet security expertise, but it’s focusing on news trends, independent research and customer concerns. And that gives Symantec cred with its base.

“You’re going to become more in touch with your customer with a journalistic approach,” Chien-Niclas says.

Spotting an opportunity, mainstream media outlets have been more than happy to lend the sheen of journalistic cred to their friends in marketing. Forbes’ BrandVoice, New York Times’ T Brand Studio and Time Inc.’s The Foundry all offer a full array of branded content.

Native content, or paid media that integrates naturally with the user experience of news sites, can help organizations “co-mingle their brand with very well respected brands in the news area,” Hickins says. But with public trust of the media on shaky ground, a loose association with news outlets might not be enough. Marketers, especially in financial services, are going to have to work harder to produce authoritative content that wins trust in the current climate.

“There’s a lot of noise in the marketplace. And it’s generated a lot of skepticism when legitimate companies try to talk to people about their financial needs,” says Paul Tyler, chief marketing officer, Phoenix Life Insurance Co., New York.

People researching investment strategies want facts that will inform their decision-making process—not just a blatant push to a company’s financial advisers. By showcasing their unique expertise and skillfully connecting it to their audience’s real lives, financial services companies have an opportunity to stand out from the competition, Tyler says. Plus, increasing financial literacy has a potential pay off down the line, particularly for complex products like multiyear guaranteed annuities.

“They work almost the same as a CD, but they provide usually higher interest rates than CDs,” he says. “Why don’t people buy more of those? Probably because they just don’t understand them. In an instance like that, journalistic content marketing is probably an exceptionally effective mechanism.”



As an added benefit, objective and educational content creates less risk for companies, especially those in regulated industries. It produces a more powerful message and requires less compliance review than product-focused content, Tyler says.

“If I speak to you about what happens to your family if you’re not around, what type of a legacy do you want to leave, that’s a relatively easy message to get through compliance,” he says. “When we start to talk about rate or return guaranteed, it gets very, very complicated. And I’m not sure it’s the most effective marketing, particularly in our space.”

Curate With Care

With so much unreliable information being spewed out, some brands are opting to conduct original research. While this can be spendy, the resulting data and analysis can pave the way to influencer status—deservedly so, Chien-Niclas says.

Symantec, for example, draws from the findings of its annual



“You’re going to become more in touch with your customer with a journalistic approach.”

—Sherri Chien-Niclas, Symantec





5 Lessons from Fake News

Does your real content read like fake news—accidentally? Earn your audience’s trust by avoiding these red flags from FactCheck.org.

1 Mystery Sources: Don’t make statements without backing them up. If an idea came from an internal expert, cite him or her by name and title. If a projection is based on confidential data, make that fact known. Showing where a brand gets its information fosters credibility

2 Bait and Switch: Vague, sensation or misleading headlines may garner more clicks, but they can do more harm than good. Write heads that have a clear tie to the content’s primary topic.

3 GroupSpeak: Articles without bylines smack of corporate messaging. Give stories a human face by attributing authorship to employees, experts or influencers who align with the brand’s values.

4 Timeless Stories: Even evergreen content needs a publication date. Conduct content audits, refresh outdated references and republish regularly to keep content from going stale.

5 Obvious Bias: Every brand wants to show why it’s so very special. But content must offer objective information—not just corporate messaging—to be valuable to customers. To avoid appearing all self-promotion-y, look for research and independent sources that offer information demonstrating the need for and value of your product.

Internet Security Threat Report to create more frequent touch points with its customers. In the past, the company simply published a PDF of the report online, and that was that. But now the marketing team identifies major themes in the report, slicing information to be a variety of formats to be published or amplified at different times on multiple channels to reach more consumers. “That changed the report into content that could be promoted throughout the year, rather than just this one time,” she says.

Curating content from trusted sources is another way for companies to serve up relevant, current information. Along with traditional news outlets, sector-specific pubs offer a first filter for time-strapped marketing teams. Sifting through news for stories to post on social media with added context is a cost-effective way for a brand to build credibility—but pulling from outside content hubs can also introduce a reputation risk. If a team member is duped into posting dubious news, the brand could take a hit—or at least lose time to back-pedaling and apologies.

Effective curation starts with understanding what the target audience wants, what they don’t already get and how to deliver it to them effectively. Organizations have to save people time and provide value if they want to fill the trust vacuum, Hickins says. But to offer true value, content marketers must scrupulously vet third-party content, adding context and expertise along the way.

“Even though there are so many publishers in so many fields, content is still pretty poor,” he says. “So there’s an opportunity to provide quality content.”

The Great Distribution Debate

Today’s loaded arguments over fake news are forcing brands to take a closer look at where they advertise online. Kellogg, Allstate and Warby Parker were called out for running ads on Breitbart, a site that many view as home sweet home for fake news. The brands blamed programmatic advertising, or automated ad placement, for the oversight. In response, some companies are putting a renewed focus on creating premium content carefully placed on owned properties, rather than repurposing ads or old content to put the majority of their money on cost per click.

It also means paying more attention to how content is distributed, including the social media blitz now considered de rigueur for most brands. More than 70 percent of Americans hold social networking sites and search engines somewhat responsible for combatting the spread of fake news stories, according to the Pew Research Center. And only 15 percent of the United States has a “great deal” or “quite a bit” of confidence in social networking sites including Facebook, according to December survey by NBC News and *The Wall Street Journal*.

Looking to make amends, Facebook and Google are changing their platforms to address the issue. Facebook, one of the largest distributors of news online, has made it easier for users to report fake news and is working with third-party fact-checking organizations to flag questionable content. Soon, when users try to share a disputed story, they’ll see a pop-up that warns them the content may be inaccurate. Facebook also banned fake-news peddlers from advertising to its audience network in November, and Google added “misrepresentative content” to its list of criteria that will get publishers kicked off Google AdSense.

“It would be wise for people to look into this kind of factchecking, to make sure the low price of getting eyeballs and clicks from sensationalism isn’t inadvertently pushing them down the wrong path,” says Kathleen Schaub, vice president, CMO Advisory Service, IDC, a tech research firm in San Mateo, California.

Good governance and close monitoring of ad metrics can help marketing teams

“There’s a lot of noise in the marketplace. And it’s generated a lot of skepticism when legitimate companies try to talk to people about their financial needs.”

—Paul Tyler,
Phoenix Life Insurance Co.

identify reputation risks in their distribution networks. But Schaub says many marketing departments at B2B companies are often too small to allow for the level of attention required to avoid risks.

Advances in areas like artificial intelligence and machine learning open up the opportunity to provide companies with more tools and information to appropriately target their ads. These technologies will not only allow brands to serve up content when and where it will be most effective, but they may also help guard against inadvertently putting content in undesirable places.

“Artificial intelligence, when combined with programmatic advertising has enormous potential,” she says. “But it’s going to take another step or two here before companies can be sure that, if you spend a dollar, you actually got that dollar delivered to the right people at the right time at the right place.”

The shifting media landscape comes with new rules and formats. But there’s still a place for old-school journalism as brands look to win over consumers left jaded by fake news.

“Done right, native content can lead a resurgence of true journalism,” Hickins says. “But now is the time to commit to that because too much bad native content or too much self-serving native content will destroy its credibility in the minds of most people very quickly, and it’s hard to regain that trust.”

Fake news and alternative facts are no doubt dragging down public trust. Consider this a content marketer’s call to arms: Independent analysis, in-depth reporting and a sometimes unnerving commitment to full transparency have officially displaced the froth of content marketing days past. Are you ready to get real? ■

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Anatomy of fake news: dos and don'ts for content marketers

See p. 2 for app info



Why content hubs are the
new gotta-have, block-and-

A HUB SUPREME

tackle play in today's content-

cluttered B2B arena

BY KIM CAVINESS

MOVE OVER BLOG.

Used to be: every B2B company had to have one. And that's still mostly true. For the majority of B2B brands, a blog is a savvy way to publish your expertise and POV on timely topics.

But there's a hot new content format in town better suited to showcase the full strategic range of B2B brands' thought leadership chops.

Say hello to the mighty content hub. If you've been tempted to write it off as content marketing's latest shiny new toy, think again. The content hub is here to stay.

Look around and you'll find a growing number of content hubs on the websites of forward-thinking B2B brands such as GE, Intel, Wells Fargo, CDW and Adobe's Behance. The big daddy of them all, American Express' Open Forum, is still one of the best-done and best-known. (It launched in 2007 and has been pioneering the format ever since.)

Content hubs and thought leadership are a match made in content marketing heaven. They showcase content value, track audience and capture data—the trifecta of content marketing best practices. Win-win-win.

If you're still not sure about this whole C hub business, here's your primer on this rising-star format.

What's a Content Hub, Anyway?

Content hubs are a digital-only phenomenon. This content experience did not exist B.I. (before internet). Done right, it's more substantial than a blog and more focused than a website. The best B2B content hubs provide contextual depth and authoritative breadth on a select handful of strategic industry topics that matter to your industry/vertical audience—and your brand business goals, of course.

Think of the content hub as command central for your B2B brand's publishing prowess. It invites your audience to come in, hang their hats and stay awhile.

Go ahead, it says: Sink into the issues and formats that matter most to your career and industry. Content hubs make users feel large and in charge: winning their hearts, minds and wallets, as they urge them to take that next, crucial step toward a brand's CTAs.

Keep in mind that you're not inviting your audience to hang their hats and stay awhile in your rented home, owned by someone else, like Facebook, for example. (Thanks but no thanks, Mark Zuckerberg.)

A content hub is an owned asset. All data, content distribution and audience insights belong to you, B2B brand, free and clear. Smart move.

Content hubs aim to increase user engagement, time spent, number of content pieces consumed and trackable markers on the road to conversion. The upside is enticing: 96 percent of B2B buyers say they want content from industry thought leaders, according to a 2016 study by Demand Gen Report.

For these reasons, and many more, the content hub is becoming the go-to format of strategic opportunity in thought leadership content marketing. In a way, it's the new online magazine. While, yes, the magazine continues to thrive in print (despite predictions of its demise late last decade), its online equivalent is far closer to the content hub than the blog.

A search for an official definition brings up zilch, so here's my very own, homegrown one, tailored to B2B: A content hub is a one-stop-shop digital experience built to house and leverage all the content—no matter the format, channel or platform—created by a brand to showcase expertise and inspire its audience to act on its business goals in measurable ways.

