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The Three-Legged Stool Strategy

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

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

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

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

Print and Events? Really?

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

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

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

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

Yours in content,



Joe Pulizzi

Founder

Content Marketing Institute

@JoePulizzi



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



While most of your competitors are focusing on digital experiences only, savvy brands see the opportunities offline.



CHIEF CONTENT OFFICER

OCTOBER 2016

WHAT'S ONLINE

IN EVERY ISSUE

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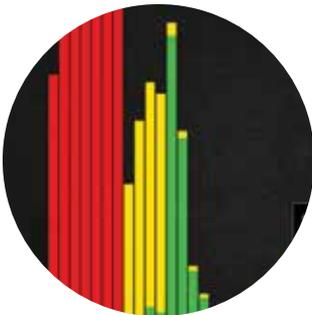
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WHAT'S ONLINE

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News, Rants & Raves, and Example of the Week

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Content Marketing Research and Trends Outlook

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<http://cmi.media/hire30>



GUILLAUME DECUGIS

7 Ways Technology Can Make You a Smarter Content Marketer

<http://cmi.media/smarttech>



PATRICK GARVEY

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NEVER FEAR; A SOCIAL MEDIA EVENT PLAN IS HERE. SOCIAL SUPERPOWERS ... ACTIVATE.

Amy Higgins

1. FIRE UP THE ENGINE

Once you have a confirmed date and location, start promoting your event through social media—even if you haven't finalized all the details.

PRO TIP!

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

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

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

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

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

2. LEVERAGE YOUR SPEAKERS

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

TIMELINE As you book each speaker

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

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

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



#HASHTAGS

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

CHOOSE WISELY, YOUNG GRASSHOPPER

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

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

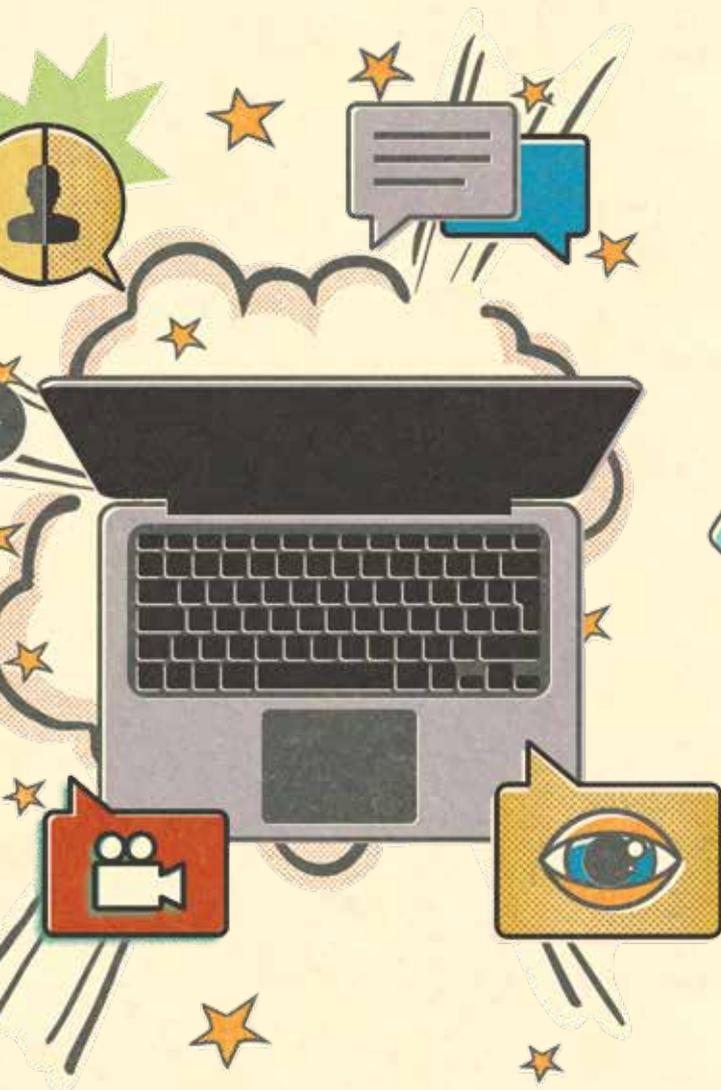
Use your hashtag in every spot possible ... even underfoot. People will take photos at your event to post on social media so give them plenty of opportunities to spread your hashtag.



- **Recurring event? Consider using the same hashtag every year to build your following.**
- **Presenting at an event? Piggyback on the event hashtag by adding your brand at the end (e.g., #SXSWZendesk)**

3. ENGAGE INFLUENTIAL ATTENDEES

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



TIMELINE At least two weeks before event

SEEK INFLUENCERS AMONG ATTENDEES As RSVPs roll in, examine social profiles to find out if you've attracted influencers to your event (usually someone with over 1,000 followers). Then begin a conversation with those individuals beforehand, asking for a chance to meet IRL for a one-on-one conversation at the event. This kind of outreach can help you build a strong, lasting relationship with your influencers and their network.

SHARE THE LOVE Don't let your social channels be all about you. Curate your influencers' content to help create a diverse and interesting social feed for all to enjoy.

CONDUCT PRE-EVENT INTERVIEWS Reach out to your attendees directly for interviews. Ask them simple questions about the event that others might be asking themselves. (You can publish the interview in a blog or even a podcast.) Why are they attending the event? Is this their first time attending? What are they looking forward to the most? Which session are they looking forward to? Do they have a conference crush on anyone? (OK, just kidding on that last one.) The goal is to create awareness about your event and increase reach by using attendees' networks.

4. USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO BUILD ANTICIPATION

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

TIMELINE As RSVPs roll in

OPEN A CHANNEL When attendees register, send them something via social that might be of interest to them, and only them. If you notice they are coming from out of town, share a local landmark they may want to visit. (Since I have #bacon on my Twitter profile, I've had event organizers recommend where to eat bacon close to the event's location.) By acknowledging them, you help create an open dialogue that will last well beyond the event.

BANTER BEFORE THE BIG DAY Even beyond the first touchpoint, keep the conversation going, particularly as the big day nears (e.g., What session are you looking forward to?).



Find out the four secrets to building social momentum. <http://cmi.media/4secrets>



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

5. HOST A PRE-EVENT

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

TIMELINE Weeks or days before your event

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

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

6. ENGAGE SPONSORS

TIMELINE Once confirmed, during and after event

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

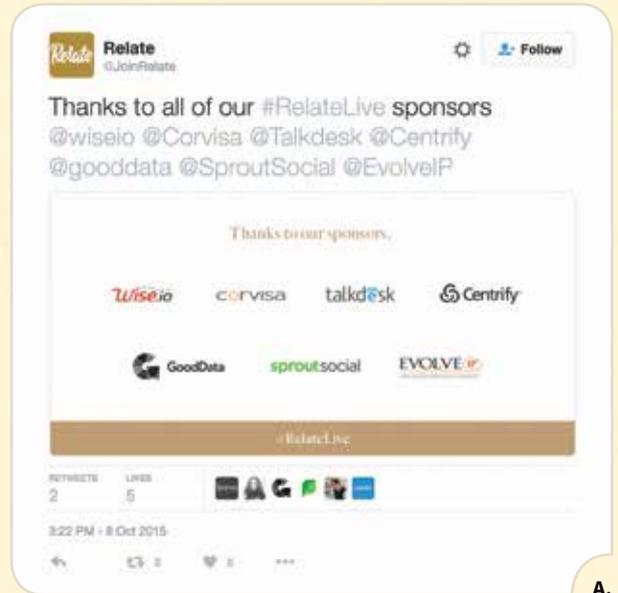
PRO TIP!

There are many ways to thank your sponsors besides the traditional nod at the podium. Consider these ideas:

- Share thank-you slide showcasing all sponsors with link to event.
- Share photos of gifts/swag at event.
- Ask for quotes to share.

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

Amy Higgins is the head of content marketing at ZOZI. Follow her @AmyWHiggins.



A.



B.



C.

CONVENING C-LEVEL EXECUTIVES

FIND THE KEY STRATEGIES TO ATTRACT UPPER-RUNG LEADERSHIP TO YOUR LIVE EVENTS—
FROM CO-CREATING AGENDAS TO ORGANIZING MORE INTIMATE GATHERINGS.

Roanne Neuwirth

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

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

Content—or your event's agenda—is the primary hook and it needs to be tailored specifically to your C-suite audience. Executives seek intriguing, surprising or useful ideas that address their greatest business challenges. They also crave solutions that push beyond common wisdom. Outcomes and impact matter; benefits and features don't. Executives often shy away from events—particularly those held by vendors—because they fear the sales

pitch. Keep the content focused on the two or three things they need to do to create value now, shared in the form of a story, and you will get their attention.

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

Connection to peers and experts makes the case for relevance. Executives value insights from those they consider their true peers, and they appreciate the opportunity to listen to and learn from the source. Craft the speaker roster with peer leaders who can share their case studies and lessons learned, and take the opportunity to engage your own executive clients as presenters. Also consider external experts whom participants identify as thought provoking and inspirational. Keep in mind that this is not the time to parade your product

managers across the stage; their messages likely won't resonate with the audience and could detract from the strategic nature of the conversation.

These three elements are requisite for attracting the C-suite to your events, but they are not necessarily sufficient. It's also important to take stock of why you want to engage executives through an event, and where you are starting from in making the ask. If you don't have a relationship or some connection in your

business to your target executives, getting them to care about your event will be a stretch without a hook or context of some kind. If you are relying on a third party to make cold calls to fill the seats, chances are you will find it a challenge to extend the conversation beyond the meeting, which won't help your business.

Consider these approaches in shaping your plans for your next executive event and helping boost attendance.

1.

Understand your target.

Ask yourself why you want to convene that particular set of executives. Do you know what issues they care about? Do you have credible knowledge to share to help them? Who in your own organization has a relationship to them? What do you want to come out of the event—and is the conversation sustainable by your sales teams and client executives beyond the event? The value proposition should be clear on both sides, or you may want to reconsider your target. For example, if you sell marketing technology, while chief marketing officers are on every vendor's "must-engage" list, their deputy or peer responsible for marketing technology may be more interested in your message and better able to engage in a valuable dialogue.

2.

Connect to a peer core group.

One way we establish relevance with a targeted audience is to (a) create a steering committee of peer executives to advise on the program, or (b) connect the program to a customer advisory board or council composed of those peers. Obtaining early input and guidance on what makes a compelling event agenda is critical to turn would-be attendees into co-creators and peer evangelists.

3.

Leverage your senior executives.

Enlisting your own C-suite to help host a peer conversation is a great tool to draw in others and build credibility. If you are hoping to convene CIOs at your next event, for example, get your CIO to serve as the draw by sharing his or her story as part of the program. Commitment from your own executive team reinforces your focus on value-added exchange.

4.

Start small and intimate.

Given their interest in connecting with peers and exchanging ideas, one way to court executives and demonstrate your value as a convener is by hosting small events, such as dinners or forums. Seeded with the right content and attendee mix, these types of sessions create the kind of focused environments executives value, away from the throngs of attendees who flood larger events. If you're trying to attract the C-suite to the large events you run, consider creating a special executive track or pre-event forum. As you build credibility over time you will find it easier to bring in a larger size C-level audience.

5.

Think engagement, not attendance.

