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**AUGUST 2014**

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CONTENT MARKETING STRATEGY FOR EXECUTIVES

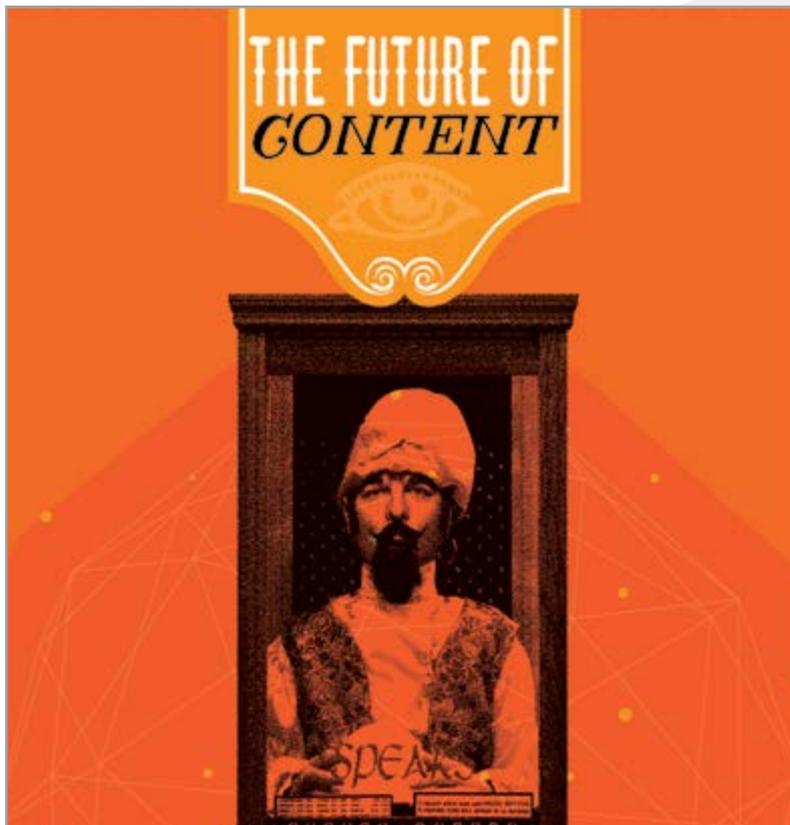
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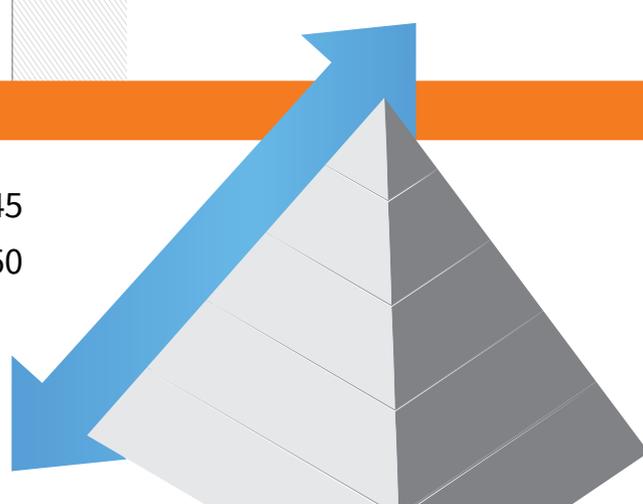
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CONTENT MARKETING STRATEGY FOR EXECUTIVES

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# Media Companies Have One Thing You Need

You can't go three pages on the web without some expert telling you that brands are the new publishers. Sure, brands are publishing a lot, they are flush with cash (compared to media companies), and are hiring journalists like it's Black Friday. But most brands are failing with their content marketing.

Here's what the research tells us: The majority of brands have no documented strategy for their content (which means they are publishing all over the place with no idea of what it's supposed to do for the business.)

## The One Thing

I've been discussing this topic with content marketer Barry Feldman and what we both realized is that brands are missing one key component. Our research shows there is one thing media companies include as part of their publishing strategies that brands lack: an editorial mission statement.

Let me explain. Every (and I mean every) online media company, trade magazine, niche publisher—and even the big boys like *Wall Street Journal* and *New York Times*—has an editorial mission statement.

I've worked with hundreds of publishing brands and every one of them has an editorial mission statement. Before launching dozens in my day, we always started with the editorial mission statement. Why? Because if the mission statement isn't right, everything else will go wrong. *Sports Illustrated* "covers the people, passions and issues of numerous sports with the journalistic integrity that has made it the conscience of all

sport. It is surprising, engaging and informative, and always with a point of view that puts its readers 'in the game.'"

*Sky & Telescope* magazine is "the world's leading compendium of timely and accurate information about the science and hobby of astronomy. Our magazine appeals to the devoted amateur looking to enhance observing skills and learn about the latest equipment, as well as to professionals and academics desiring to keep up with this dynamic field."

Brands create this kind of detail for their products and services, but almost never about the content they use to attract and retain customers. And that is exactly why most branded content is just awful.

Your mission statement needs to:

- Articulate your approach to the content and industry.
- Clearly define who the content is for.
- State how the content will satisfy the needs of readers.

So many brands fail at content marketing because they try to "boil the ocean" with their content (i.e. cover a bit of everything.) An editorial mission gets you focused on your readership and their needs.

## You may need more than one

Once you begin the process, you may find you need more than one editorial mission statement. Why? Because you have different buyers of your products and services, and each of these audience groups have different informational needs. Years ago when I worked for a large B2B publishing operation we had about 50 different reader groups. You know how many editorial mission statements we had? That's right ... 50.

The majority of brands have no documented strategy, which means they are publishing with no idea of what it's supposed to do for the business.

But don't get overwhelmed. Start small. Begin with your core audience first.

## What to do with it

Your editorial mission will become the core of all the content you create, a rallying cry for your team, and a beacon for your readers. Consider:

- **Posting it:** Include the mission statement where it can be found easily by your audience (just like media companies do,) such as on your blog.
- **Spreading it:** Make sure everyone involved in your content marketing process has the mission statement. Encourage them to print it out and pin it up on the wall.

The most important aspect of developing an editorial mission statement for your content is in how it will help you determine what not to do. Use it as a litmus test against every piece of information you publish (or don't publish.)



**Joe Pulizzi**  
Founder  
Content Marketing Institute  
@JoePulizzi



CONTENT  
MARKETING

# Magic

BY SARAH MITCHELL

Many brands build communities and even acquire fans, but precious few turn fandom into cult followers. **Black Milk**, a quirky Australian fashion brand, uses storytelling to chart the future of retail, social cliques and the so-called third shelf.

The great equalizer in attracting the new fashionista set is content, and no brand understands that better than Black Milk Clothing. The online retailer sells Spandex™ clothing, primarily tights, and is rapidly expanding to dresses, skirts and workout gear. What's so special about that? Black Milk is revolutionizing how online clothing brands use social channels and consumer-generated content to sell online. And it's getting bankable attention without fancy shop windows or big advertising campaigns. In fact, Black Milk has never advertised, never promoted a post or paid for a "like."

Cameron Parker, head of sales and marketing, admits it's difficult selling a form-fitting product online because there's no

way to try it on or feel it. When customers began taking selfies while wearing Black Milk tights, he saw an opportunity.