Designed to look like the most engaging media sites, content hubs usually live in a dedicated area of a brand's website. You'll typically see lots of content squares lined up in pretty rows. Each content box has an image and headline, sometimes an H2, and always a call to action when the user hits the article page. Once consumed, each piece pays it forward, teasing another related content experience—article, infographic, video, listicle, podcast, social object ... or whatever content marketing dreams up next.

Why Do We Trust Content Hubs?

We're attracted to content hubs because they satisfy a deeply human need to learn and thrive through information gathering and social connection. If we want to get all psycho-sociological about it, we could say the content hub is an online proxy for three distinct old-school, real-life spaces we've traditionally sought out for professional education and inspiration:

The Newsstand—Discovery. "Hey, look at all these great B2B magazines about my industry. Who knew? I'm going to stand here longer than expected and flip through them all, so I can stay ahead at work and impress my boss."

The Conference—Connection. "I'm going to network with others like me and schmooze, learn and recharge, as I think about my future and what I want to accomplish next in my professional ambitions."

The Library—Authority. "I can go deep in this trusted, evergreen archive of expertise and search for everything I need to know about my industry. Looking back thoughtfully helps me look forward—and succeed."

What these three places have in common is they offer information and put users in charge of how to



Thinkstock/Stranyk

The B2B content hub’s value prop is control. For you and your audience



Thinkstock/AgarsR

get it. Similarly, the B2B content hub’s value prop is control. For you and your audience. Content hubs are built to empower a brand and its target users with front-end UX and back-end CMS wizardry. They’re usually better at this than the blog and the website, the other two go-to experiences most of us think of for showcasing expertise.

Here’s How They Differ:

A blog prioritizes time. The most recently posted article or infographic is what users encounter first. They typically have to visit other sections of the site or dip into archives to find what else that brand stands for.

A website prioritizes navigation. Visitors must first decode nav items to determine authority, plot their next move and understand where to find value. That’s fine, but it’s not putting the user at the center of a relevance-first content experience.

A content hub prioritizes relevance. Readers are welcomed by lots of smart, good-looking thought leadership and invited to select the topics that matter most to them by using filters and tags. Through skillful design experience choices and strategic CTAs, brands can guide users toward content choices that deliver on their own business purposes. Audiences and brands have an equal say in organizing meaningful editorial experiences that benefit both sides.

What’s In It for You

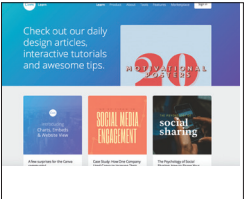
Now that we’ve covered why users trust content hubs, let’s talk about you, B2B brand: What benefits do you get out of content hubs? Nine, by my count:

Brand authority: Content hubs showcase your industry expertise and insider access in a singularly authoritative way. How smart, comprehensive and ahead of the competition is your brand? The answer lies in your hub, where your audience can easily access the best, most relevant and most complete—and



Intel’s iQ

- Showcases high-level expertise to impress industry peers
- Invites user personalization via filters
- Teases Trending/Recommended for further touch points



Canva

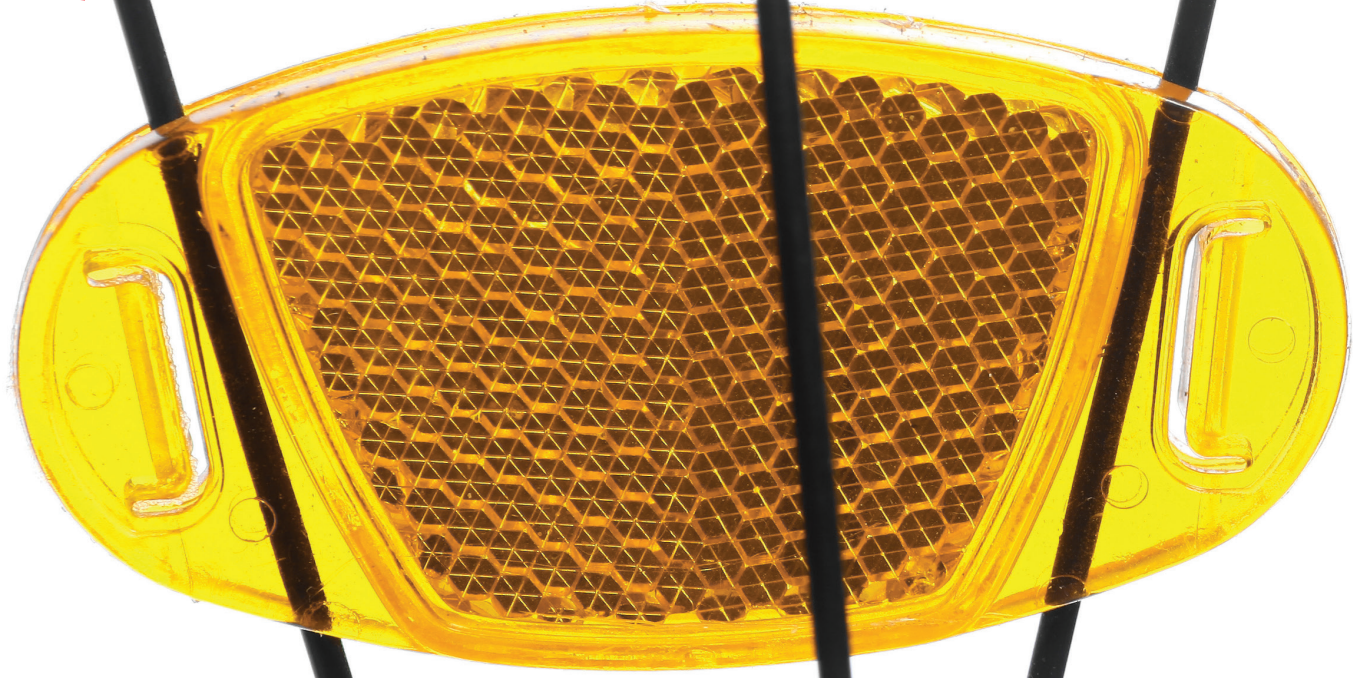
- Offers B2B industry specific tips (“20 Real Estate Flyer Templates”)
- Mixes formats, content types, channels
- Cross-promotes social sharing
- Designed to reinforce brand value proposition
- Withholds select items behind gate for lead gen



99U by Adobe-owned Behance

- Offers design-forward experience for its B2B audience
- Drives to expert mix of content types and formats (books, magazines)
- Serves as education arm for Behance/Adobe
- Reinforces community credibility by showing number of views
- Offers savvy CTAs

A content hub is a one-stop-



shop digital experience built to

house and leverage all the content —

no matter the format, channel or platform — created by a

brand to showcase expertise and inspire its audience to act on its business goals in

measurable ways.

we mean complete—range of topics, verticals and formats your brand chooses to offer. All your expertise is on full display. That’s thought leadership at its best.

Centralized experience: A defining element of content hubs is that no matter the content source or format—article, infographic, social, UGC, white paper, YouTube video, whatever—it all lives in your centrally organized, beautifully designed, UX-optimized hub. The user is happy and the host brand is happy, because the content makers can easily manage and optimize the front end from one CMS. The back end is seamlessly managed via one dashboard with access to all the analytics.

User personalization: Relevance rules. And one of the most important benefits of content hubs is users’ ability to filter their content desires. This allows brands to present a comprehensive range of the topics, pillars, related CTAs and tags that further your brand’s thought leadership cred, across a rich range of formats, topics, platforms and channels. Is your user a visual learner? Offer her a video or infographic. Another prefers long-form? Guide him to white papers and articles. A blog is more of a one-way conversation, starring you. A content hub offers up your smarts in a way that’s more about them: your end users. Ultimately, that will be better for both of you.

Audience buy-in: Good design matters. And delivers. Successful content hubs take design inspiration from modern media experiences relevant to the world of your audience. Where do your readers go for news and entertainment when they’re not thinking about you or work? Take a cue from that. The goal is to have visitors arrive and instantly feel that you “get” them because you’re offering an experience that seems so oddly familiar.

Which is why, if you get it right, they’ll instantly find themselves trusting you—subconsciously, of course. Offering them a media-like content experience announces: “Don’t worry: I’m giving you something. I’m not trying to sell you anything—yet.” Plus, search engines reward collections of well-designed pages intelligently linked to each other and that offer quality content. Which means that your audience has a greater chance of being served your beautifully designed content experience as an official SERP response to its Googling.

Back-end control: Good news! You don’t have to bug dev for every pesky little content-design thing. Because a content hub is powered by a content-optimized CMS, your team has more levers to pull. This means content creators can handle a wider variety of inputs. And your analyst has just one dashboard to

track—no more having to go pull data from different accounts for social, YouTube, blog, podcast, white paper downloads, CRM and so on. A content hub organizes all your data inputs into one centralized dashboard. Plus, the more your users click around the hub, the smarter your brand gets about their needs and wants. That way, you can serve them more relevant, personalized content via targeted e-newsletters and on future hub visits. All power goes to you.

Relationship drivers: Content hubs are relationship powerhouses. Per a 2016 Demand Gen Report study, nearly half of buyers view three to five pieces of content before they’re ready to talk to a rep. By design and function, content hubs were created to deliver these touch points. They’re built to skillfully suck in your target audience and tease them along the content continuum, guiding them from, say, article to video to newsletter to white paper to—ta-da!—your ultimate success-metric CTA. If you get the give value/take value dance just right, you provide so much quality, contextual expertise and positive UX to your audience, they forget you’re trying to sell them something. They’re hooked.

Lead generation: Are you one of the 74 percent of marketers that Hubspot says cite lead conversion as nirvana? Behold the content hub. By very definition, a C hub uses content experiences to skillfully hustle audiences through the funnel. As it moves them from awareness to conversion, a brand can choose to reveal or withhold high-value content in exchange for commitments, such as an email address, opinions or membership renewal. Because of their interlinked front and back ends, content hubs can be lead-gen gold.

Measurement & distribution: Like J Lo, the C hub has a beautiful back end. Content hubs make it

easy for brands to track metrics across channels and platforms in one unified dashboard. This helps brands improve content experiences, stay connected to users, get smarter about their business prospects, and distribute brand value across e-newsletters, paid and personalized future touch points.