I often hear from marketers that even when they can get executives to come to one event, the executives won't come back to the next one. This makes it more difficult to use events to build relationships and create an exchange of value over time. With an executive audience, this tends to happen when the meeting team is more focused on filling a seat quota rather than creating the right dialogue, or when the content is salesy, tactical and unconnected to a broader, more strategic exchange of ideas. Executives want to do things that bring them value, and will stick with you if you overcome these pitfalls. Viewing your events as one element of your more comprehensive engagement strategy will help refocus on what it takes to get traction with this audience.

The bottom line is you can attract the C-suite to your events, and even make them look forward to coming again and again. But there are no shortcuts; convening worthy peers and valuable ideas is paramount. With the right strategy, setting and audience, you will find your events C-suite worthy. ☞

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



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more attendees

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10.2X
more attendees

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more attendees

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4.8X
more attendees

Keep it simple.



4.6X
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meetings

quickmobile

bizzabo

CITRIX[®]

GoToWebinar

Poll Everywhere

Here's a sampling of solution providers mentioned frequently by marketers at events.

EVENT MARKETING PLATFORMS

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

Cvent

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

Attend

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

RegOnline

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

etouches

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

Bizzabo

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

ONLINE EVENTS

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

GoToWebinar

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

ON24

With a strong focus on delivering leads, ON24 offers webinar and video-marketing solutions. The webinar

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

MOBILE APPS

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

doubledutch

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

quickmobile

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

CrowdCompass (by Cvent)

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

AUDIENCE-PARTICIPATION TOOLS

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

Poll Everywhere

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

Crowd Mics

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

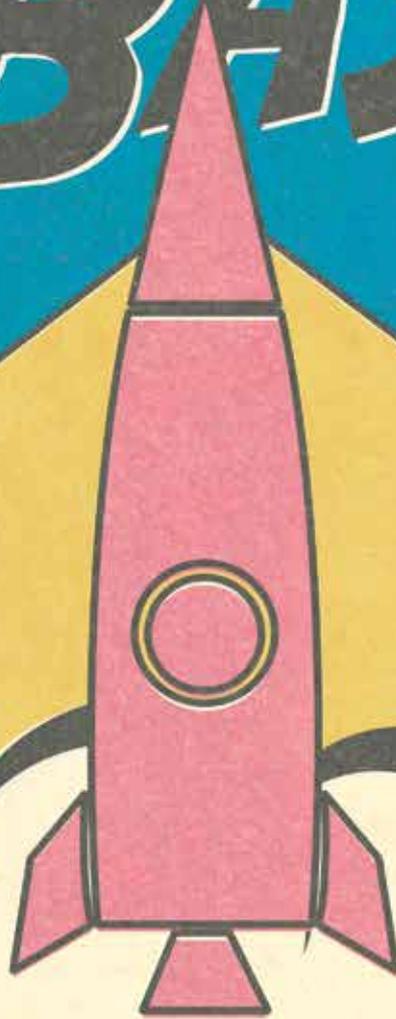
Glisser

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

Mobilized Meetings

Let attendees get all conference information in one stop: news, vendor maps, agendas, speaker profiles. The app can even handle ticketing and shopping integration. 

BEYOND THE BASICS



*KELLEY WHETSELL, THE MAGIC-MAKER BEHIND
CONTENT MARKETING WORLD, INDEPENDENT EVENT
PLANNER AND PRESIDENT OF MEETING DEMANDS,
DISCUSSES WHAT IT TAKES TO ELEVATE LIVE EVENTS
FROM MIDDLING TO MASTERFUL.*

Clare McDermott

Elevate content above all else

If the goal of your event is to grow your audience or to make them more engaged with your brand, then offering stellar content is your primary focus—be it inspiring, educational or entertaining.

Kelley Whetsell says some of the best events she's been involved with focus on setting a future-looking agenda rather than simply reflecting current realities and problems.

How do you do that? "A lot of the events I've overseen have the benefit of an editorial team—something I strongly recommend," she explains. These individuals understand your industry's critical challenges, Whetsell says, and are experts at identifying exciting new ideas. "I've been lucky to work with people who played this role: Joe Pulizzi and Robert Rose from Content Marketing Institute and John Brandt, former editor in chief of Penton Media's IndustryWeek, among others. They are great listeners and analyzers. They identify trends before others do and even borrow ideas from other industries to describe what the future may look like."

Engage attendees

You may be focused on content and logistics, but these days the mark of a masterful event is also how well you engage your attendees before, during and after the event. "Simply hosting an event isn't enough to expand your brand

anymore," explains Whetsell. "You need to think about getting people to engage with you and with each other—things that go beyond ordinary networking." Engagement can come in the form of Twitter shout-outs to registrants, apps for gamification or even platforms that help attendees interact with speakers during sessions. (See page 17 for a rundown of event-marketing and execution technologies.)

Match technology to your attendee profile

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

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

Consider alternative formats

Content Marketing World follows a more classic event format: general session, break-out meetings and an expo hall for sponsors. That format is effective and successful for many events, but don't rule out non-traditional formats, says Whetsell. For example, if you work for a venture-capital firm, you might host an event heavy on one-to-one access—or what Whetsell calls "speed dating for business." Or for complex topics, you may consider a deconstructed conference session, where attendees receive homework ahead of time and come prepared to encounter more of a workshop-style curriculum. "To pull that off, you need the right speakers who can adapt quickly to their audience's interests and sophistication," says Whetsell.

Take evaluations seriously

Most events hand out surveys for attendees to rate speakers and venue-related experiences. The mark of great event planning, says Whetsell, is the extent to which these results guide future decision-making. "I find organizers may read surveys initially, but then don't revisit them as they plan for the following year," she says.