Parker wondered, "How can we use this great content?"

## THE POWER OF SOCIAL PROOF

Black Milk fans call themselves Sharkies (for their predatory love of the brand, in case you're wondering.) Sharkies across the globe support more than 60 private Facebook communities, among dozens of other social channels. Why so many? Early on, women of different shapes and sizes began posting photos of themselves on Instagram wearing their

Black Milk tights. Photos of real-life women wearing Black Milk tights offered inspiration to those concerned about fit. They also provided social proof that their fashion sense was right on the money.

To drive more Sharkie selfies, the brand created unique hashtags for each product. And Sharkies themselves started a trend to include clothing size in hashtags. The result: an always-on runway for women to see form-fitting clothing looking fantastic on any woman, not only waifish models.

“Social proof is absolutely fundamental,” explains Parker. “Sizing is a big thing. Hashtags for sizes has been invaluable in overcoming barriers.”

Hesitant buyers are encouraged to buy not only for the online camaraderie, but with full knowledge of what a product looks like on real women of their own size. Website and promotional videos feature a variety of women replete with tattoos, piercings and all manners of hair and make-up. Customer are more than fans, they’re Black Milk models and part of the Black Milk story.

### FANS ARE DESIGNERS TOO.

As Parker points out, it’s not just authenticity in images working in Black Milk’s favor; letting fans guide product development is also key. Sharkies are instrumental in setting themes for product lines like Game of Thrones, Harry Potter and Star Wars. This results in highly anticipated collections that become collector’s items with enviable regularity.

“Girls love talking to our designers. We probably do too much listening ... They’re quite demanding,” jokes Parker.

Parker and Black Milk founder James Lillis travel the world to attend Sharkie meetups—whether it’s a Vegas conference or a park bench in Perth, Western Australia. Being accessible to the customer base and fostering the intense, almost rabid loyalty of Sharkies is a cornerstone of Black Milk’s marketing strategy.

### DEMANDING GENERATION

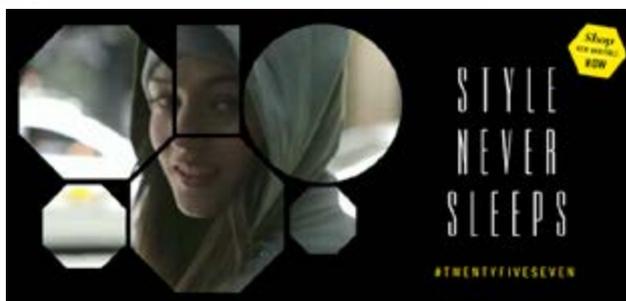
Of course all that loyalty and cliquishness can be a double-edged sword, as Black Milk discovered painfully on Star Wars Day in May 2014. Black Milk posted a message on Facebook in what it thought was self-effacing Australian humor. Essentially, Black Milk compared a vampish female dressed in Black Milk Star Wars tights, with the image of Mayim Bialik’s character in “The Big Bang Theory.” The comparison—meant to juxtapose hot vs. nerdy—was seen as offensive by many Sharkies who thought it contrary to the non-judgmental values Black Milk said it stood for. The brand compounded the problem by deleting posts and comments rather than ‘fessing up to the misstep immediately. Parker did eventually issue an apology ... but not before Black Milk got a quick lesson on what can happen when a brand pulls fans so close, and then disappoints them.

Parker admits they were slow to realize the extent of the



### FASHION FORWARD:

At left, Black Milk is best known for its graphic tights, many of which are now collector’s items. Below, Sportsgirl is yet another innovative Australian fashion brand.



problem. “Fans personalized it and it was not wise to defend it to the level we did,” he shares. “We don’t want to be boring, but finding the right balance is critical.”

An internal review of social media policies and procedures was immediately conducted. Intensified training focused on roleplaying was implemented for what is arguably one of the best social media teams in Australia. Parker admits he doesn’t have all the answers but, then again, trailblazers often don’t.

### EXPANDING THE OPPORTUNITY WITH STORYTELLING

If you want to sell high-quality clothing manufactured in pricey Australia and still turn a profit, it’s not going to be easy. Despite a \$70 USD price tag for a standard pair of tights, Black Milk is selling more 1,000 garments a day across the globe. In every step of the sales process, a story unfolds. Parker equates customer engagement with an onion, ensuring every layer has its own story. Indeed, the sales receipt is nearly 600 words and a gift voucher begins, “Once upon a time ...” Shoppers are compelled to read every word because it’s so unexpected, and yet everything Sharkies want—a chance to be part of a bigger story.

### CHANGING FASHION FOREVER

Historically, the retail industry operated on a two-shelf system, one in the store where retailers show their product and another in the shopper’s home where purchases are



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## TECHNOLOGY TRENDS IN FASHION

STORYTELLING, ACCESSIBILITY and AUTHENTICITY are an important part of the future of fashion, but technology is also playing a part. Mashops bring together the virtual and physical worlds in the store and these are some of the coolest tools on the scene.



**TENSATOR VIRTUAL ASSISTANT** is a digital sign using a big whack of artificial intelligence to give shoppers the illusion of speaking to a shop assistant. She's friendly, welcoming and incredibly helpful, speaking multiple languages and available 24 hours a day.



**COGNOVISION** from Intel is facial recognition software creating heat maps of traffic flow in a physical store. This allows retailers to get a better idea about what shoppers do and what attracts them to certain displays and products.



**BODYMETRICS** is a full-body scanner similar to the kind found in airports. It predicts and recommends the ideal product for your body type and size from hundreds of different brand-name clothes, allowing you to shop in store or at home.



**FASHION LIKE** is a Brazilian product marrying social networks with physical clothes hangers. A digital screen in the clothes hanger reflects the number of "likes" on Facebook giving shoppers a strong social signal about the popularity of specific items of clothing.



**CISCO STYLEME** is a life-sized mirror letting shoppers try things on without changing clothes or needing a changing room. Shoppers also benefit from expert fashion advice and the ability to hook into their social channel.

displayed. The introduction of a third shelf has disrupted the traditional path to purchase.

Doug Stephens, aka the Retail Prophet, describes the third shelf as a place that is not the store nor the customer's home, but a wonderfully appropriate location for consumers to shop. It might be an online store, a digital app or even the packaging of the product itself. More and more it's found in collaborations between brands and influencers. And in the future it may be something entirely different.

"It's about locations, events, opportunities, moments, instants where your product is relevant. And you need to use whatever means you can to understand that path to purchase for your consumer, whoever they are," advises Stephens. "You need to understand the moments of their life where your product becomes relevant along the path to purchase. That's really the key thing."

### FASHION FORWARD FOR ESTABLISHED BRANDS

Even traditional retailers are finding relevance on the third shelf. Australian retailer Sportsgirl opened its doors in 1948 and has long been a stalwart of malls and downtown shopping. Recognizing a third-shelf opportunity, it launched an integrated content strategy in March that melds digital and print content with a big whack of user-generated

content to ensure customers are thinking about fashion #twentyfiveseven.

Digital store windows are running three movies on the Style Never Sleeps theme while a new print magazine, The Daily Us, is being handed out inside. The retailer's ecommerce smart phone app has been updated so readers can retrieve additional content, like beauty tutorials and catwalk shows, using augmented reality with the print magazine. Armed with so much fashion goodness, young fashion mavens photograph their Sportsgirl look and upload to social networking communities ensuring the Sportsgirl cash registers are running 25x7 too.