Money makers: Content hubs are right at home hosting third-party advertising, sponsored partnerships and native advertising. Their organization reinforces church-and-state separation by allowing brands to label revenue-generated vs. editorially “clean” content. Transparency and trust are cornerstones of thought leadership easily delivered by content hubs’ flexible design and media-like environment.

Do You Need a Content Hub?

With so many benefits, content hubs are increasingly a content marketing mainstay. But, let’s be honest, they don’t make business sense for every brand. A content hub is right for your brand if:

You want to be a thought leader.

You have something to say about your industry that your competitors don’t. You have proven expertise and a relevant POV that will provide real value to your audience and help connect them to your business objectives.

You’re ready to publish frequently.

Commitment doesn’t scare your brand. You’re ready to create content regularly (by your team or assigned experts). This means more than twice a week, minimum. Less than that and a content hub gets stale. If it looks the same when your user comes back within a week, they’ll soon sniff you out: You’re not the real deal. Go big and provide value frequently, or sidestep the commitment—and the benefits.

You distribute.

If you don’t put in the time and invest the money to spread the word and tell your audience you care, you might as well not be there. You’re publishing quality, so put in the effort to get it out to the right people via paid, social and e-newsletters. Care enough to share and remind them to come visit you at your content hub home.

You’re committed to journalistic and/or quality content.

If your idea of publishing content is to tell people how great you are and all about your new product line, forget it. You’ve got to address your end users’ value gaps. Your content has to be better than anything else they might find online about your designated topic(s). Talking about me, me, me is the opposite of content marketing. Write a press release instead and save yourself the time and hassle.

You’re in it for the long-haul.

If you want quick results, a content hub is not for you. A content hub wins at the long game. It can take a full year to see meaningful results. So take a pass if your goals are short-term or campaign-based.

If you checked off most of the boxes (be disciplined: no half measures), it looks like it makes good business sense for you to join the Content Hub Club.

You now have the opportunity to experience what forward-thinking marketers ISO thought leaders have discovered: A content hub is the heart and soul of a B2B data-centric, editorially innovative, audience-hustling content marketing program. It’s your brand storytelling meet-up, your online home for visitors new and old, your content lab for innovation.

You’ll know you’ve done yours right if your stakeholders start telling you they don’t know how they ever survived professionally without your brand’s content riches. And your own numbers show your CTAs knocking it out of the park.

As you embark on your new or ongoing content hub adventure, a final word of advice: Stay true to this powerhouse format’s defining rules of engagement.

Be relevant. Be consistent. Provide value. Measure progress. And win.

Because the best content hubs are—literally—designed to win. ■

This is the first of a two-part series on the art and science of content hubs. Part 2 will report on best practices in content hub UX, design, measurement and distribution and will appear in the next issue of orange magazine this fall.

Like J Lo, the C hub has a beautiful back end.



Why content hubs are the new association gotta-have

See p. 2 for app info



**If you want to really kill it on
LinkedIn, it's time to go full funnel**

BY JORDAN BERGER

MISSING LINK

LinkedIn doesn't have the cultural cachet of the other social media channels. But when it comes to B2B marketing, LinkedIn rules. Facebook is My Little Pony; LinkedIn is the workhorse. It now boasts 467 million members, including 61 million senior-level influencers and 40 million decision-makers, making it a prime opportunity for top-tier thought leadership. Added to that, LinkedIn is the most effective social network for lead generation, according to DemandWave's 2016 *State of B2B Digital Marketing report*. And the platform's sponsored content conversion rates are nearly 2.5 times higher on average than Google AdWords, according to 2016 findings by HubSpot. If you're looking for a full-funnel B2B content marketing rocket, LinkedIn just might be it.

"LinkedIn is moving from a nice-to-have to a must-have," says Howard Dover, clinical marketing professor at the Jindal School of Management, University of Texas at Dallas, and creator of a program curriculum on LinkedIn. "LinkedIn is in its prime, and this year is going to see interesting innovation from LinkedIn Sales Navigator, which will allow for CRM [customer relationship management] integration."

But the real value proposition is the attitude of platform users as they navigate their feed.

"B2B marketers can get a message to the right person when they're in the right mindset to be receptive to it," says Mike Romoff, head of global agency and channel sales at LinkedIn, New York. "It's about catching people at that right moment. That's a key differentiator for LinkedIn."

Execs are power users: They view their home page 1.4 more times than the average LinkedIn user, according to 2016 internal LinkedIn data.

And while executives often don't manage their social media, instead handing it off to an assistant or PR team, that's not the case with LinkedIn. Most actively manage their own account, says Dover, which means access. "That's a rare opportunity to communicate to the leader of the organization you're trying to target."

Reaching executives on LinkedIn is de rigueur for B2B brands, 94 percent of which use LinkedIn, according to a 2016 study by the Content Marketing Institute. Now the question becomes how businesses should push social media marketing efforts beyond building a company page.

"Most people and brands are on LinkedIn," Dover says. "However, the question is how well these groups are actually utilizing the tools LinkedIn provides to be effective at social marketing and selling."

So miss out no more. Here are the tips that help B2B brands slay on LinkedIn:

Get Specific

"You may say, 'We've got good engagement on LinkedIn, so obviously we're doing it right,' but that's not always the case," says Jessica Otero, the Atlanta-based assistant vice president of social media at SunTrust Bank and leader of its LinkedIn strategy. "If you're ultimately looking to get traffic to your website or landing page, then on-platform engagement shouldn't be your priority metric. Instead, you'd want to look at click-through-rate, then maybe bounce rate and valuable actions people are taking on the landing page once they come from LinkedIn."

As you establish goals on LinkedIn, don't shy away from a full-funnel approach. Accelerate your hot targets, but also consider how to secure leads and nurture warm prospects.

Dover advocates for the full funnel, too. "You may be at the bottom of the funnel ready to close, but thought leadership at the top of the funnel is equally as important because you're solidifying yourself as a valuable contributor to [your] industry's need for information," he says. "The content you're generating is equally as valuable as the services you're selling."

Consider brand touch points alongside wherever users are in the funnel, including at the very top. "Leave enough budget for brand building so you can reach people who you ultimately want to collect leads from so you're not asking them to take an action the first time they see you," Dover says.

Those positive experiences throughout the funnel can be make-or-break in building the trust necessary for future purchasing.

"Whether they buy or not, they'll find the interaction with you valuable," Dover says. "Most of us are open to having partnerships and communication with people where we're gaining value—even though we may not purchase their product. Eventually, when we need the product, we'll turn to the people we trust."

Know Thy Audience

Only 32 percent of B2B companies have a documented content strategy, according to a 2016 study by the Content Marketing Institute. That means 68 percent of companies could be missing opportunities—or, worse, appearing out of touch with audience needs.

"A top mistake is companies look at social selling as cold calling, smile-and-dial, just in another platform," Dover says. "Take the time to develop thought leadership content. Understand the person you're talking to. Understand you have a relevant contribution to help them with the issues they're running into. If you're going to be a good social seller, you have to develop thought leadership in the space you're trying to sell."

When it comes to developing content, don't guess what might be of value to your audience. Let data

Unsplash/Calum Macauley

Your LinkedIn Strategy Checklist

- ☐ Have you established clear, platform-specific goals?
- ☐ Do they support your business objectives?
- ☐ Is your program strategy clear and measurable?
- ☐ Have you considered the full sales funnel?
- ☐ Do you have a content strategy?
- ☐ Is your content strategy rooted in data?
- ☐ Are you leveraging relevant existing content?
- ☐ Do you have a plan to test and optimize?
- ☐ Have you developed a paid media strategy? Is it agile?
- ☐ Have you created a targeting strategy?
- ☐ If so, is it broad, but still aligned with your audience?
- ☐ Do you have an analysis and optimization plan?
- ☐ Do you have a plan to activate employees?
- ☐ If so, do your employees have the right learning materials?
- ☐ Have you established a measurement plan?
- ☐ Do you have a plan for regular reporting?
- ☐ Are your marketing and sales teams communicating?

Follow These Leaders on Pulse

These top LinkedIn influencers know a thing or two about how to nail it on Pulse, LinkedIn’s news, opinion and trends content aggregator and publishing platform:



Tom Goodwin
EVP, Head of Innovation,
Zenith Media



Alex Hisaka
Head of Global Content
Marketing, LinkedIn



Jason A Miller
Global Content Marketing
Leader, LinkedIn



David Sable
Global CEO, Y&R



Jeremy Waite
Evangelist, IBM



Jeff Weiner
CEO, LinkedIn

drive the content strategy, whether it’s from LinkedIn or from third-party sources with insights into your target segments.

“The first step is to understand your audience,” LinkedIn’s Romoff says. “We can also help marketers understand what kind of content the audiences and segments they care about most actually interact with on the platform. We can take a pixel and put it on the site to understand who’s coming to various parts of the site. Then we can say these are the topics each segment cares most about.”

Once you’ve identified where your company can provide value in a way that sets you apart from the pack, develop content pillars. That doesn’t have to mean developing completely new content, though.

“A lot of B2B companies already have a lot of content—you don’t need to make stuff from scratch,” Romoff says. “What’s content you’ve already invested in that you can get more mileage out of because you know it’s interesting to segments you want to reach? Doing it in a data-driven way makes it repeatable, too.”

If you’re looking to move fast but aren’t sure where to start, one option is to start with LinkedIn’s Sponsored Updates. “It’s the easiest way to get into marketing on LinkedIn—and the most effective,” Romoff says. “Look at the content you’ve already put together. It could be articles, white papers or other content that will be of interest to your audience. You as a brand are bringing something helpful to them.”

Even going in armed with data, don’t assume there isn’t room for improvement—or for zeroing in if you uncover a highly engaged group within your audience. Continuously launch tests, analyze performance and identify content optimization opportunities to put what you learn to work.

“We can get campaign results and see what’s really resonating,” Romoff says. “Then we can plug back in and do it over again. Maybe we thought one segment would be interesting, but then maybe we have a sub-segment that was actually most interesting, so we can focus on them.”

Go Wide— Then Narrow

To put your valuable content to work, develop a targeting strategy that helps you reach key audience segments in each part of the sales funnel. And try tapping into LinkedIn’s capabilities, like targeting custom company lists, for instance.