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

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

Don't forget small details

"The atmosphere you create adds to the energy of your event," says Whetsell. By tending to seemingly smaller details, you can incrementally improve attendees' experience not just of the event, but of your brand. For Content Marketing World, those small details range from how the venue and culinary team make use of the signature orange color, to the sunny disposition of all event staff who return year after year and become part of the experience for repeat visitors. Whetsell also underlines the absolute drop-dead importance of running on time. As she says, "It's a sign of respect to attendees that we take very seriously." ☺



Kelley Whetsell

Need to know more about using data? Learn how to measure engagement the right way. <http://cmi.media/measure>



DATA

TELLS

A

STORY



Scott Berinato is the senior editor of Harvard Business Review and author of *Good Charts: The HBR Guide to Making Smarter, More Persuasive Data Visualizations*. He is passionate about the transformative power of data visualization inside organizations. We spoke to Berinato about how he uses data visualization at Harvard Business Review and why he thinks we are living on the cusp of a visual data revolution.

Clare McDermott

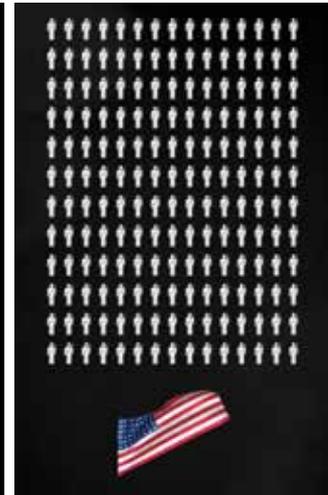
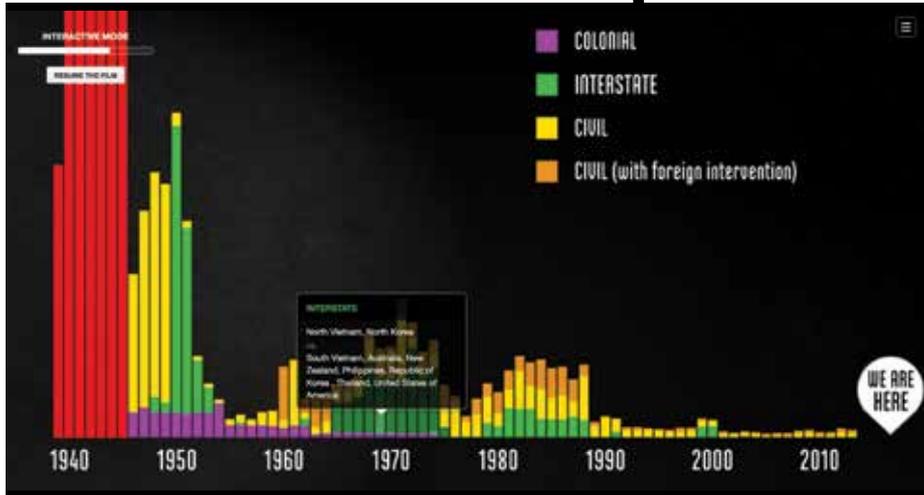


Scott Berinato's book, *Good Charts*, is a primer for non-experts to understand the basic tenets of data visualization. For both content marketers and business managers, effective data visualization is much more than creating a flashy graphic. Good charts, he explains, are a way of crystallizing complex ideas into easily understandable and sharable visuals. His book shares the neuroscience behind visual thinking, a planning methodology for choosing appropriate charts and related illustrations, and case studies of companies that use charts to solve complex business problems.

CCO: What's a real-life example of how good data visualization can be a transformative?

Scott Berinato: One that sticks out for me (and one that I've been studying) is Tesla, the car company. They've integrated visualization into their operations and way of working. Tesla cars have so many sensors in them—they're like rolling data generators. What's really impressive to me is Tesla is beginning to see trends about how people *actually* drive versus how Tesla *suspects* they drive.

A simple example: Tesla can see the air pressure in tires over time. It can see when people refill, when pressure drops dramatically and when it rises. This information not only changes how Tesla engineers its cars, but changes how it communicates with customers about taking care of their cars.



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

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

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

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

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

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

Why is it so few do it well?

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

Data Visualization Mastery

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

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

1

The author constructed a narrative. He turned data into a story with a setup, conflict and resolution.

2

He used animation in the right way—to demonstrate change. He's not decorating with animation.

3

He only uses three types of charts: stacked bars, unit charts and stacked area charts.

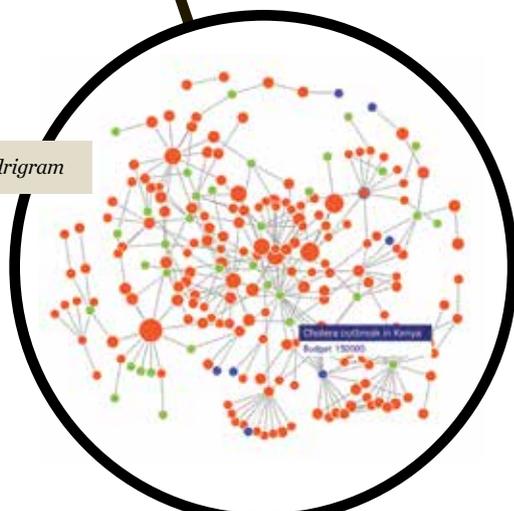
When people think about the future of data visualization, they think about three-dimensional and crazy chart forms. This video shows you can tell a gripping, contemporary visual story with just three chart types, basic animation and a simple narration.



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

Continued on 22

Quadrigram



Tools for Data Visualization Neophytes

Scott Berinato advises that no tool can replace the *people* you surround yourself with: “The most important thing you can do is have a data friend and a design friend who can help you do the process I outline in the book.”

If you don’t have access to those people, or if you simply want to practice your own data-visualization skills, Berinato says the key is to play and experiment with the vast ecosystem of tools out there. “I’m trying to learn as many as I can. The tools change so fast it’s unbelievable—but they are getting better all the time,” he says.