The concept of the third shelf means shoppers are no longer content to be a passive part of the fashion equation. Successful fashion houses realize the importance of being accessible and including shoppers in their brand story. The third shelf means the store is everywhere and nowhere. It also means retailers must find a way to become relevant to their customers at a time when they're ready to purchase. It's a big ask, for sure, but Black Milk and Sportsgirl prove it's possible whether you're a young upstart or an established brand.



**Sarah Mitchell** is a content marketing consultant at Global Copywriting and lives in Western Australia. Find her @globalcopywrite.

# T

eamwork and technology  
will fuel the flight to quality  
on the visual web.

**TAPPING IN TO TALENT:** BRANDS WILL RELY MORE ON COLLABORATIVE CREATIVE TEAMS

The ecosystem of the visual web starts with talent, including independent illustrators, designers, animators, videographers, data visualizers and other creatives. But rather than just bringing aboard a single hired gun, more and more we are seeing small teams where an illustrator partners with an animator, a videographer works with a writer, etc. so together they can satisfy multiple aspects of a

brand's project. The more they work together, the more a team becomes a genuine "1+1=3" for the brand.

And while on the topic of working together, you will see more partnerships like the one that gives Facebook advertisers direct access to the Shutterstock photo library. Integration like this will be more prevalent, placing creative assets within easy, efficient reach for brands.

**BUILDING BETTER IDEAS:** PLATFORMS WILL EMPOWER EASIER, EARLIER SHARING OF CONCEPTS

One frustration of visual content creation particularly video and animation is the clunkiness of sharing early-stage ideas and cuts with clients who might be across the country, not across the table like they were for Don Draper. Companies will advance development of sharing platforms that get ideas vetted, discussed and refined in a "pre-storyboard" phase, using technology-driven communication and brainstorming earlier in the creative process to further fuel the flight to quality.

**MASTERING THE FUNDAMENTALS:** THE INDUSTRY WILL REFINE THE ARTS OF DISTRIBUTION AND MEASUREMENT

You can make the Sistine Chapel of data visualizations, but without the right approach to distribution nobody will see it, and without the right analytics no brand can justify making it again. Granted, these truths are not specific to visual content per se, but with the incremental time and investment often required for infographics, animation and video, the fundamentals are that much more important.

With distribution, look for publishers thanks to their built-in reach and native-ad platforms to become bigger and bigger players as marketers seek guaranteed scale. Distribution networks specific to a topic or industry are critical because (to use the finance vertical as an example) a company like Merrill Lynch looks to get its content in the hands of a quality audience quickly.

And on the analytics side, the industry will reconcile the challenges we have experienced in trying to create content like journalists and measure it like marketers.

Visual.ly and other companies like ours are investing in much-needed measurement tools. Visual.ly will focus on the sharing index not simply engagement, but rather deep profiles of who is actually doing the sharing and liking.

That's why I picture a future where the visual web is defined by quality. Not (thankfully) lolcat.

# LOLCat NEARS 9<sup>TH</sup> LIFE

BY STEW LANGILLE,  
as told to Brad Young

WHAT?  
I'M NOT  
QUALITY?



**Stew Langille** is the CEO and co-founder of Visual.ly, which connects designers, journalists, animators and developers with clients via cloud-based collaboration tools. Written with **Brad Young**, a New York-based content and marketing consultant. Find them @slangille and @byoung07016.

# THE FUTURE IS *Now*

**T**ime to tear down the silos and matter to your audience.

BY KIRK CHEYFITZ



With abject apologies to the young Bob Dylan, nobody in adland needs a weatherman to know which way the wind blows these days. It blows toward great content.

Seriously? We're gonna have another debate about the future of advertising? It's a little late for that. But there's still time, I think, for a heart-to-heart about how and how quickly we get there.

Adland's confusion about advertising's future reminds me of America's more consequential relationship to climate change: There's general agreement about many of the facts (CO2 levels are rising), little understanding of the causes (It can't be people. Could it be cow farts?) and zero ability to accept the logical consequences (Yes, sea levels are rising, so Miami will be underwater.) The result: paralysis and ineffectiveness.

The ad biz version: We see the facts. (TV's share of total media-watching time, for example, has contracted by 10.75 percent over the last five years, eMarketer says.) We even understand the causes. (More people are watching streaming TV without ads and 47 percent of all media time is now spent on digital devices.) But there's precious little discussion in our business about the "why" of this mass behavior change and there's outright denial of the logical consequences.

Despite everything we know, the entire media industry keeps talking about the "future of advertising" as if it were in, well ... the future: a remote land we might visit one day. Our audiences—the folks we keep trying to reach (formerly known as consumers)—woke up in the "future" roughly eight years ago as digital became social, changing media forever. Now audiences seamlessly consume (and create) media—TV, movies, music, books, news—across all kinds of devices. (Another fact: *The New York Times* says NBC just paid an eye-popping \$7.5 billion to extend its rights to the Olympics because "more viewers consume media on their own schedules, often without commercials." This puts the Olympics among a dwindling number of spectacles that keep audiences watching and advertisers paying in real time.)

## RULES TO FOLLOW

For brands and agencies, it's past time to face the consequences of what's happening. Here are four rules for successful advertising now:

- 1 Ads can't interrupt anymore because people have too many choices and too much control over the media they consume. Consequently, ads have to change into content that actually deserves an audience—compelling, authentic stories that create real meaning and provide real value to a brand's audiences.
- 2 Brand stories have to be told on the audience's schedule, 24/7, across all media, mostly on social channels or digital platforms owned by the brand.
- 3 Brand stories have to be so good, so true and so contagious that they compel audiences to share them.
- 4 Brand stories have to unmistakably embody the brand and its unique core narrative, differentiating it from all others.

All sorts of agencies with all sorts of models are flooding into the newly created "content" and "storytelling" space. But precious few are displaying the vision or breadth of skills needed to take charge of advertising and keep it working for clients. Content and editorial agencies lack brand knowledge. Traditional agencies lack both storytelling and digital

# OF THE People

Jonathon Colman, content strategist at Facebook

Colman talks about the untapped power of metadata and why brands must build *people systems*.



**@LauraCreekmore asks:**

What do content strategists need to understand to be successful today? In the next three years?

“Plastics!” Just kidding.

Systems, systems and systems. It’s not enough to make a video go viral, to design a funny infographic, to write that killer blog post. We need to plan for and develop the content systems that help our brands go the distance and endure for the next hundred years. And not just technological systems, but also for the infinitely more complex people systems.

Organizations sometimes make the mistake of building or selecting their content systems based on a gigantic list of technical features, a wish list of buzzwords dropped into an RFP template. And they end up with a behemoth “frankensystem” that might technically suit their needs on paper, but it’s completely unusable by actual people ... and it can’t adapt to how the organization itself truly functions.

To be successful, content strategists need to be able to map out people, processes and politics (contrary to popular belief, they exist!) and the roles they all play in creating and maintaining content in your organization. Understanding people is the first step toward building a great system that they can use.