“One of the key things about LinkedIn for SunTrust is it’s currently one of only two channels where we can target directly to our prospect list because our list is based on company name,” Otero says. “So, it allows us to have more in-depth thought leadership go directly to that target, which helps us achieve our campaign goal of driving landing page traffic.”

LinkedIn’s 2017 roadmap includes smart targeting opportunities beyond companies, expanding to email contact targeting with Eloqua, Marketo or LiveRamp integration, as well as website retargeting.

Creating the right strategy for your brand involves two steps. First, identify the broadest possible target while maintaining a reasonable assumption that it carries potential business value.

“When marketers and planners have so much granular data, one of the temptations is to over-target,” Romoff says. “They become overly specific so they say, ‘I know I only want to reach CMOs, so that’s all I want to target.’ The reality is they’re trying to sell a product where, yes, the CMO is the final decision-maker, but there’s a whole committee of people involved in the decisions who are doing the work two to three levels down. They’re doing the research and making the recommendation.”

Once you set your targeting plan in motion to reach the broad spectrum of people involved in decision-making, proceed to step two: Analyze performance and optimize accordingly.

“Understand how to start broad and then use that data to narrow it down,” Romoff says. “Continually optimize based on insights that come back from the platform.”

Sync With Sales

You can build the most solid marketing strategy in the world, but if you’re not aligned with sales, your audience will notice the disconnect. SunTrust, for one, actively fosters a strong relationship between the two groups.

“There’s no sense in putting money behind your marketing if your sales team has no idea what’s happening in that environment,” Otero says. “If a relationship manager goes out and says, ‘Long time, no talk,’ but the person just saw content pieces from your company, it seems disjointed. It’s important for the sales team to be very involved in the ongoing strategy, as well as heavily involved in campaign tactics and timelines.”

Integrating teams doesn’t have to be labor-intensive. Explore a monthly meeting for aligning on plans, or send an internal newsletter outlining marketing plan details for awareness and integration opportunities.

“We make sure we let teammates know which materials people receive and when, which lets them know they need to follow up with them about those materials,” Otero says. “That helps them have a more valuable conversation.”

To further integrate in a way that drives business value, lean on your sales team to drive a portion of your targeting strategy. “We don’t just come up with lists of prospects in a silo and decide these are the companies we think might work out and then go

target them on LinkedIn,” Otero says. “We look at it from a business perspective. We see if this is a viable company that we’d want to do business with, and we speak to relationship managers to see who’s on their hot lists. The resulting list then becomes the companies we target so we can get them further down the funnel and drive meaningful conversations.”

Pay Up— But Take the Freebies, too

Social is pay to play—and LinkedIn is no exception. “You have to budget for paid media,” Otero says. “At the end of the day, you can have the best content and targeting strategy, but if you don’t have sufficient paid budget to put that plan into action, you won’t accomplish what you set out to do.”

But it’s going to take more than throwing money at the platform. Stay dialed in to which efforts consistently drive performance and invest more in those initiatives—as long as the investment aligns with your overall objectives. Building campaigns that optimize in real time or establishing flex funds to spend retroactively helps you stay agile and generate the most bang for your buck.

Prioritizing a paid media strategy doesn’t mean organic work should fall to the wayside. A thorough company page is essential—consider it a home base that your audience will visit to size you up after seeing your thought leadership content in their feed.

“We see people coming in and spending time on putting together marketing campaigns, but they haven’t necessarily invested in the organic side of the business,” Romoff says. “If you’re going to spend money, you want to make sure that money’s working. You want it to work on top of organic efforts.”

Home in on Amplification

When it comes time to amplify your content, consider tapping into an opportunity that’s all around you: your employees.

“You may be posting content, but then you’ll have employees amplifying that through their own networks through liking it, sharing it, distributing it to people on LinkedIn—at no cost,” Romoff says.

By recruiting employees to amplify your message, you do more than bolster your company’s thought leadership cred. You promote your employees, and especially your sales team, as thought leaders on the platform.

A first step to activating employees on the platform is to equip them with the right materials for supporting your brand and sharing content. Develop best practice guides outlining key opportunities and

step-by-step guides for how employees can beef up their LinkedIn profile, engage and even prospect.

Know Your Numbers

You’ve heard it before: You need to have a solid measurement plan. So if you can’t measure your efforts on LinkedIn, don’t launch until you can.

“Excellent reporting and analytics are so important,” Otero says. “Our goal is getting people to a landing page so they have more awareness about what we have to offer so relationship managers can have meaningful conversations. So for us, we’re continuously tracking site traffic and optimizing our strategy.”

Think beyond social platform metrics, too. Develop a plan for tracking LinkedIn’s role in driving your target further down the funnel to your owned properties, implementing a conversion tracker on your site, for instance.

“Whatever gives you more information about what your targets do after they leave LinkedIn is really

“You can have the best content and targeting strategy, but if you don’t have sufficient paid budget to put that plan into action, you won’t accomplish what you set out to do.”

—Jessica Otero, SunTrust Bank

important,” Otero says. “Track all the way from when people see content on the LinkedIn page to which actions they took on your website or landing page. That’s where you will be able to show the biggest ROI, especially if your sales cycle is long.”

A thorough measurement plan will also allow you to show that all-important ROI.

“If you don’t really know your goals and how to translate those goals into KPIs and a comprehensive reporting strategy, you’re not going to be able to show success,” Otero says. “You won’t be able to show your executive leaders what you’re able to accomplish on LinkedIn in a meaningful way.”

Test, Analyze, Optimize, Repeat

“It’s important to not only set up a strategy, but also to be OK with something not working,” she says. “Re-evaluate it, rework your strategy and test. Test for months—not just weeks. If it doesn’t work, try something else.

“You have to be OK with failing to be able to actually win on the platform. So, do the testing. Take the chance.” ■



How to turbocharge your LinkedIn strategy

See p. 2 for app info

Did I Ever Tell You ... ?

Association CEO Cheryl Durst on using storytelling to create a community—and why she still believes in long-form journalism

BY CYNDEE MILLER



“Did I ever tell you about the time a couple on their way to a KKK rally left me with their child while they went back through airport security to pick up the fanny packs, dog and toy snake they’d forgotten?”

Cheryl Durst knows how to tell a story. She weaves in all the right details—like how she spotted a confederate flag as the woman said, “Excuse me, Miss Black Lady, will you watch AngelJune while we find our things? Just smack her if she acts up.”

The tale is just one of many in the Durst repertoire.

This is a woman serious about storytelling, calling it an essential life skill. And it’s no different at work. “Content marketing is like a really good play. It has a beginning. It has a middle. It has an end. It has antagonists. It has protagonists.”

As EVP and CEO of International Interior Design Association, she tells a powerful story of her members and the industry as a whole. One of the main plot points? Commercial interior designers don’t fluff pillows. They create experiences.

And she knows the value of sharing that story to members (as well as their clients and future members) through books, videos, social media, awards, enewsletters and a newly reimagined member print magazine, *Perspective*.

But Durst also knows the story has to be in absolute strategic alignment with “what an organization does, with what its members do, with what the industry does. That’s the biggest test, that it doesn’t look or feel artificial, but that it’s really authentic.”

We’ll start with a big one: What are IIDA’s top goals with its content marketing?

I’m a firm believer that everybody has their own idea of what they do as a job, as a profession, as a career. One of our duties as an association is to remind our members of the value of what they do.

The other goal is around knowledge about interior

design. We don’t just hoard it and keep it for ourselves. We know that our members share *Perspective* with their clients. And so it’s about giving our members one more vehicle to better articulate their value.

We also want to have a content marketing program that’s really cohesive. Whether it’s social media, whether it’s the events—it’s tying it together. I see that as our next step—making it really one cohesive, compelling story from the association. So we’re constantly supporting our mission and our vision as an association—which is knowledge, value and community.

What does content marketing do that advertising and other kinds of marketing don’t?

Advertising and PR can get what I call “shove down your throat-y.” Content marketing allows an organization to use its most authentic voice. And there doesn’t need to be a lot of spin, you don’t need to set the stage. You can be very authentic with content marketing.

Ah, yes, what a brilliant segue into this whole business of fake news. Do you see it changing how people look at content marketing?

A year ago, you couldn’t have asked me that question, right? But now, everybody’s skeptical about what they read. We’ve always been cognizant of spin. We’ve always been cognizant of marketing language. But because of this conversation about fake news, consumers of information have become a little bit more skeptical about everything they read.

Whether it’s your members or somebody randomly picking up your publication, that seed of doubt has been planted. Is this real? As a society, the needle has been pushed pretty far on our bullshit barometer—whether it’s because of social media, whether it’s because of reality television, whatever those reasons are. We’ve become very questioning as a society about the information given to us. That’s not necessarily a

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Content marketing is like a really good play. It has a beginning. It has a middle. It has an end. It has antagonists. It has protagonists.”



Cheryl Durst’s storytelling in action

See p. 2 for app info

Q&A

bad thing, but people producing content have to be more aware of it than ever before.

One way to counter that is thought leadership content. And IIDA has clearly invested in it, especially with the books and the research. How did that begin?

It started with our book series, *What Clients Want*. And we also partnered with a trade association to do our Design Leveraged series, which is all about research on the collision of design and employee engagement, recruitment, attraction, retention and satisfaction. You could anecdotally talk about that, but we also need the credibility of pure research.

So we did it in a format where we talked about companies like Coca-Cola, like 3M, and we had bona fide research that we analyzed—about 1,500 employees across the United States talking about their workplaces. Our members found that information incredibly useful. They’ve been talking to their clients, and now they’ve got a book series from IIDA that supports the conversation.

It’s beautifully designed, it’s wonderfully written. And all those things matter, especially for our audience. You just can’t throw research out there. It’s about the entire package. I’ve definitely seen a lot of organizations that just say, we’ve got the research, and then they put out the PowerPoint, the PDF and a bunch of really wonderful charts and graphs. But most people aren’t interested in deciphering what those charts and graphs mean. You’ve got to have the narrative. And you’ve got to have the story. Human beings are consumers of great stories. We need to engage, even though I know engage has almost become a really boring word.

Who is just absolutely nailing content marketing right now? And what are you stealing from them?

AARP is doing a phenomenal job of being very authentic. Obviously they’ve got a great moment in time—what is it, every 6 seconds somebody in the United States is turning 50? This is not an organization for old people. It looks like an organization you want to be a part of. And the information they have—not about aging, but about well-being, about travel, about financial planning. They take the whole gamut of where a person is in their life and make it really relevant to who they are as an organization.