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

Continued from page 21

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

In recent years, marketers have had a love affair with infographics. Unfortunately, the quality of research behind those graphics is often a dud.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Kristen Pettersen

Subscriptions Marketing Manager, Institutional Investor



contentmarketingconf.com

FUELED BY AN ATHLETE'S HEART

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

Clare McDermott

ABOUT adidas GROUP

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



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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Kirsten Keck: GamePlan A embodies a new strategic approach for us, one that emphasizes content marketing as a part of the communications mix. For us content marketing doesn't necessarily mean moving away from a product-based approach—in our industry people want to know when the latest shoe drops, what it looks like and where they can buy it. But we also know some want more than that. They choose what they



ISSUE 01 • 2016

THE FIRST BUSINESS LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE FUELED BY SPORT.

adidas GROUP'S CONTENT CREATION JOURNEY

Kristen Keck's team came up with a documented methodology—the Content Creation Journey—to vet new ideas and ensure they are on point with the group's overall objectives. It includes the following stages:

1. GamePlan A DNA

First, the editorial team asks, "Does the topic showcase the feeling we want readers to experience in every story (e.g., spirit powered by sport)?"

2. Mega Theme

Next, writers must question which overarching theme the topic touches. Mega Themes reflect the intersection of what's important to adidas Group combined with what the target audience is interested in; they include creativity, innovation and trends, intrapreneurship and collaboration. One story might be a fit for various Mega Themes but should ideally focus on one.

3. Trigger

With the DNA and Mega Theme defined, writers must ask what "trigger" will cause individuals to share a story. Triggers are predefined and include, for example, a reader's desire to optimize or advance his or her life, or to position themselves for success. The content that readers choose to share says something about who they strive to be.

4. Category

Next, a writer must define the story's category, which is the organizing principle on the GamePlan A website, such as "in balance" or "skill drill." These help readers find new content.

5. Content Guide

Finally, editors can find practical tips and rules (like "how to write a headline") in the Content Guide—an editorial style guide that includes answers to common questions and concerns.

wear or what company they work for to showcase who they are and their attitude about life.

Author and speaker Andrew Davis, once said, "Content builds relationships. Relationships are built on trust. Trust drives revenue." Our primary focus is not on driving revenue but building trust. GamePlan A is our way to add genuine value to our target audience's lives, build relationships with like-minded people (we define them as "creators and entrepreneurial minds with an athlete's heart") and nourish our own culture by intensifying the connection between our external and internal target groups.

Having a clearly defined target group and content strategy makes our job easier because it gives us focus. The more people you try to talk to, the more generic and meaningless your content becomes. Good content marketing isn't about reaching all people, but about reaching the right people with relevant information.

Our stakeholders understand that people's trust, admiration and appreciation (and eventually

advocacy) for the adidas Group influences their decision to work for us, invest in us or buy our products. Managing the company's reputation (as a measure of trust) has a direct impact on business results.

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

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

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

EXPANDING THE EDITORIAL TEAM

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



Influencers

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

life with an athlete's heart and become their business life's MVP), we developed tools like a simple content creation journey, which helps the team find the right story-angle(s). [See sidebar pg. 25]

From there, it's all about constant education and communication. We are in touch daily at a conversational level, host weekly editorial meetings and organize quarterly content/target audience workshops.

How do you ensure stories are distributed widely and gain followers?

Thomas: We're focused on unlocking the full potential of our existing followership instead of just blindly chasing new followers. One important driver of this is optimizing our content. We look at general content KPIs, as well as specific content characteristics that originate from the Content Creation Journey (e.g., Mega Themes and Triggers, see sidebar pg. 25) and adapt our content based on patterns.

While we share simple metrics with the wider team in an open dashboard, we'll present and discuss more complex findings in our editorial meeting to improve future content.

We also A/B test headlines and images in our social networks, measure native advertising and sponsored content campaigns, and optimize all promotion activities towards quality traffic (looking at bounce rates, conversions, etc.)

In terms of distribution, we use a mix of tactics that are constantly evolving. One of our most important channels currently is LinkedIn. Nevertheless, we are also expanding our ecosystem of touch points where it makes sense.

We also try to involve the community in shaping GamePlan A. We co-create content with influencers and sports figures, and also invite community members to contribute.

Sports Figures

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



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

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

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

This is why we created a digital hub that promotes tackling work-life with an athlete's heart, be it at the adidas Group or

Community Members

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



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WHAT CAN MARKETERS LEARN FROM THE ATHLETE'S MINDSET?

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

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

WHAT HABITS MAKE YOU MORE PRODUCTIVE?

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

“

We want to fuel those who are
FUELED BY SPORT.



On GamePlan-A.com

Frank Thomas shares how to use a sports mindset to juice creativity.
<http://cmi.media/gameplana>

”

anywhere else. GamePlan A is also an invitation for everyone with an athlete's heart to take an active role. We want it to be their go-to place to connect with like-minded people and get support in combining an athletic lifestyle with creative and entrepreneurial ambitions.

What are the biggest challenges you face as a team? Individually?

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

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



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That Help Them Keep Their Edge.

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contentinstitute.com](mailto:techtools@contentinstitute.com).



What's your favorite webinar tool?



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

KATHLEEN SMITH, THE CONTENT CANVAS, @1KATHLEENSMITH

ON24

Thanks to ON24, our webinar program is a primary channel for getting leads in the door, but even more critical in helping us move existing leads further down the funnel. Since switching to ON24, we've generated 40 percent more leads and over \$150,000 in pipeline.