Three years from now—as content delivery, promotion, analysis and iteration continue to fracture across multitudes of platforms and devices—content strategists must further delve into enterprise information management and architecture.

As Source editor Erin Kissane said, “We don’t make things. We make systems that make things.” I think we need to get out of the business of creating individual things like videos, infographics, blog posts and other artifacts. Instead, we need to get into the business of creating and planning for the systems that make, manage and distribute those things. Design and systems thinking will help our brands endure over the next century.



**@hejhejnatalya asks:**

What’s the biggest content strategy opportunity that companies can take advantage of in the near future?

Organizations need to understand that metadata is far more than just <meta> data.

There are companies that are still optimizing for meta keywords even though it does them no good—and wastes a non-

trivial amount of their time and other resources. Wiser marketers are employing page-level metadata standards like Facebook Open Graph, Twitter Cards, Google Authorship and Schema.org to drive more visibility and engagement with their content. But even that's still just dipping your toes in the water.

Metadata can do far more than aid in SEO or increase clicks in social. It can power your navigation across millions of products. It can help you carry out multivariate tests against your site structure all the way down to the look and feel of individual pages and their modular elements. It can help you reuse your content across your website or even deliver your content to other platforms. It can help you transform your content from the web to print and even back again, all from a single source. At scale, metadata can help power content services in the form of APIs that developers can use to build content-driven applications on top of your platform.

All these opportunities are possible when you conceive your content not as an artifact of text, but as a product in and of itself.



**@carriehd asks:**

**What will the next generation of content strategists need to know to be successful?**

Part of what makes the content strategy industry great is that we all come to it from so many different paths: technical communication, user-experience design, library science, marketing, information architecture ... no matter their skill set and experiences,

everyone gets a say. Everyone has a seat at our table. We want to hear your voice. And what keeps us creative and nimble is what helps us evolve: our diversity and humility.

What I fear about our future, however, is that we get so caught up with the technologies, tools and tactics of our trade that we reassign our thinking from the long term to the short. We start thinking and strategizing in ever-shorter cycles: months instead of years, campaigns instead of lifecycles, individual infographics instead of the brands they represent.

What brings us back from the brink is what the next generation must focus on far more than we have: empathy. The ability to build connections with people—to truly understand who they are and what their experience is like—and shape product experiences to best fit their needs is what will set the most successful practitioners of content strategy apart from others.

As people continue to create and consume more and more information at a faster pace than ever before, our ability to help them make sense and create meaning is our single most important contribution to the world.

Start with empathy. Engage with utility. Improve with analysis. Optimize with love.



Hear Jonathon Colman's presentation at

Content Marketing World: <http://bit.ly/CMWColman>

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# Social Media's Future Shock is Really

# Déjà



Remember all those articles a few years ago that predicted Google Plus would overtake Facebook and revolutionize search? The +1 button was going to be the most important social media share button you could, you should, you MUST install on your blog.

Now there are articles predicting the slow dismantling or downgrading of Google Plus, potentially eroding the efforts of those who did commit to the network.

Articles that attempt to predict the future of social media make for great link-bait. We're all desperate to avoid some shiny new toy eroding our advantage or destroying all our hard work. That's why most of these articles focus on the new technologies of the day, written in a tone that implies an impending threat if the reader doesn't adapt quickly enough.

Facebook buys virtual reality company Oculus, so the future of social media must involve virtual reality (VR). Pinterest stuns everyone with its rapid rise, so the future of social media must have more pictures.

These aren't predictions of the future. They're merely reactions to whatever is happening at the time.

The Spanish philosopher, poet and novelist George Santayana wrote, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." To understand the future we have to stop looking at the present.

## THE CONSEQUENCES OF OUR ACTIONS

For example, instead of speculating about Facebook's new VR acquisition, the bigger clue to the future of Facebook, and potentially the rest of social media marketing, can be gleaned by dissecting the recent updates to its News Feed algorithm. Although these changes are happening now, they're deeply rooted in the events of the past.

There is absolutely no doubt—'cause they came right out and said it—that these algorithm changes were

.....

THOSE WHO  
CANNOT  
REMEMBER  
THE PAST ARE  
CONDEMNED TO  
REPEAT IT.

.....

By Jonathan Crossfield

designed specifically to remove the loopholes exploited by marketers. Facebook wants an end to content that targets the algorithm instead of the actual interests and expectations of the person who initially liked the page.

That means all marketers now operate under more restrictions and with a greater handicap on Facebook than regular users. All posts from Pages will have a harder time reaching a Facebook audience without investing in ad spend.

And it's no use wailing about how unfair it all is. It's our own fault.

### PAY TO PLAY

I know some of you are going to say these algorithm changes aren't about restricting bad behaviour but rewarding shareholders. Therefore, these changes are a cynical ploy to force us to pay for previously free services and benefits.

Of course they're out to make money! Aren't you? When were we led to believe that Facebook, Twitter and the rest weren't businesses looking to make a buck? The possible downgrading of Google Plus and the changes to Facebook have led to a lot of recent commentary that admonishes marketers for ever being so stupid as to "build on rented land." But if we're honest, we weren't even paying rent.

Marketers were freeloading on someone else's property, relying on the goodwill of our host. We were fully aware that someday the host would ask us to contribute to the bills if we wanted to continue sleeping on the sofa and helping ourselves to the fridge. And when those tiny voluntary ad spends weren't enough to compensate for our often rowdy behavior, our host began placing further restrictions and demands on us to pay our way.

The new Facebook forces marketers to look closer at the quality, relevance and strategic benefit of their social content, instead of throwing all kinds of rubbish on the page because it's supposedly free.

### WE'VE SEEN IT ALL BEFORE

A lot of the hoopla surrounding the recent Facebook updates certainly sounds eerily similar to the whining and

protestations that, until recently, would happen after every Google update.

Go back to 2008 or thereabouts and marketing forums like Search Engine Land and Sphinn (now Marketing Land) would explode with a wounded sense of entitlement and outrage every time Google restricted a popular but manipulative tactic or penalized a notably spam-type activity.

Apparently, Google was being unfair in restricting the methods available to marketers. Apparently, Google didn't want businesses to succeed in the organic results because it wanted to force us all to use AdWords. Apparently Google hated marketers. I heard them all.

But by the time Panda and Penguin came along, most smart marketers had given up trying to beat Google with tricks. Instead they focused on producing the best possible experience for their potential customers. Quality always wins.

Why didn't we learn? Why did so many marketers resort to similar low quality, and sometimes extremely dubious, tactics when social media marketing came along?

History tells us that when we target the algorithm, chasing numbers instead of people, the platform always, ALWAYS bites back.

### KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON

So what is the future of social media marketing?

It's going to get harder. Some marketers may eventually look back on 2010-13 as the golden age of free, "anything-goes" social media. But that was never going to last.

There will always be some who will look for an unfair advantage, prompting further restrictions and harsher updates. Eventually, social media may have its own Panda moment, and we'll learn to accept and cope in a new world where social media is part of a brand's media spend. And as a result, most of us will produce better content and smarter strategies capable of achieving a reasonable return on that spend.

I want to believe the future of social media would follow the words of Santayana. Unfortunately, I think the late, great Kurt Vonnegut is closer to the truth. "I've got news for Mr. Santayana: we're doomed to repeat the past no matter what. That's what it is to be alive."