My other one would be the Society of Human Resource Management. Once upon a time, people would say HR people, they must be the most boring people in the world. But they’ve been very deliberate about the viability of HR as a career. They have a phenomenal certification program, they’ve got incredible research. What they’ve done to position that profession has been really incredible. And they tell a great story.

Obviously cause-related organizations like Susan G. Komen are doing a phenomenal job of creating community—which is at the core of every not-for-profit. And that’s become so important in our society. We all are looking for that community that we want to be a part of.

How do you see IIDA’s content needs and goals changing as it becomes more global?

There’s still that quest for information, there’s still that validating the profession, but also connecting designers from all over the world to best in practice. So whether it’s happening in Kenya or Kansas City, people want to know what other



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**You can’t
immerse
anyone in
anything
with 140
characters.
You just
can’t.”**

designers are doing and how they’re successful.

We don’t want to make that fatal mistake that we’ve seen other associations make—that what happens in the United States is the best possible way for it to happen. Clearly, in other parts of the world, design is more a part of the DNA—for instance in Italy or in Scandinavia. So there are lessons to be learned—that we’re learning daily—from our members outside of the United States.

And that goes down to how you’re interviewing and sourcing....

Exactly. For us, acknowledging the diversity of practice. It’s not just reporting how design is defined in large firms, but how it’s happening for sole practitioners, or for firms doing retail or hospitality, and not just workplace.

Every association out there is trying to pull in millennials and even Gen Z. How can content help?

It’s about satisfying that “I want to be an expert” piece. If you read our content, you will become better at ... something, whatever, fill in that blank.

Associations are really looking at that FOMO factor—that you need to read this so that you can be a part of this movement. Increasingly, younger members really see membership in an association as being very activist. And so that’s very grassroots, but you can’t be an activist unless you’re a well-informed activist.

There’s a lot of buzz about how this is the first generation of digital natives. Do you see that reflected in how your younger members consume content?

I do. But it’s interesting that even among our younger members, there’s still value in getting information from print. Not that I’m saying we don’t ever do streaming video or some of the other channels, but print, by far, seems to have great value.

Why did you decide to reimagine IIDA’s print magazine, *Perspective*?

It needed a refresh. A magazine should not sit on a shelf. There should be multiple touch points, no matter where members are in their design careers. And we felt that we were moving away from that. It was getting a little too precious, so we wanted to bring that accessibility aspect back.

And what do you hope that readers will get out of the new *Perspective*?

Well, kind of jokingly, I say that you should feel like your IQ goes up at least three points when you read that magazine. Also though, I want there to be a connectedness to the magazine. I want our members to be



Reading List

Every content marketer looks to the media powerhouses. No big shocker that Cheryl Durst is a big fan of *Monocle*, but *Reader's Digest*?



Let's talk daily content regime. What's your first piece of content, what do you take as your midafternoon snack and what do you need before you go to sleep?

I'm an NPR junkie. And so once upon a time, I would listen to NPR before I would leave for work in the morning. Now I can stream it online, but it's still my go-to for information. I'm a book junkie, so I'm still a huge fan of *The New York Times* book review—wouldn't miss that for anything in the world. Oddly enough, I still have a subscription to *Reader's Digest*. I was given a subscription when I was 12 years old and I still have it.

Do you read it?

I do, I do. And everything from the corny jokes to very timely articles is in there—it's like tapas. There's some folksiness, but *Reader's Digest* has had to change with the times. So it's been interesting to see how they've redesigned, how they updated their content, and it's still a good, relevant read.

I still remember buying my very first issue of Sassy magazine with Brooke Shields on the cover. What was the first magazine that got you hooked on print?

Growing up, my mother read *Newsweek* and my father read *Time*. And so those magazines were always in the house, and I remember both of those—that was even before I started kindergarten. Once I got to school, it was *Scholastic* magazine. They would take the news of the day and write the story so that as an 8- or 9-year-old, it made sense. I remember learning about Watergate by reading my *Scholastic* magazine. I remember seeing Gloria Steinem on the cover, talking about the Equal Rights Amendment. It was the same thing my parents were talking about, but I was able to have something in print that explained it in a way that I could understand. What I admired about *Scholastic* is they didn't pander.

And now? What magazine is really killing it?

Ooh. Well, *Monocle*, of course. They do those longer pieces that then resonate in their podcast. And then they've taken their Quality of Life reporting and turned into an entire conference.

And *Sports Illustrated*. They've stayed true to telling great stories. If it takes eight pages to tell a story, *Sports Illustrated* will tell that story in eight pages.

I'm also a big fan of *Esquire*. That's just good old-fashioned journalism and great storytelling.

And *The Economist*. Once upon a time it was regarded as wonky, but it's repurposed and rebranded for anybody who's interested in global affairs and business news of the day.

I've always been a big fan of *Vanity Fair*. And I've rediscovered *Town & Country*, which is potentially the most elitist magazine on the face of the earth. It won't ever be a magazine of the people, but it has become incredibly readable and relevant.

And what magazine have you decided to stop dating?

A lot of the quote unquote women's magazines. I don't pick up *Vogue* anymore, probably not *Bazaar*, *Marie Claire*. Those are just the same articles over and over and over again.

You spend a lot of time on planes. What's your go-to read in the air?

Usually I'm absorbed in a good book when I'm on the plane. But I grab *Harvard Business Review*, and, again, I go back to *Monocle*. That's the perfect plane read, because you get a little bit of everything.

I fly United, so I'm a fan of *Hemispheres*. United has done a fantastic job with that. And then they've created *Rhapsody* just for first class—and I know other airlines are doing that as well. It seems like the airlines have rededicated themselves to having really great, relevant content in those back-pocket magazines.



possessive about it. To be territorial about it. This is about me, and design, and how I practice design.

The magazine is incredibly tangible. They can hold it in their hands. It's very visual, but it's also very literate—one is not exclusive of the other.

What do people think?

The response has been fantastic. Even moving away from illustrations to having real people on the cover. The content feels relevant. There's been a groundswell of commentary about the change in the magazine. So that's always very gratifying.

There's obviously been a massive push to short-form and visual content, but IIDA has stood out—as have many associations—as a supporter of magazines and long-form journalism.

We absolutely have to acknowledge the science behind people having a shorter attention span. But that puts the burden back on the people creating the content and the people designing the content to make it more compelling.

There will always be a place for long-form, and as much as human beings have a short attention span, human beings still want to be immersed in a topic, and you can only do that with long-form. You can't immerse anyone in anything with 140 characters. You just can't.

Okay, so social media: Lover? Hater? Acceptor?

Tolerator? I get it. I absolutely get it. It has become a phenomenal way to connect people with people, people with ideas. I'm not sure I love it, because sometimes it moves way too fast. And can you actually grasp anything? Can you actually learn anything? But it is a wonderful way to stay au courant.

And do you have a preferred channel that you

stay au courant on?

Probably Facebook. And LinkedIn, which is old school apparently.

But IIDA is active across all the social platforms?

Yes. It's all about being relevant. So we added Snapchat for students, but it could be something different next year. Our team is constantly looking and listening to our own members about what they're using and where they're getting information. I know a lot of associations are struggling with it, but if you want your voice to be heard, then you've got to put your voice in places where your audience or your intended audience is listening.

And what's your top goal with social?

It's one more avenue for members, non-members, prospective members, clients to attach to IIDA.

You got your degree in journalism, correct?

I did—once upon a time, when it was called print journalism.

It seems to give you a different vision of content and content marketing....

Words matter. Storytelling matters. A lot of people will say words are just words and you'll just tell a story, but there are still rules when it comes to what you're trying to get across to your audience. We may tell the same story, but it will have a different voice when we tell it on social media. It will have a different voice if it's a longer-form piece in *Perspective*. It can have a different voice or even inflection when it's a quick news item in a chapter or member newsletter. Being cognizant of how you're telling that story and where you're telling that story is so critical, and maybe even more critical because we're inundated with so much information. ■



Advertising and PR can get what I call 'shove down your throat-y.' Content marketing allows an organization to use its most authentic voice."



Sound Strategy

Rappers and rockers are known for crazy cool content marketing. So maybe it's time to steal an idea (or two)

BY EMILI VESILIND

-based music manager Todd C. Roberts can pinpoint precisely when he knew Kanye West was “marketing on another plane entirely.” It was last year, when hip-hop’s chief provocateur promoted his album *The Life of Pablo* with a series of pop-up shops—which he announced through tweets that included a map dotted with the 21 locations around the world.

Roberts, co-founder of creative advisory Creative Cabal, went to check out the artist’s L.A. shop, but initially couldn’t get near it; a throng of fans all but barricaded the entrance. Once inside, he discovered the “shop” was actually just a single rack of T-shirts with Pablo art on them. And forget about any attempt at customer service: “You could not touch the merchandise,” he recalls with a laugh. “You were not allowed to. You had to just pay \$65 for a T-shirt and get the f*** out.”

The pseudo-hostile retailing only fueled interest in the music. Songs from *The Life of Pablo* were streamed 400 million times in the six weeks it was exclusively available on Tidal.

Cultivating a feeling of exclusivity, real or perceived, is a signature gambit for content marketers—and artists/marketing auteurs—in the music industry. It’s also one of the many strategies worth pilfering by content marketers working in industries outside the pop music sphere. Sure, you say, but that’s Kanye Freaking West. Well, yes. And you’re probably not going to open a string of pop-up boutiques to sell T-shirts with catchphrases from your latest ebook or blog post. But a lot of your customers (and prospects) may be just as eager to get their hands on your content. So take a cue from Yeezy—make a video, hit the social channels, do whatever it takes to make your customers feel like they’re part of a cool cabal with exclusive access to insider info.