JEFF PERKINS, CMO, QASYMPHONY @JEFFPERKINS8



CROWDCAST.IO

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

DERRIC HAYNIE, REBRANDLY, @SIXPEPPERS



GOTOWEBINAR (CITRIX)

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

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

STEF MILLER, EVERWISE, @SUPAHSTEF



GOOGLE HANGOUTS ON AIR & FACEBOOK LIVE

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

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

NATALIE BIDNICK ANDREAS, DIGITAL CONSULTANT, @NATALIEBID



ADOBE CONNECT & MEGAMEETING

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

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

ALEXANDER GROSU, INSEGMENT, @ALEXANDERGROSU

DEPARTMENT EDITOR



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

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



Brexit, Algorithms and Filter Bubbles

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

Jonathan Crossfield

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

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

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

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

I can’t trust my social media feeds anymore. My various streams, timelines and news feeds made

it easy to believe it was impossible that the United Kingdom would vote to leave the European Union; that Australia would re-elect the Liberal government; and that Donald Trump would become the Republican nominee.

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

I don’t rely on social media for my news and current affairs, so I was aware from other sources that the EU referendum and Australian election were going to be much tighter than any social media commentary might suggest. Yet many demographics increasingly get most of their news and opinion

from social, without always clicking to read the detailed analysis behind the slogans and headlines. No wonder so many Remain voters were shocked and surprised by the outcome of the EU referendum. These trends also make filter bubbles open to politically motivated manipulation.

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

“Somehow it seems to fill my head with ideas—only I don’t exactly know what they are!”

Alice, *Through the Looking Glass*, Chapter One

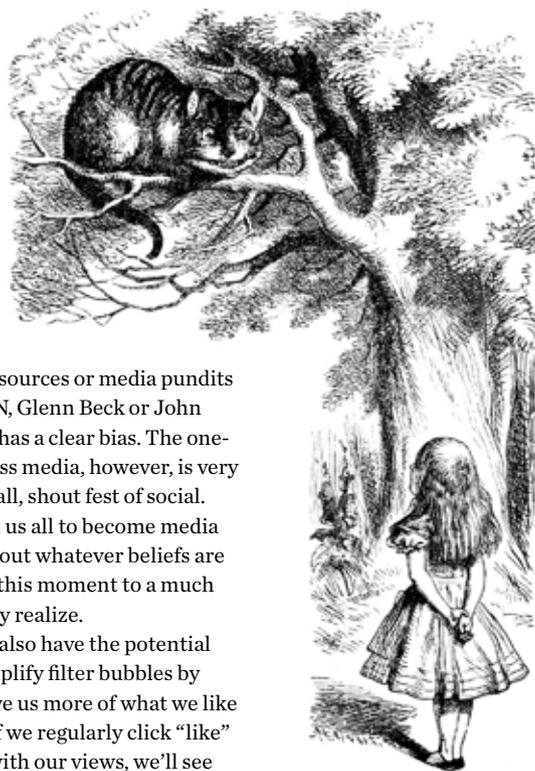
“What I tell you three times is true”

We are bombarded with so much content and information every day that conscious or unconscious filters are not only inevitable but also necessary to help us make sense of it all.

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

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

Echo chambers are nothing new. We’ve always



had a choice of which news sources or media pundits to follow—Fox News or CNN, Glenn Beck or John Oliver. Each choice usually has a clear bias. The one-way broadcast nature of mass media, however, is very different from the free-for-all, shout fest of social.

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

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

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

“You know very well you’re not real”

What can marketers learn from this? Can filter bubbles prevent your content or message from getting through to the very people you hope to reach? The short answer is “yes,” and it’s probably only going to get harder as increasing social media dependencies, algorithms and the sheer amount of competing content further change the landscape.

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

1. Are you trapped in your own filter bubble?

Businesses and marketers can be just as blinded by filter bubbles as anyone else—particularly when guessing at the beliefs, wants and behaviors of their target customers or audiences.

One clear example was the excruciatingly painful social media campaign by the Stronger In Europe camp that targeted young voters. The #VoteIn campaign (“Vote In”, get it?) worked on the not-

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

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

very-deep-nor-accurate insight that young people sometimes drop their “g” when talking. A video was pushed in social that combined grating third-rate electronica beats with fast edits of “yoof” stuff like partying and graffiti; overlaid with chunky captions such as WORKIN, EARNIN, RAVIN, CHATTIN, SHARIN, LIVIN, GOIN, etc.

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

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

2. Will your information even be trusted inside someone else’s filter bubble?

What might make perfect logical sense in one filter bubble might seem like nonsense in another,

particularly when it draws upon differing assumptions.

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

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

3. Are you addressing the right issues?

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

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

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

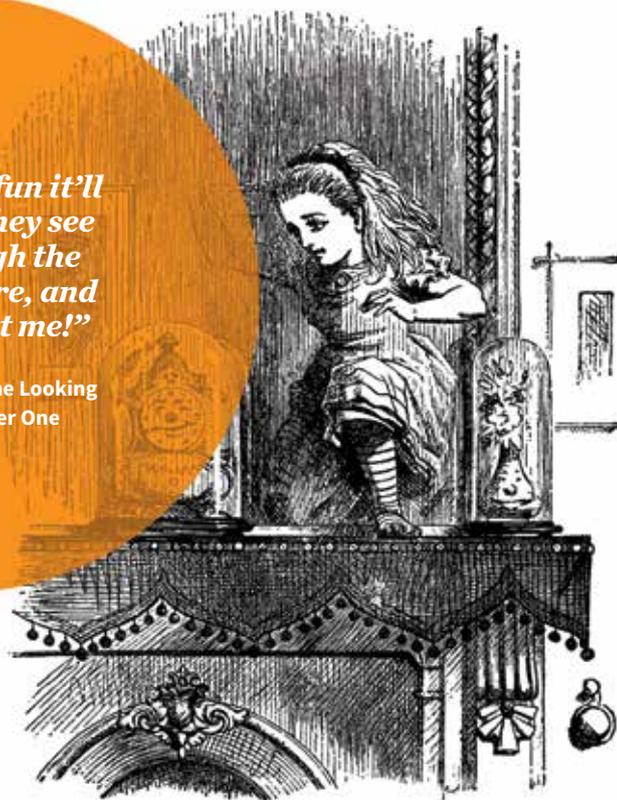
Instead, consider the different ways in which each persona will form distinct filter bubbles within those networks, shaping their attitudes and opinions. Will your content be welcomed or ridiculed? Will it even reach them at all or might it be filtered out for not appealing to the opinions and themes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

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

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

“Oh, what fun it’ll be, when they see me through the glass in here, and can’t get at me!”