Sadly, I think that's what it is to be a social media marketer, too.



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



Read more from Jonathan Crossfield.  
<http://bit.ly/Crossfield>

knowledge. Digital agencies lack strategic knowledge and don't understand content at all. What's demanded is a hybrid that's very tough to create: A completely integrated shop that understands editorial thinking and brand management so it can create strategically effective, branded narrative executions for TV, web, print, live events, Twitter—for any delivery format now known or ever to be invented.

For me (and for my agency, Story), the future clearly belongs to anyone who can put brilliant brand management, strategy, media planning and storytelling into a single, integrated shop.

This will require more than a shift in approach, however. It will demand a serious reorganization of how agencies and brand marketers operate. The starting point is banishing silos and killing the idea that channel specialists are useful. (No more "digital units" or "TV teams," please.) The end game is integrating all disciplines—creative, planning, technology, production, account, media planning and buying—into a single multi-disciplinary, multi-channel team. That's the hardest part. But everyone knows it has to happen.

Then the newly organized agency has to dedicate its integrated organization to the first commandment of future advertising (which has always been the first commandment of storytellers—the folks who create successful movies, books, photos, poems and TV series):

### YOU SHALL PUT THE AUDIENCE FIRST

Your brand and how it's managed are critical; but your audience's needs and desires are more critical if you actually want a brand to connect with people. You've got to respect the audience. You've got to earn people's attention. You can't force anyone to listen to you anymore, so you've got to make media they actually want to see; media so good they want to share it with their friends, too. That's the present and future of advertising.

There are a lot more demands, of course. Advertising in the future is complicated because it not only has to be a great story, it also has to be data-driven, technologically enabled, automatically distributed, targeted with pinpoint accuracy, constantly measured and optimized, and so on.

But without a great, unique and authentic brand story to tell, none of that will get you far. That means we have to matter to the audience or we've lost before we've begun.

As I so often say, welcome to the post-advertising age.



**Kirk Cheyfitz** is Co-CEO and chief storyteller of Story Worldwide, the global brand storytelling ad agency he founded in 1999. Find him @KirkCheyfitz.



Read more from Kirk Cheyfitz.  
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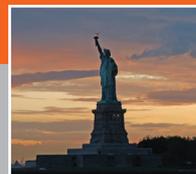
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## TECH TOOLS

SOCIAL INFLUENCERS SHARE THE TOOLS THAT HELP THEM KEEP THEIR EDGE.

# What are your favorite marketing automation platforms?

**REMOVE THE BLINDFOLD** That's what marketing automation has done for my company. "Prior to that it was like driving a car while blindfolded. The likelihood we would get to our desired destination was slim," marketer Katie Hollar says.



### Act-On

I have implemented all the high-profile marketing automation platforms for clients over the past year.

Each one is specifically

suited to solve particular problems. Act-On is simple to use and the price point makes it attractive for companies without a large budget.

Submitted by **Stephen C. Murphy** @stevencmurphy

### BAMBOO INTERACTIVE

### Oracle/Eloqua

Oracle/Eloqua is designed for the high-end user. Its updated lead-scoring engine allows companies to run multiple scoring models simultaneously. Its integration studio syncs with multiple CRM systems. The Topliners community on its website helpfully connects users and lets them get answers to common problems. It's a great vendor if you seek guidance from the support team. Plus, Oracle/Eloqua distinguishes itself because it doesn't require you to contact them for pricing first. Its enterprise package pricing is listed online.

Submitted by **Devin Kelley** @methodsavvy



### DEPARTMENT EDITOR



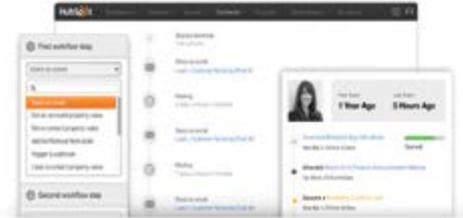
**Ann Gynn** trains others to create successful content marketing or works to get the job done on behalf of her clients. Follow her @anngynn or [www.content-marketing-coach.com](http://www.content-marketing-coach.com)

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

### Hubspot

Hubspot has been useful in creating landing pages that allow for capturing information in what looks like a native setting, and keeping track of activity and touch points for each contact/company. This helps with determining which types of correspondence is working with whom, and we are better able to adjust our future marketing efforts based on this information.

Submitted by **Cindy Elhaj** @sprocketmedia1



### Marketo

Marketo is a perfect product for a company in any stage of its marketing evolution. From small one-man bands with big ideas to giant multinationals with marketing departments in each country, you can manage any level of experience inside of Marketo. For many years now they've had a few different customer community forums where users can talk with each other or with Marketo employees about any topic. What is inside of these years of discussions is a better that a master's degree in marketing.

Submitted by **Adam Waterson** @AdamInBloom



### Salesforce Pardot

Pardot seems to have the best combination of powerful drip logic, automation rules and analytics for a small B2B, plus a user friendly interface without too many extraneous bells and whistles. The price tag fit our budget as well. It has been invaluable in creating unique nurture tracks and scoring models for each of the various audiences we target. Pardot's landing page builder allows our tech team to focus on higher-priority projects and marketing doesn't have to bother them for every new campaign.

Submitted by **Katie Hollar** @katiehollar



# CYB

**CONTENT**

**MARKETING**

YOU GET IT.

BUT DOES YOUR BOSS?

**CYB**

CONVINCE  
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# THE POWER OF LISTENING COMMUNITIES

Online communities can be generous sources of new content. But you'll have to learn to value listening over teaching and talking.

By Vanessa DiMauro



Photo courtesy of Ryan McGuire/Bells Design

**Y**our content is well-written and -produced, engaging, even useful. But is your audience really paying attention? We all know what it's like when someone won't stop talking—it's very hard to stay engaged. Have you tried listening to your audience instead?

Online communities are the primordial (pre-web, even) discussion, content-sharing and collaboration applications. While many brands use online communities for bottom-line-focused activities such as lead generation, others focus on listening—and uncover powerful sources of customer insights, content and industry credibility.

First, let's understand what is meant by online communities.

Online communities (i.e. dedicated, brand-sponsored platforms that enable the exchange of ideas and content via a suite of interactive features such as discussion forums, polls, content libraries, member directories, etc.) generally fall into one of the following four categories:

**Lead generators:** These communities are established by brands to bring members into conversations solely to generate sales leads. When a prospect joins the discussion the sales team jumps in to press the sale. It's a Trojan horse, inspiring neither trust nor engagement.

**Marketing speakers:** Long on broadcasting messages to members, short on interaction, the primary mission of "megaphone"

## 5 Tips for Building a Successful Listening Community

### Tip 1: Listen visibly

Online communities are social entities. Even the most focused and defined membership will display a remarkable range of behaviors and contribution styles. Community managers should foster a diversity of opinions and avoid closing down fruitful, if sometimes intense, discussions. Attentive listening by community managers—signaling they are actively observing your community's conversations—will confirm to members that your organization is paying attention to what they are saying.

### Caveat:

Don't stifle disagreements, disputes or complaints. Online communities are an early warning system for product and service issues, and sometimes, the next big thing that could transform your firm. Redirect or resolve problematic discussions through engagement rather than censorship.