Up to 11

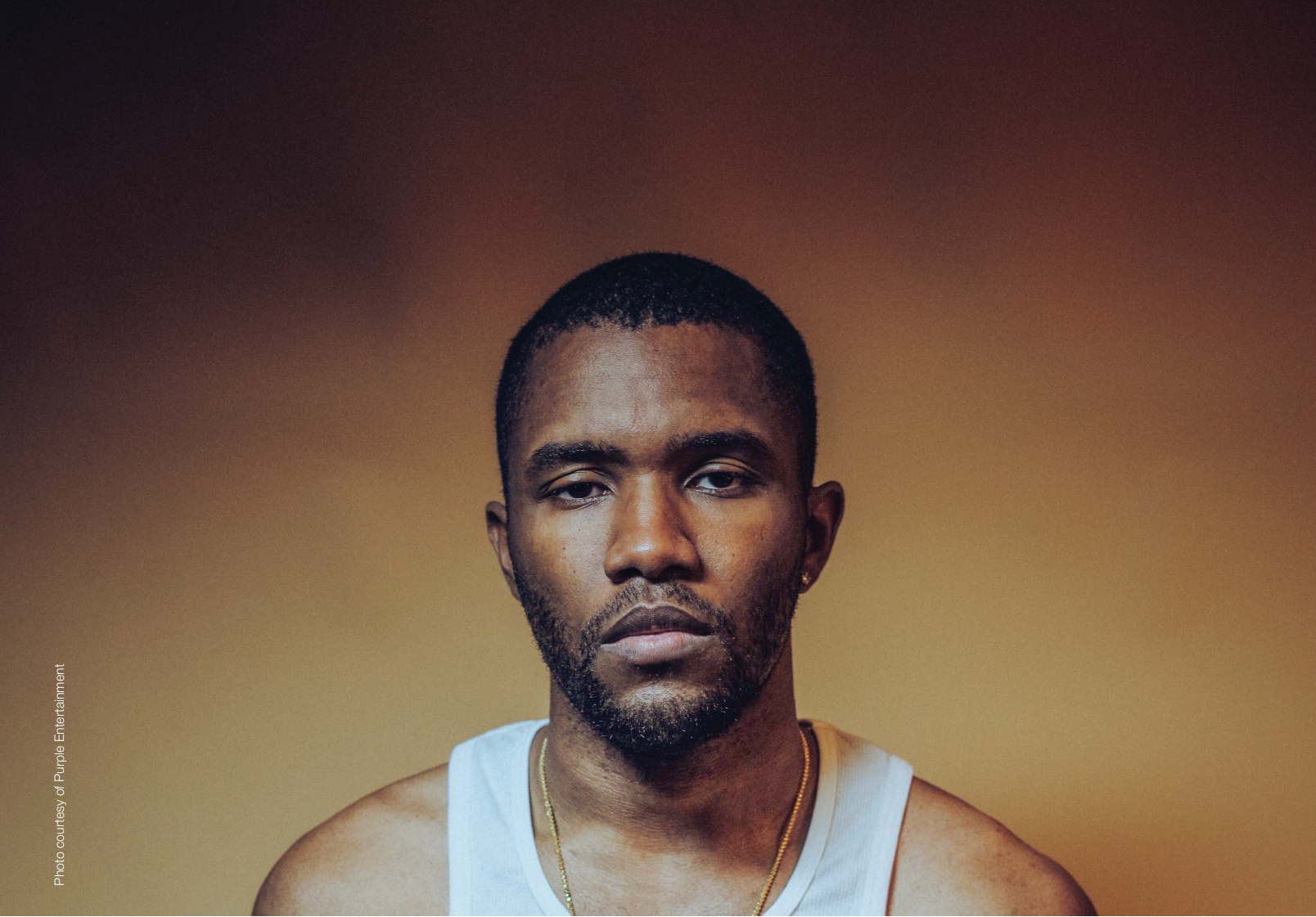
There’s a reason content marketing in music so often feels maverick these days. The music industry, like journalism and the book trade, is in chaos. The Internet Age has not been kind to the industry’s business model. As the margins on song and album sales plummeted, and virtual streaming has gone mainstream, all but the top tier of performers have to tour extensively to see any real profits. So it’s no shocker that they’re turning up the content marketing.

In a way, the music industry was an early adopter of content marketing, with its go-to tool: the music video. The format—both in short and long versions—has a storied history that stretches back to The Beatles and has since attracted everyone from David Bowie (with Oscar winner Tilda Swinton, no less) to Chance the Rapper. Content marketing continues to offer the music industry new pathways to revenue generation—not to mention customer loyalty and engagement—that connect with consumers in ways that feel both authentic and organic.

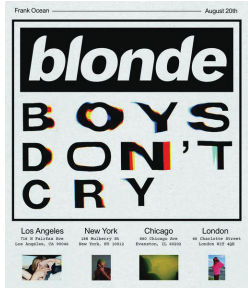
“Artists are realizing that that 5-inch slab of carbonate called a CD is not the be-all-end-all,” says Cary Baker, who helped rockers R.E.M. ascend to global fame in the 1980s as vice president of publicity at I.R.S. Records. “Doing other [content-related] things—like videos and documentaries—is a smart way to promote your music,” says Baker, now owner of conqueroo, an L.A. music publicity agency.

“The gatekeepers—basically those in the established record label system—have moved along,” says Alan Miller, co-founder of seminal (now-defunct) rock magazine *Filter* and now co-founder of self-described boutique culture agency Collide in Los Angeles. “And now there’s no barrier to entry when it comes to marketing in music. Everyone is a Twitter handle away from creating something amazing. You’re seeing smart artists evolve into doing things beyond music that are equally creative—and oftentimes even more lucrative.”

Indeed, some of music’s splashiest moments from the past year fall under the umbrella of savvy content marketing. **orange** takes a look at some of those ultra-buzzy campaigns and a few lessons content marketing professionals can extract from them.



An Ocean of Print Opportunity



By now most content marketers realize reports of print’s demise have been greatly exaggerated. Alternative hip-hop artist Frank Ocean got the memo. Last August, he promoted his *Blonde* album by launching a custom magazine, *Boys Don’t Cry*, available via pop-up shops in New York City, London, Chicago and Los Angeles. Contributors to the mag included Kanye West (man, that guy gets around), A\$AP Rocky, Rick Rubin and Tyler the Creator. Nearly every contributor gave the release a shout-out on social media on its release date, creating a mighty cyclone of influencer marketing around the project.

Pitchfork reported that Ocean gave away the magazine for free, but prices for it hit \$1,000 on eBay. And the magazine is still working it for Ocean, as fans continue to prize the premier content marketing product, with unopened copies priced at up to \$500 on eBay.

The magazine itself—an ultra-artsy, glossy 360-page collectible featuring fashion shoots, song lyrics, browser histories, a screenplay and original art—wasn’t built for a mass audience. Roberts says that’s the genius of the campaign. “For Frank, a magazine like that works because he has a very specific audience. It’s basically girls who wear boys clothes and girls who wear boys clothes, right? ‘Niche’ is where all these artists need to go. If they’re just putting a billboard up and hoping for the best, they’re not really doing anything.”

Unlike a billboard, a magazine uses storytelling and first-person access to the most personal thoughts and styles of the musician, which can only help build demand and relationships between a star and audience. Ocean is seeing his record and ticket sales go through the roof. *Blonde* debuted at No. 1 and appeared on an overwhelming majority of critics’ best of the year lists.

Lessons Worth Stealing

- Niche marketing builds brand loyalty
- Collaborators put influencer marketing on steroids
- Print is premium and a friend to sales



Making Hay of It All

Colin Hay, former frontman for Men at Work, is taking the standard-issue video to new lengths with an 84-minute documentary.

Released in January, it chronicles the Aussie's rocky journey from '80s pop icon to working solo artist. The announcement of the film, *Waiting for My Real Life*, was rolled out by video trailers posted to social media, namely on Facebook, where a majority of Hay's core fan base congregates.

Long-form "video is becoming a more popular way to get attention," says Baker, who represents Hay. "And in this era of mass video consumption, it also has the power to humanize an artist by telling compelling stories—in a way that shorter music videos simply cannot."

Yes, shooting a documentary film is both time-consuming and requires significant capital. But a good promotional doc tethers an artist to his or her fans emotionally and can also validate the veracity of a fan's admiration, by zooming in on stories that reveal the artist's finer qualities or deeds. In Hay's case, the singer's dogged determination to persevere for years in a tough industry leads viewers to wonder how such an incredible person and performer could have languished in relative obscurity for so long. Hay's story sells his music.

Lessons Worth Stealing

- High-quality video and personal storytelling drive fan engagement
- Take the time to tell the story right
- Authenticity drives the brand and the bottom line

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MUSIC CONTENT MARKETING HALL OF FAME



1977

Members of classic rock band Kiss gain renown as content marketing hustlers. Each member of Kiss had his own supernatural alter ego, which illustrators at Marvel Comics developed into full-blown comic book superheroes in 1977.



1983

Michael Jackson's 14-minute short movie/video for "Thriller" reinvented the music-video complex—birthing the promotional video-as-art piece that proliferates to this day. MTV ran the short film three to five times a day, and it now has close to 400 million views on YouTube.



2007

Prince, who had famously contentious relationships with record labels, granted U.K. newspaper *Mail on Sunday* exclusive rights to distribute his *Planet Earth* album as a freebie. If you bought the \$3 newspaper, you received the album. Segments of the music industry were livid, but fans of the Purple One celebrated the direct marketing campaign.



2007

For its *Year Zero* album release, Nine Inch Nails had a marketing group create an alternative reality game for fans. The band hid USB drives loaded with MP3 files of new songs at venues around the world, and also buried clues about the album in spectrograms, on websites and in phone numbers.



2010

To create awareness for his soon-to-be-published memoir *Decoded*, hip-hop star Jay-Z reproduced entire pages of his book—and hid them in locales referred to in the pages (Times Square, the bottom of a hotel pool, to name a couple). Fans found them through clues on a Microsoft-hosted webpage, Bing.com/Jay-Z, that functioned as an online scavenger hunt. Users saw *Decoded* billboards superimposed on the 3-D map, which included a "proximity meter" to let them know when they were closing in on a clue.



2013

Arcade Fire announced its *Reflektor* album by hiring graffiti artists around the world to plaster buildings with a grid bearing the word "REFLEKTOR." The hipster billboard was born. And in 2010, the band debuted an interactive video for the song "We Used to Wait" dubbed "The Wilderness Downtown." Users started the video by entering their childhood home address. If Google Maps had enough footage of the house, that childhood abode would show up in the video's very dramatic action. Voilà, the personal music video was born.