Alice, *Through the Looking Glass*, Chapter One



DEPARTMENT EDITOR



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

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Identifying Influencers

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

Andrea Lehr

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

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

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

Source: Augure, "State of Influencer Engagement 2015" conducted by Schlesinger Associates, June 18, 2015.



Main Challenges of Influencer Marketing

% of respondents

Identify the right influencers

75%

Find the right engagement tactics

69%

Measure the performance of your programs

53%

Keep track of your influencers' activity

32%

Automate your engagement processes

26%

Find budget for your campaigns

26%

Find/train qualified staff

8%



1

Find and follow as many experts as possible

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

2

Reciprocity is essential

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

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

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

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

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

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



INFLUENCER TOOLS

BuzzSumo users can plug in keywords and discover the Twitter handles of accounts sharing similar keyword-related content. Filters allow users to sort handles by reach, authority, influence and engagement. An added bonus? When you're done researching, you can easily export all the results to use in other platforms.

Individual social networks also offer keyword search features to vet influencers. Keep in mind you also want to look at the type of conversations they're having, specifically if and how they talk about your industry and outreach.

Try specialized tools. If you're particularly interested in specific channels—Instagram, Pinterest or Snapchat to name a few—consider adding a niche tool to your arsenal.

ViralWoot, for example, is a go-to Pinterest tool that can help you track down influencers on that channel. GhostCodes helps find leaders to follow on Snapchat. And Iconosquare helps suss which of your Instagram followers are influencers in their own right.



Need more? Find five ways to get noticed by influencers on Twitter: <http://cmi.media/influencers>



3

Don't confuse reach with influence

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

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

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

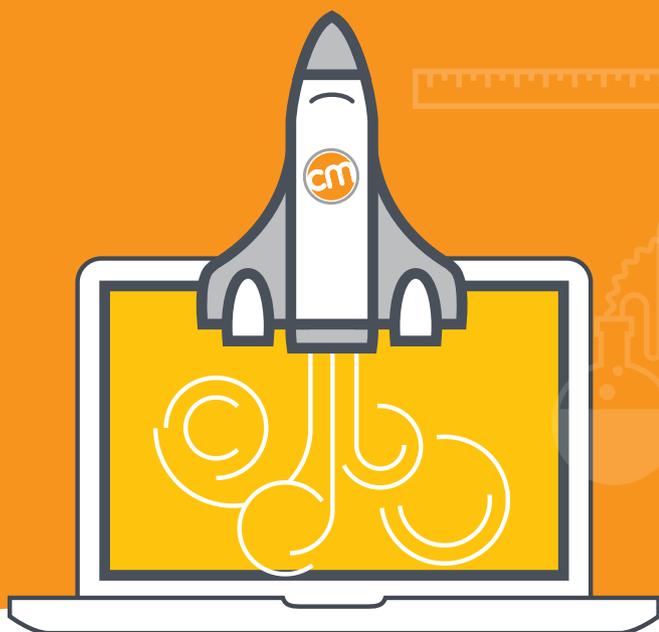
- **Relevance:** Figure out whether the content shared by the influencer connects with your brand. If the connection is a stretch, move elsewhere.
- **Engagement:** Take a look at some of the influencer's top posts (i.e., those which earned high social shares) to get an idea of their overall engagement.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

Remember that each step is bringing you closer to an influencer's level of authority. The more trust they have within their industry, the more likely they can push your prospect further along the buyer's journey.

Final thoughts

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

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



And the Winner Is ...

CMI launched our inaugural Leadership Guide earlier this year to help marketers sift through the avalanche of content-related tools and find those that belong at the top. We asked you, our savvy and discerning readers, to vote for the technology providers that you believe are demonstrating leadership and vision. Our readers spoke, and you chose video marketing platform, **Brightcove**.

What helps content creators raise the bar to new levels of excellence? Who has their finger on the pulse of content marketing's future? You need only take a look at the technologies that emerged from our readers' responses to find out.

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

With a twelve-year track record in the video space, Brightcove's far-reaching vision into content marketing's future needs little introduction.

They were literally doing video before it was cool.

Caren Cioffi, Brightcove's senior vice president and general manager of digital marketing and enterprise business, has been there since day one.

"We had zero customers," she recalls. "Just this notion that video would one day be as ubiquitous as text on the web." Brightcove believed in the power of video to move people, to evoke emotion, and, as Cioffi puts it, "to make the intangible tangible."

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

Believing that video is crucial to marketing success, Brightcove has worked hard to create a one-

click solution for teams that are a little intimidated by hitting the digital airwaves.

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

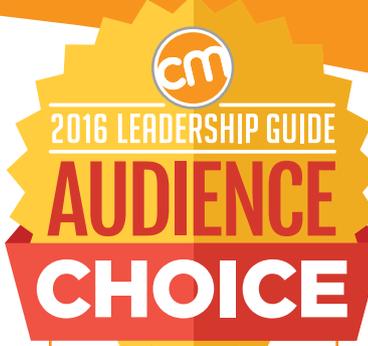
Given their strong showing in our Audience Choice voting, Brightcove's commitment to simplifying video for novices while still creating advanced solutions for sophisticated media publishers has clearly endeared them to the content marketing world.