### Tip 2: Encourage conversations through engagement

Community members can supply clues—and contributors—for great user stories, case studies and thought leadership. Encourage in-depth discussions, especially among subject matter experts, and highlight their contributions. Internal communities can be a rich source of insights and ideas for improving operational efficiency, product/service enhancements and innovations if members have an incentive to contribute. Be sure to ask good questions, solicit feedback and invite others into the conversation.

### Caveat:

Sustaining the flow of ideas and insights from the community is a marathon, not a sprint. A long-term strategy for member engagement should attract new members and reward long-time contributors.

### Tip 3: Empower members

Reward active participants with opportunities to guide discussions and share their expertise. When a community attracts or develops its own subject matter experts from within the membership, their contributions add to their own reputation and to the unique value of your branded community.

*(continued on page 22)*

(continued from page 21)

Celebrate this homegrown thought leadership by rewarding those star contributors with offline and online appreciation.

**Caveat:** Empowering members may mean respecting their privacy and sheltering their discussions from public view—especially for executives, established experts and others with confidentiality concerns. Creating private peer-to-peer networks can encourage more candid conversations.

#### **Tip 4: Respect and reward contributions**

While the terms and conditions governing your online community contributions may allow you to use your members' contributions however you wish, common sense and courtesy dictate that you request permission before doing so. Acknowledgement and an honorarium for the most valuable contributions are usually all that's needed.

**Caveat:** Don't overtip. Your community members will be highly attuned and aware of the most valuable individual contributors and contributions. Make sure the rewards match the community's sense of value, not just your organization's agenda.

#### **Tip 5: Build trust**

Online communities quickly develop a keen sensitivity to what is authentic and what is not. Organizations that remain authentic, maintaining trust with their online community members, will see that reflected in external perceptions of the firm across all its activities. Building and maintaining trust is an essential component of a successful online community.

**Caveat:** Authenticity takes work, strong governance, constant attention and vigilance. Internal teams working with community members need clear guidance on handling issues where evasion or in-authenticity may appear to be the best option. Keep it real.

communities is to share new developments and latest accomplishments with prospective and current customers. Often designed and managed to optimize SEO measures, they also typically fall short on member engagement.

**Customer huggers:** Staffed by customer service employees assisting members in need, "closed tickets" is the key metric. But absent additional in-depth interaction and collaboration with members, insights remain undiscovered. The community is just a nice-to-have cost center rather than an outreach mechanism.

**Innovation centers:** Dedicated to achieving deep collaboration with customers and partners, these communities seek to share information, glean insight and put community-sourced ideas into action. Through continuous engagement around the ideas, concerns and hopes the membership have for the products and services, these communities identify areas of internal improvement and growth, and provide ongoing feedback to members about their contributions. Innovation centers can have a profound impact at all levels of the organization.

Successful online communities often combine aspects of each of these four styles: identifying future customer needs (lead generation), sharing marketing information (marketing speakers), reducing problems and increasing customer intimacy (customer hugs) and collaborating on innovation opportunities for both members and the organization (innovation centers). Yet true listening communities—those that offer brands the greatest potential to source content—emphasize the latter two styles (customer huggers and innovation centers).

Companies like HP, Whole Foods

and Mindjet use brand-owned online communities to connect more deeply with customers, prospects, suppliers and partners. And they do so by listening much more than they talk.

Sourcing content through listening to an online community can take many forms:

#### **Thought leadership from highly engaged member experts.**

One example is the award-winning LexisNexis Investigators Network (LNIN). Here members (all law enforcement professionals) share best practices across local, state and national law enforcement agencies within a secure online community.

Another is the Palladium Group XPC Community. Based on the balanced scorecard management system developed by Kaplan and Norton, this community of management consultants, strategy professionals and operations executives pool their expertise to develop best practices for use within their organizations.

A third example is HP's IT Expert Zone, where corporate IT staff can interact directly with HP's IT experts, asking complex questions and receiving detailed responses. By listening to this content, IT managers and directors can better understand the pitfalls and opportunities within their IT environment.

**Process improvement and operational efficiency case studies.** SPS Commerce, a supply chain solutions provider, created a public community for customers to collaborate on solving all manner of supply change management issues. Thomson-Reuters operates a global online community (intranet) for employees to improve collaboration and speed up innovation across offices in over 100 countries.

**Case studies from member stories about products, services or solutions.** These are especially helpful for B2C or B2B firms where it may not be easy to identify engaged end users. For example, Hitachi Data Systems (HDS) maintains close relationships with its large corporate customers, but may not know the specific details of an end user's implementation. The HDS Innovation Center Community provides a forum for end-user innovators within large organizations to share their forward-thinking approaches, and offers a way to develop case study content HDS might never learn about otherwise.

**Problem-solving testimonials through collaboration with customers.** Analog Devices (ADI) EngineerZone online community was cited by 76 percent of customers as a reason to purchase from ADI in a 2012 customer survey.

**Customer-generated endorsements and recommendations.** Wireless networking firm Aerohive leveraged positive user-created content to build brand

equity and customer acquisition. Mindjet's collaboration tools saw a 5 percent increase in referral traffic after opening its online community.

Marketers considering a listening approach must beware of the impulse to focus too much on quantity metrics (e.g. number of conversations, articles or members). A community with a seemingly high number of likes, for example, may not generate the kind of thoughtful exchanges that support a brand's content machine. Instead, examine whether your community provides deeper insights: A case study worth sharing. An insight worth pursuing in a long-format report. An idea around which to build a new product.



**Vanessa DiMauro** is CEO of Leader Networks, a research and strategy consulting group.

Find her @vdimauero.



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# CONTENT MARKETING AWARDS

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## VISUAL CONTENT



**Brad Walters, director of social media and emerging platforms, Lowe's Home Improvement**

Lowe's just keeps raising the bar. The company's #lowesfixinsix series on Vine (6-second videos of easy DIY tips) received much-

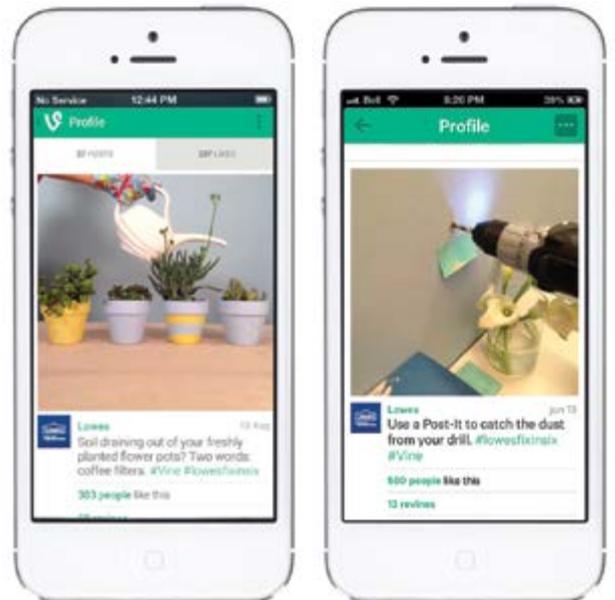
deserved attention this year for "getting" Vine even while many of us were still scratching our heads. Lowe's is also massively popular on Pinterest (nearly 3.5 million followers) in large part because the brand doesn't use the channel as a digital catalog. In fact, Lowe's has among the most diverse collection of boards to match their audience—from gardening tips to ultimate man caves.