2015

To promote his *Stories* album, superstar DJ Avicii created a bunch of Instagram pages linked to visual narratives. Each page had nine images that, when put together, created a larger image. Fans could then click the links those created and unlock a track from the album.



2016

Frank Ocean self-produced a spare-no-expense premium magazine, *Boys Don't Cry*, to promote his 2016 *Blonde* album. More than six months later, the pub was still selling for up to \$500 an issue.



Kanye Bares All for Marketing

The Kanye West marketing blitz of 2016 included the pop-ups, a fashion-show-as-listening-party staged during New York Fashion Week, and the artist’s genius/deranged use of Twitter—which included tweets filled with an endless torrent of links to alternate versions of songs on *The Life of Pablo*.

In June, West dropped a video for the song “Famous” that doubled as a masterstroke of viral content marketing. In the video, 12 famous people—(now president) Donald Trump, Anna Wintour, Bill Cosby, Rihanna and Chris Brown, included—lie naked together in a big bed (almost all were computer generated). Splicing that footage were a surreal voiceover, sound effects and celestial imagery worthy of a David Lynch film. *Vanity Fair* said it might be “his most thought-provoking work yet.” And 8,000 people watched its premiere on a 100-foot screen at the L.A. Forum.



At the New York Fashion Week show for his Yeezy brand in February 2016, West debuted a dramatic trailer for a videogame that depicts his late mother entering the gates of heaven.

Love him or hate him, you must respect Ye’s incredible content game.

Lessons Worth Stealing

- Great content marketing can catalyze conversations—and sales
- Authenticity rules
- Go big or go home



Turn the Beat Around

Some brands don’t just steal a few items from the music industry’s content marketing bag of tricks. They actually steal the musicians—and give them a starring role in their own content.

Rick Ross takes center stage in a mini-documentary about growing up in Carol City, Florida. The nearly 4-minute video shows the rapper driving around the old ‘hood, musing about his childhood. He talks to locals, tells stories. Near the end of the piece, he pulls his truck up to fast food restaurant Checkers, which he calls “The No. 1 hamburger in the game.”

You guessed it: The piece was actually a highly produced content marketing piece for Checkers, in the wake of Ross’ purchase of the Carol City franchise. He uses his life story to give authentic props to his new business. Would any of his fans doubt that Ross loves Checkers burgers? Nope. Or that he’s deeply committed to his neighborhood as he tells his own and local friends’ stories? His passion for burgers and fries feels as genuine as his memories of playing football with his childhood friends.

“Food and value are our two big brand pillars, and I think they come through in the spot in a cool way,” Checkers’ client marketing director, Scott Wakeman, told *AdWeek*. “It wasn’t a script. It was just Rick talking about what he loves.”

In a clear sign that product partnerships aren’t seen as selling out if they’re done right, the video has racked up 110,000 views on YouTube.

It’s not all about videos, though. Energy drink brand Red Bull (classified as a media company on Facebook, by the way) has a few heist-worthy ideas for any marketer that hosts an event. (We’re talking to you, association content marketing friends.)

Red Bull pulls in the coolest of the cool kids with one of the music industry’s edgiest annual events—The Red Bull Music Academy Festival New York every April and May. The event has included live talks from luminary artists such as Brian Eno and Spike Lee, provocative art exhibits, and music performances from tide-shifting artists such as Diamanda Galás and Dizzee Rascal.

“Nobody programs like this—it has included so many diverse people,” says music PR veteran Judy Miller Silverman, founder of Motormouthmedia, which helps handle the public relations for the event.

Red Bull also hosts a proprietary website loaded with content and so menacingly hip, it’s likely to befuddle anyone over the age of 40. And the company promotes it all with an artist’s eye. This year, it worked with artists to create hyper-graphic virtual flyers dripping with vibrant color for its latest NYC event.

It’s a gamble, but the company trusts its sharp, authentic-feeling storytelling will drive fans to seek out its blue, silver and red cans.

“You have to get outside your comfort zone in marketing these days,” says Miller. “We fight this battle on a daily basis where brands are scared to push it too far. People from a traditional marketing background are looking at spreadsheets and reasoning that the way to increase sales is by spending on media. Take your media dollars and spend them on organic, incredible campaigns in cultural spaces.”



Annie Papp

Queen Bey's Surprise Strategy

Superstar Beyoncé ruled content marketing in music in 2016 with her “visual album,” *Lemonade*—a soulful, 60-minute film that was one of the prettiest and most provocative pieces of filmmaking to surface all year. It aired on HBO April 23, 2016, the same day the album became available for streaming. According to TV by the Numbers, the video pulled in 787,000 viewers in the 18 to 49 demographic, not too shabby considering it was up against the NBA playoffs. The album went on to sell just over a million copies by the first week of June, making it one of only four albums in 2016 to pass the magic million mark.

The album and film dropped with no pre-game promotion; Queen Bey is a big fan of releasing projects unannounced, then watching her fans go bananas. However, the impeccably art-directed video dominated pop-culture conversations for weeks, and prompted a number of important questions—not the least of which: “Who’s Becky with the Good Hair?”

Her stunning turn at the 2017 Grammy awards, where she performed heavily pregnant in a gold gown and headdress worthy of a mythical goddess, was later immortalized on Beyonce.com, in large-scale photos. Along with the style showcase were a tally of her Grammy wins and scenes from the performance. Content is the marketing gift that keeps artists top of mind and moving units in the music business.



Lessons Worth Stealing

- Quality over quantity
- Teasers are great, long-form surprises are better
- Slice and dice that content

Better Brainstorms

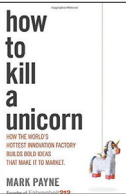
Love 'em or hate 'em, brainstorms can lead the way to that whoa-where-did-that-come-from brilliant idea. But only if you do them right. To help better define expectations and manage creative outcomes at your next group powwow, **orange** searched high and low for the best books, TED Talks, podcasts, guidelines and more to inspire you. Happy ideation. —*Shaun Ruddy*



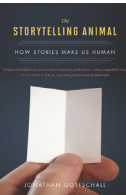
BOOKS



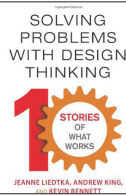
Sprint: How to Solve Big Problems and Test New Ideas in Just Five Days
by Jake Knapp



How to Kill a Unicorn: How the World's Hottest Idea Innovation Factory Builds Bold Ideas That Make it to Market
by Mark Payne



The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human by Jonathan Gottschall



Solving Problems With Design Thinking: Ten Stories of What Works
by Jeanne Liedtka, Andrew King and Kevin Bennett



Gamestorming: A Playbook for Innovators, Rulebreakers, and Changemakers
by Dave Gray, Sunni Brown and James Macanufo



TED TALKS

“How to Build Your Creative Confidence”
by David Kelley

“Creative Problem-Solving in the Face of Extreme Limits”
by Navi Radjou

“How Art, Technology, and Design Inform Creative Leaders”
by John Maeda

“How Frustration Can Make Us More Creative”
by Tim Harford

“Your Elusive Creative Genius”
by Elizabeth Gilbert

“The Surprising Habits of Original Thinkers”
by Adam Grant

“The Unexpected Benefit of Celebrating Failure”
by Astro Teller

“Play This Word Game to Come Up With Original Ideas”
by Shimpei Takahashi



PODCASTS



Creative Mornings



The Tim Ferriss Show



The TED Radio Hour



99% Invisible



Unthinkable

“How I Made an Impossible Film”
by Martin Villeneuve

“Tales of Creativity and Play”
by Tim Brown



THOUGHT LEADERS

Jake Knapp, design partner, GV

Tom Kelley, author, *Creative Confidence: Unleashing the Creative Potential Within Us All*

Todd Henry, author, *The Accidental Creative: How to Be Brilliant at a Moment's Notice*

Tim Brown, CEO, IDEO

Chauncey Wilson, adjunct professor, Bentley University

Frans Johansson, author, *The Medici Effect: What Elephants and Epidemics Can Teach Us About Innovation*

Jennifer Mueller, author, *Creative Change: Why We Resist It ... How We Can Embrace It*

Ed Catmull, president, Pixar

Simon Sinek, optimist and founder, Simon Sinek Inc.

Daniel Kahneman, author, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*

Thinkstock/LDProd



THINK AGILE

How to transform your brainstorms into successful sprints

The way we usually brainstorm innovation is old school.

Whether we're aware of it or not, most brainstorms still follow the basic procedure outlined in Alex F. Osborn's 1953 definitive and excellent tome *Applied Imagination: Principles and Procedures of Creative Problem-Solving*. In many ways, it's remarkable that Osborn's brainstorm approach dominated, unchallenged, as long as it did.

Disruption came, of course. Silicon Valley companies such as Google Ventures and IDEO began actively championing new ways of thinking about thinking in groups. So take some tips from the pros to create stronger and more agile brainstorming environments designed to drive bolder, more adaptive creative results.

Identify the right challenge.

Before your brainstorm, communicate to your team the specific challenge you want to address. Also ahead of time, provide them with strategic insights. Try to pare down your challenge to a few short sentences and arm your team with this information as early as you can. Remember: The only thing worse than having too little to ideate around is having too much. Keep it brief and essential.

Ditch digital.

There are enough distractions in the workplace, and a brainstorm, especially a short one, will benefit from their absence. Leave the laptop, phone and other digital devices in your workspace or be prepared to check them at the door. Go analog to capture the ideas via whiteboards, sheets of paper or Post-It notes.

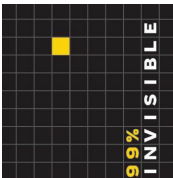
Ideate individually.

Give the group time to ruminate together and solo. Build in opportunities for your team to think before, and even during, the brainstorm via a structured breakout, if it makes sense. One problem with the “let's get a big team together and see what sticks” mentality is that it produces a large amount of surface-level ideas. Rarely does it produce anything of substance that aligns with the goals or even addresses the problem. Instead, give team members ample amount of time to ideate on their own. They're more apt to come back to the brainstorm with the kind of thought-through, detailed ideas you need to succeed.

Regardless of which brainstorm methodology you subscribe to, scrutinize and challenge it until you identify what works best for your team. It's the only way you're going to ferret out that great idea that changes everything.