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

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

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

And Cioffi is confident that their customers will keep driving Brightcove to improve: "We have the most forward thinking customers. Everyday they're pushing boundaries, and that pushes us to keep innovating." 



2016 LEADERSHIP GUIDE
AUDIENCE CHOICE

2016 Audience Choice Category Winners

Creation/Workflow/ Experience
DIVVY^{HQ}

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Analytics/Data/ Optimization

 | **Content Science Review**



CONTENT MARKETER *of* THE YEAR



AMANDA TODOROVICH,
DIRECTOR OF CONTENT MARKETING, CLEVELAND CLINIC

She started her content marketing journey at Cleveland Clinic with a three-person team and a vision. Now, it's one of the most visited health-care destinations online.

Dawn Papandrea

When asked what she thinks is the coolest part of her job, Amanda Todorovich explains, “We’re not driven by a top-down mandated goal.” Instead, she and her team dream up big audacious “what-ifs” and set ambitious goals for themselves. The fun, she says, is seeing the self-driven, aggressive approach pay off year after year.

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

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

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

Content as an asset: Once Health Essentials’ readership reached a critical mass, Todorovich says serious discussions with the CMO began about how to start monetizing the traffic. They began by incorporating Google ads on their pages, which was a low-risk way to test reader reaction. Once they saw progress, the group explored options for strategic

partnerships, and formalized a major one in the first quarter of 2016 with About.com. “They handle the selling of ads, but we worked with them to define a policy and list of advertisers we would not allow. It involved the legal team, another layer of complexity,” she says.

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

In his column, Andrew Davis dishes out content marketing advice to unsuspecting targets. In this issue, Davis begs conference organizers to rethink the (boring) panel discussion.

Dear Event Organizer,

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

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

There's only one thing missing.

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

What's missing? One simple ingredient: conflict. Yep. That's it. You need some drama.

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

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

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

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

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

What do you say? Do we have a deal?

Whether you wanted it or not,
Andrew Davis

The discussions are not
enlightening, and the
banter is anything but
entertaining.

DEPARTMENT COLUMNIST



Andrew Davis is the author of *Town INC. Grow Your Business. Save Your Town. Leave Your Legacy*. Follow him @DrewDavisHere.

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—DIGIDAY SIGNAL AWARDS



A content smörgåsbord.

REAL LIFE: BLAKE KATHRYN

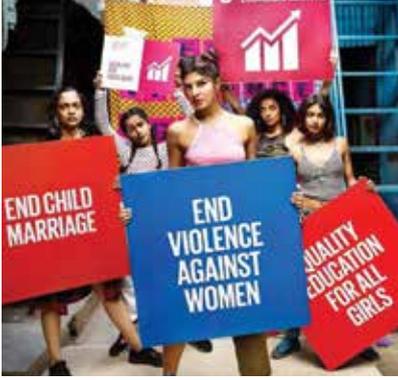
Living the Real Life with Snapchat

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

TAKE A RIDE WITH DEADMAU5 (AND ABSOLUT)



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



#WhatIReallyWant for Girls and Women

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



ORGANIZING EVENTS FOR EMPLOYEES

How does a company known for its software design and development work attract top talent? By embracing and celebrating its nerd culture. **The Nerdery**, based in Minneapolis, works hard to ensure it's "the best place in the world for nerds to work." To that end, it organizes an Overnight Website Challenge each year to rally employees (and would-be employees) around a worthwhile cause. Volunteer web experts form teams of 10 to knock out amazing websites for nonprofits in a 24-hour blitz. Since The Nerdery's first Overnight Website Challenge in 2008, volunteers have given more than \$6 million worth of professional services to 175 nonprofit organizations in communities in which the company has offices.

Backcountry Stories



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

GET GLUED TO COMCAST XFINITY

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



DEPARTMENT EDITOR



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



Creating Adaptable Personas

Most marketers are familiar with the basics of defining marketing personas to guide content creation and distribution, but too often they are developed and shelved for months or even years. It's time to consider a new, more iterative approach.

Andrea Fryrear

When marketers discuss personas, we're often talking about static, pristine, hyper-detailed profiles that we approach with reverence, eyes averted. These are marketing artifacts that should be seen, but not touched. After all, when you invest dozens (or hundreds) of hours into creating something, you don't want somebody coming along and getting their fingerprints all over it.

The problem with the persona-as-artifact approach is that our audience members aren't static, unchanging automatons. They're real people, and real people change. If we don't change with them, our content will soon find itself on the road to irrelevance.

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

Marketing as Market Research

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

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

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

IBM's Iterative Persona Success Story

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

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

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

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

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

Based on how the open-source evangelists were responding to the content, the IBM team decided to target Wired.com for content distribution, a channel that was definitely outside the box for LinuxONE.



IBM did a site-wide takeover of Wired.com, which included homepage and section native ads, custom announcement content and a livestream webcast event. Centerline took point on producing content for IBM that would speak to Wired’s audience. Initial estimates were that the campaign would bring in about 150 qualified leads; the final count was 417.

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

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

Small Moments of Reflection

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

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

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

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

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

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

Not the Answer

When creating personas, there’s a strong temptation to look for The Answer. We want to get check, “make persona” off our to-do list so we can move on to the next thing.

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

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

Andrea Fryrear is a content strategist and the editor in chief of TheAgileMarketer.net. She tweets about content and agility @andreadfryrear.

Iterative Personas Made Easy

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

Step 1: Create a “skinny” persona.

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

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

Step 2: Release content around the topic.

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

Step 3: Monitor the content closely.

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

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

Step 4: Move from ad hoc to anchor.

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

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



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