But it's clear Lowe's isn't finished yet. In a new twist, Lowe's has recruited top designers and mom

bloggers to take over its Instagram account for a few days at a time. Popular design personalities like Grace Bonney from DesignSponge post inspirational images, and in doing so, introduce their fan base to Lowe's. It's a brilliant idea from the amazingly talented social media team, led by Brad Walters, director of social media and emerging technologies.



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#lowesfixinsix Vine videos show DIY tips in 6 seconds.

# MARKETER OF THE YEAR RD FINALISTS

## CONTENT STRATEGY



**Bryan Rhoads**, executive editor, Intel Digital Media Labs

Calling himself a “long-time, early-stage builder of all things digital,”

Bryan Rhoads explores

the outer edge of new media and content consumption models for Intel. Rhoads is the founder and executive editor of Intel’s digital platform *IQ*, and he manages the partnership with VICE Media that produces the award-winning *The Creators Project*. Rhoads is also readying the launch of a new series, *The Future of Things*, a collaboration with *PSFK*.

When asked what’s next for Rhoads at Intel, he explains, “Marketing has traditionally focused on look and feel, and messaging. We believe having a consistent narrative is another critical, connective tissue marketers must consider. We’re going back and looking at classic storytelling, and how and why certain narratives and story archetypes work.” Rhoads believes that by teasing out storylines—and in particular archetypal narratives such as the hero’s journey—companies like Intel can create much more moving and memorable content for their audiences. Rhoads wins our vote for his passion in pursuing innovation at the intersection of media, brand and technology.



*The Creators Project* captivates with its focus on new media, technology and innovation.



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## CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT



**Jesse Desjardins**, social media & advocacy manager, Tourism Australia

Jesse Desjardins won our vote because of a simple idea, brilliantly executed. He asked, “Can we build a platform that gets bigger over time?” Rather than launch a campaign, giving it some social juice and then letting it fade, Desjardins aimed to create a socially fueled movement that increases in value and scale over time.

With a social media team of one, Tourism Australia receives 900 fan photos *per day* on its Facebook and Instagram accounts. It outperforms every other tourism board in the world, and does so based on two primary ingredients: user-generated content and community co-creation. Says Desjardins, “We aim to make our audience the hero. Consumers take us places much faster than we can go on our own.”

To be fair, Tourism Australia does launch campaigns, such as the group’s *Best Job in the World* contest (which promised seven lucky winners a six-month working holiday in roles such as a wildlife caretaker and lifestyle



*Tourism Australia receives 900 fan photos per day on its Facebook and Instagram accounts.*

photographer) and its *Food and Wine* campaign (a partnership with restaurateurs and local growers to position Australia as a food destination). But each campaign feels like an iteration on a core mission to let the land and people speak for themselves.

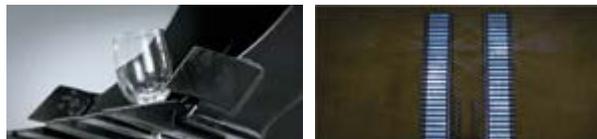
## STORYTELLING



**Renee Richardson**, global brand marketing head, Caterpillar

Who said B2B has to be boring? Caterpillar surprised many this year with its bold *Built for It* campaign. The first video featured the company’s massive earth-moving equipment positioning 600-pound blocks in a giant game of Jenga—and earned over 2 million views.

Renee Richardson describes the new campaign as an important step for a historically risk-averse brand. In an interview with *Fast Company* she explained, “We wanted to be more brand promoters than brand police. Instead of focusing primarily on enforcing compliance on brand and identity standards, we wanted to facilitate more consumer interaction and use it to contribute to the growth of the brand.” The second and third in the series—Gravity and China Shop, are also



*Caterpillar surprised many with its bold Built for It campaign, including video of a Jenga game using earth-moving equipment.*

proving to be blockbusters.”

While some may call it a lucky viral hit, we salute Caterpillar for telling a great story and having fun with it, particularly given that it operates in such a compliance-heavy, traditional industry.

## OMNICHANNEL



**Susan Helstab**, executive VP of marketing, Four Seasons and Resorts

Hoteliers have a leg up on other industries when it comes to captivating storytelling, but the challenge is doing it in an effective and engaging way that supports the brand. Four Seasons leads the luxury hospitality pack with a beautiful and hardworking portfolio of content delivered through various channels focused on engaging existing and prospective guests. It includes the brand's premier digital property, *Four Seasons Magazine*, as well as a host of special interest microsites and social media platforms. And Four Seasons' Pin.Pack.Go program on Pinterest, an industry first, invites guests to co-curate a custom itinerary via a Pinterest board with the Four Seasons hotel or resort of their choice.

The diversity of content and channels makes sense given online habits; customers usually book travel on computers, but use smart phones and tablets for other travel-related activities. Susan Helstab explains, "We are interested in how people engage with Four Seasons across various platforms. But for us it's not just



*Four Seasons' Pin.Pack.Go program invites guests to co-curate a custom itinerary on Pinterest.*

about providing the information people want on the appropriate channel or device—that's table stakes in our industry. It's about leveraging digital and social media to deepen relationships with existing guests and attract new ones. We look to create opportunities for sharing stories and fostering dialogue through rich, immersive content localized in meaningful and relevant ways."

We salute Helstab for her leadership, pushing Four Seasons to be among the few omnimedia brands.

## MARKETING WITH A PURPOSE

**Karen Girty**, senior director of marketing and media, New York City Ballet

We've seen too many brands decide to publish videos, then fizzle out after producing a half dozen. Under the leadership of Karen Girty, the New York City Ballet committed to video six years ago, and publishes a new video almost weekly—each receiving many thousands of views. The videos offer behind-the-scenes peeks at upcoming productions, screen tests with dancers and interviews with choreographers. But most moving of the ballet company's videos: the 9/11 tribute titled *New Beginnings*, in which two dancers share a moving sunrise performance atop Four World Trade Center.

Girty also led the launch of the City Ballet's Art Series, an ambitious program to introduce new viewers to the ballet by inviting collaboration with visual artists. In January the nonprofit invited JR, a French street artist known for his massive public photo installations across the globe, to install a photo mural spanning the



*The New York City Ballet publishes a new video almost weekly—each receiving many thousands of views.*

entire floor of the Koch Theater's grand center hall. Girty says 70 percent of attendees at special Art Series performances described themselves as new to City Ballet, and 7 percent of those visited the ballet again. And JR's floor mural, which featured life-sized photos of dancers, spawned an always-on stream of social media coverage as attendees snapped pictures of themselves on the floor next to the dancers.

## WANT ATTENTION?

Why not shower some extra love on your most influential fans?



**T**aco Bell sent “Breakfast Phones” to 1,000 fast-food fans and influencers. The pre-paid Samsung T404G burner phones delivered texts and pre-recorded messages prompting the phones’ recipients to complete missions and win prizes.