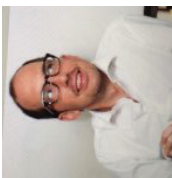
FOLLOW-WORTHY FEEDS



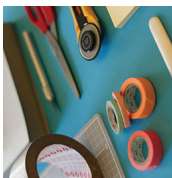
TWITTER
@99piorg



INSTAGRAM
Great Big Story



INSTAGRAM
Christoph Niemann's Abstract Sunday



TWITTER
@CreativeToolSet



INSTAGRAM
The Short News

Make, Buy, Partner

Lessons from a content marketing cognoscente in Italy

BY REBECCA ROLFES

The basics of content marketing—awareness, engagement, conversion—don’t change much from one country to the next. In the United States, the elements of a content marketing program tend to look pretty similar: digital content, perhaps print, social media, maybe events. Each brand’s strategy is different, but the nuts and bolts often look the same. Companies in Italy, where populations are smaller and target markets more easily defined, sometimes take less-obvious directions.

As an example, Wolters Kluwer Italy, a division of the global information services company headquartered in the Netherlands, uses a system of freemium sites for its target markets of lawyers, tax advisers, accountants, and risk and compliance professionals. The sites boast 4 million unique visitors per month and 600,000 registered users in Italy.

Sergio Liscia, WKI’s digital and business development director in Milan, shares those

same awareness, engagement and conversion goals, but uses a unique hybrid approach he calls the “make, buy, partner” concept. WKI already had a database covering the majority of the intended audience in Italy and consequently created a digital path that starts with WK’s brand properties—the “make” part of the concept. The “buy” part invests in generating a critical mass through technology investment, marketing expenditure (SEO, SEM) and resources, i.e., community management, Liscia says. Finally, because there are two top target audiences—legal and accounting professionals as well as their customers—WKI partners with consolidated players in adjacent markets, like Corriere.it, Italy’s leading daily newspaper, to attract audiences with content.

All of this aims at lead generation, with Liscia pointing to two trends that he says will strongly enhance those efforts in Italy:

- The explosion in **video**, especially the ability to include

- a CTA in the video itself
- **Chatbots** added to messaging apps, which he says his target customers are using more.

Moving to the all-important conversion stage, Liscia says the path to purchasing has gotten longer, and the decision process is “more articulated.” Content drives the user along the customer journey, enabled by tech. “Tools such as marketing automation allow the publisher to define the user experience for each touchpoint,” he says. “Remarketing pushes to the last phases of the sales funnel, suggestions of ‘people who bought this also bought this’ and triggered emails, things like ‘abandoned cart,’ finalize conversions.”

Here too, Liscia sees two trends that will change how companies convert users in Italy:

- **Paid advertising and algorithms** are must-haves.
- **Bring the marketing team close to the content team** to close the loop and engage

in ongoing content marketing innovation.

Last year, taking advantage of the large community of law students hosted by daily online judicial guide’s portal Altalex, WKI launched its first embedded web-native product. Praticamente combines content, e-learning and service with a freemium approach: free web content and a paywall for a subscription to the premium service for bar exam prep.

“Praticamente offers an experience that is a seamless continuation of the portal in which it is hosted,” Liscia says, greatly increasing its odds for success with a receptive audience.

WKI’s B2B program is a powerful reminder to content marketers around the world to never take a cookie-cutter approach. Same old/same old won’t cut it with users, especially highly sophisticated B2B audiences with ready access to plenty of content from many sources.



Social, Italian-Style

Alone among its southern European neighbors, Italy has taken to social. Almost 70 percent of Italian internet users use social media, according to eMarketer. That’s equal to the take-up in the northern European countries of the Netherlands, Norway and the U.K. However, with only 66 percent of the country’s population online, that translates to less than half of the population. The translation? Italian companies have been relatively slow to swipe right on social.

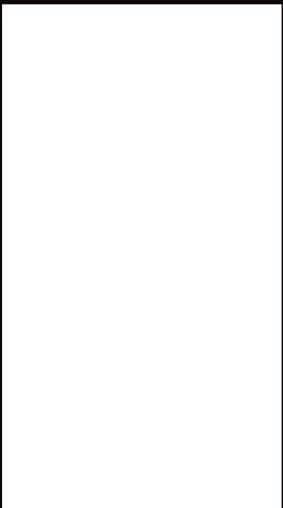
GET SMART

- Bharat Anand, author, *The Content Trap: A Strategist's Guide to Digital Change*
- Sean Jackson, host, *Members Only* podcast
- Capgemini and Informatica, *The Big Data Payoff: Turning Big Data Into Business Value* white paper



HIT OR MISS

- Leafly
- Merriam-Webster
- *The Atlantic*, Life Timeline
- Snoop Dogg
- Tanqueray
- Marcos de Quinto, former CMO, The Coca-Cola Co.
- 20th Century Fox, *A Cure for Wellness*
- SunGard
- Odyssey



MISSING LINK

- LinkedIn
- DemandWave's *2016 State of B2B Digital Marketing*
- Google AdWords
- Howard Dover, clinical marketing professor, Jindal School of Management, University of Texas at Dallas
- Content Marketing Institute
- Mike Romoff, head of global agency and channel sales, LinkedIn, New York
- Jessica Otero, assistant VP of social media, SunTrust Bank
- Tom Goodwin, EVP, head of innovation, Zenith
- Alex Hisaka, head of global content marketing, LinkedIn
- Jason A. Miller, global content marketing leader, LinkedIn
- David Sable, global CEO, Y&R
- Jeremy Waite, evangelist, IBM
- Jeff Weiner, CEO, LinkedIn

SOUND STRATEGY

- Todd C. Roberts, co-founder, Creative Cabal
- Kanye West, *The Life of Pablo*
- Cary Baker, owner, conqueroo
- Alan Miller, founder, Culture Collide
- Beyoncé, *Lemonade*
- Frank Ocean, *Blonde* and *Boys Don't Cry* magazine
- Pitchfork
- Colin Hay, *Waiting for My Real Life*
- New York Fashion Week
- Rick Ross, "Buy Back the Block"
- *Adweek*
- Red Bull Music Academy Festival New York
- Judy Miller Silverman, founder, Motormouthmedia
- Kiss
- Marvel Comics
- Michael Jackson, "Thriller" video
- Prince, *Planet Earth*
- Nine Inch Nails, *Year Zero*
- Jay-Z, *Decoded*
- Arcade Fire, *Reflektor*
- Avicii, *Stories*



MY FAVORITE MISTAKE

- Bitches Who Brunch
- Becca Loveridge, co-founder, Bitches Who Brunch
- Cori Sue Morris, co-founder, Bitches Who Brunch

A HUB SUPREME

- IQ by Intel
- American Express' Open Forum
- Facebook
- Mark Zuckerberg
- Demand Gen Report
- HubSpot
- Canva
- Adobe-owned Behance, 99U



BEEN THERE, DONE THAT

- Mitch Joel, host, *Six Pixels of Separation* podcast
- Mirum



who's
inside



SOCIAL SEEN

- Ricardo Arias-Nath, CMO, PepsiCo
- Lynn Vojvodich, former CMO, Salesforce
- Matthew Luhn, storytelling and innovation expert, formerly of Pixar
- Kim Caviness, chief content officer, Imagination
- Arnaud Coltery, co-founder, Stand Up for Passion platform
- Paul Begala, political contributor, CNN
- Steve Rubel, chief content strategist, Edelman
- Andy Raskin, NPR commentator
- Christoph Trappe, senior director of content marketing and content creation, MedTouch
- Monika Schulze, global head of marketing, Zurich Insurance
- Ann Handley, chief content officer, MarketingProfs
- Garr Reynolds, author, *Presentation Zen*

WORLDVIEW

- Sergio Liscia, digital and business development director, Wolters Kluwer Italy
- Corriere.it
- eMarketer



ME TOO

- Snapchat
- Nielsen
- Association of Surfing Professionals (now World Surf League)
- *The Economist*
- *The Wall Street Journal*
- Instagram



THE LEDE

- Samsung
- IDC
- Tom Mainelli, VP for devices and AR/VR, IDC
- Moosejaw
- Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, Vegas VR app
- Folio:
- Backlinko
- Cisco
- Twitter
- Omni Media Group
- Content Marketing Institute
- Wealth-X
- NFP
- Gauthier Vincent, head, Deloitte's U.S. Wealth Management
- Chase
- theSkimm
- Brian Becker, executive director and head of content, digital team, JPMorgan Chase
- Digiday
- John Legere, CEO, T-Mobile
- Pepsi, #PepsiHalftime
- Davey Alba, staff writer, *Wired*
- Amazon, Alexa
- Gartner
- Adam Marchick, CEO, VoiceLabs
- *Ad Age*
- Cavan Sieczkowski, deputy director of news and analytics, Huffington Post
- Mashable
- Josh Jackson, co-founder and editor-in-chief, *Paste*
- *Paste*
- *Spin*
- Amazon, *Good Girls Revolt*
- Stephen Blackwell, chief strategy officer, Billboard-Hollywood Reporter Media Group
- CNBC
- Blue Apron
- Greg Fitzgerald, director of acquisition marketing, Blue Apron
- The Drum
- YouTube
- Olapic
- Getty Images
- MuslimGirl.com
- Pam Grossman, director of visual trends, Getty Images
- The Committees of Advertising Practice
- Felix Morgan, senior strategist and innovation lead, Livify

GET REAL

- Hillarybeatrump.org
- 2017 Edelman Trust Barometer
- *The New York Times*
- David Rubin, SVP, head of brand, *The New York Times*
- Michael Hickins, director of strategic communications, Oracle
- Sherri Chien-Niclas, former director of enterprise content strategy and storytelling, Symantec
- Paul Tyler, chief marketing officer, Phoenix Life Insurance Co., New York
- Symantec's *Internet Security Threat Report*
- Breitbart
- Pew Research Center
- NBC News
- *The Wall Street Journal*
- Facebook
- Google
- Kathleen Schaub, vice president, CMO Advisory Service, IDC
- FactCheck.org

BIG DATA

- PwC's *CEO Viewpoint 2017* and *Total Retail 2017*
- U.S. Department of Commerce
- Business Intelligence
- SapientNitro's *Global Retailing in the Digital Age*
- National Retail Federation and Forrester's *The State of Retailing Online 2017*
- Boston Retail Partners' *POS/Customer Engagement Survey*

orange Q&A

- Cheryl Durst, EVP and CEO, International Interior Design Association



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Finders, Keepers: Your Guide to Managing Sources
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