## BURT’S BEES POLLINATES CALENDARS

**T**he “Invitation to Brighter Skin” marketing campaign from **Burt’s Bees** aims to reach customers in an unusual place: their digital calendars. To mark the launch of Burt’s Bees new Brightening face care line, the company invites fans to receive weekly “Brightening Moments” via online calendar notifications. The skin care line promises to brighten your face in just eight weeks; customers who opt in will receive eight “moments” and be rewarded with a coupon and product sample.



**DEPARTMENT EDITOR**  
Natalya Minkovsky is a writer and content strategist. Find her @hejhejnatalya.



## SUBSERVIENT CHICKEN IS BACK AND DOING IT HIS WAY

**T**en years ago, in the days before YouTube, **Burger King** introduced us to the Subservient Chicken: a man-sized chicken you could control by typing commands at subservientchicken.com. (“Dance, chicken, dance!”) An online video campaign to promote the TenderCrisp chicken sandwich with a play on Burger King’s “have it your way” slogan, the Subservient Chicken got more than a billion online views, according to *Ad Age*. Now, the Subservient Chicken is back to promote a new sandwich, the Chicken Big King. Campaign content includes a short film about the fleeting nature of Internet fame: “an inside look at the untold story of Burger King’s viral sensation after the Internet spotlight faded to black.” Featuring a cameo from *Saved by the Bell* actor Dustin Diamond, the video shows how the Subservient Chicken made his comeback, hashtagged #chickenredemption.



## WHAT SPEED DO YOU READ?

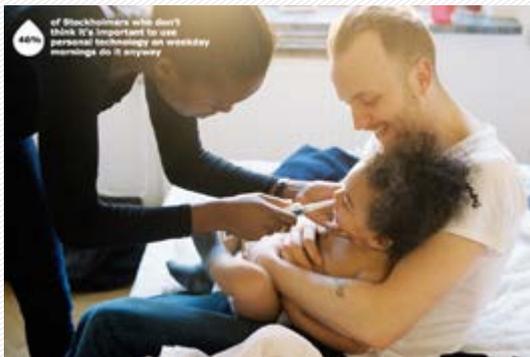
**H**ow fast can you read a classic novel like *War and Peace*? How much of the book could you read before you had to recharge your e-reader battery? Curious bookworms can test their reading speed and compare it to the national average—and then compare the battery lives of the different e-readers sold by **Staples**—through the retailer’s “what speed do you read” interactive infographic.

## MAKING ADS INTERRUPT JUST A LITTLE LESS

**A**cura has signed on for four more seasons as the exclusive sponsor of Jerry Seinfeld's web-only series, *Comedians in Cars Getting Coffee*. The carmaker has struck an interesting deal with Seinfeld. He writes Acura's ads for the show—10 spots in all—and allows Acura product placements that are as funny as they are effective. In a recent episode featuring Sarah Jessica Parker, the duo is stopped outside a diner by a police officer. "Excuse me," asks Seinfeld. "Is this your product placement?" [Cut to a shot of the Acura MDX.]

Yes, the Acura spot is still an ad, but we think it's an interesting small step toward what future collaborations between brands and entertainers will look like. Less interruption. More alignment. Funny also helps.

### COMEDIANS IN CARS GETTING COFFEE



## IKEA STUDIES LIFE AT HOME

**T**hick **IKEA** catalogs arrive in mailboxes every year, featuring perfectly curated, pristine interiors. While lovely, they're a far cry from customers' homey-but-messy interiors. In a bid to understand how its customers live indoors, IKEA launched its Life at Home research program, studying the habits of consumers in Berlin, London, Moscow, Mumbai, New York, Paris, Shanghai and Stockholm. They ask about everything from morning routines to respondents' sex lives, and pair the answers with gritty photos of real interiors (with not an IKEA product in sight in many photos).

We asked, "Why?" Why publish these results? Why share what is valuable market intelligence with the world? Says IKEA, "We want to share our insights, raise awareness and interest, spark debate and contribute to the constant journey of creating an even better everyday life for the many people—together." In other words, why not?

Find all the reports: [lifeathome.ikea.com](http://lifeathome.ikea.com).

# Quick Tips to Optimize and Socialize Your Content

Brilliantly simple, effective tweaks to elevate your content just a smidge.

By Rebecca Watson

**B**y the time you read this, you could have already been capturing and analyzing information on your most valuable consumers—those who share your content. While brands and publishers spend a lot of time and effort creating and promoting content, less time is usually spent optimizing the sharing of that content for consumers. And that's a lost opportunity.

## Consumers demand multiple sharing options

One of the biggest oversights brands make is offering only Facebook and Twitter sharing options, assuming consumers only want to share content or products on the largest social sites.

In reality, today's audiences

are continuing to shift to new social networks, fragmenting their social and web activity across multiple channels. By offering only major social-sharing buttons, brands dramatically limit new user acquisition and page views. Our data—based on access to share and click-back data for hundreds of thousands of websites—indicate that websites giving users a minimum of five choices generate the largest volume of sharing.

Less mainstream share buttons such as email, Pinterest, Tumblr and Google Plus (among others) are still effective in drawing in a larger audience. And using a third-party sharing widget that consolidates multiple sharing channels into one JavaScript tag is a smart choice to simultaneously limit downward drag on page load time and increase sharing of your content. Don't leave valuable click backs (i.e. free users!) on the table.

## Let your users promote the value of your content

Another way to optimize your content pages is by including counters to show share volumes. You can display one universal counter that tallies all of your shares across channels, or show individual counters beside each sharing channel. Websites with counters see an average boost of 8 to 20 percent in sharing volume within one month, according to our data. Visual indicators

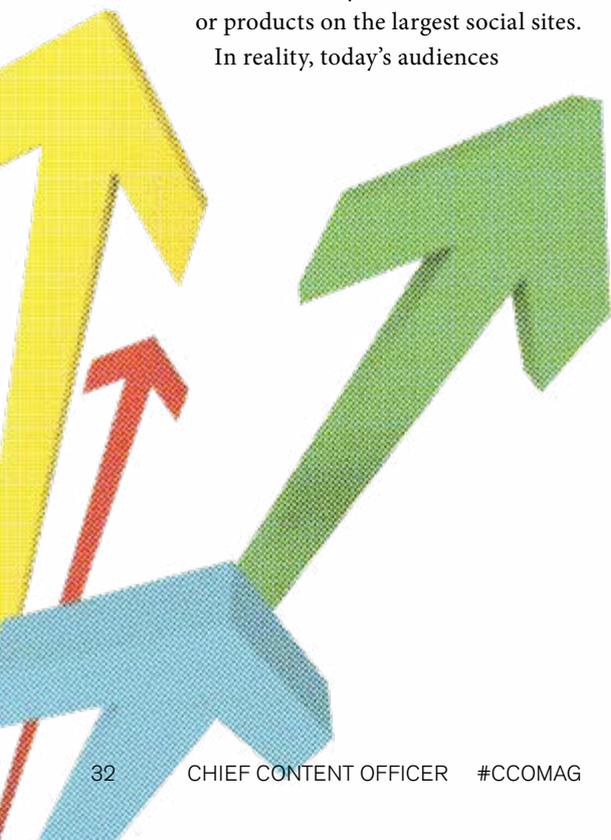
## Websites with counters see an average boost of 8 to 20 percent in sharing volume within one month.

of sharing volume add credibility and affirm the popularity of the content. Digital consumers, like it or not, follow the herd, paying more attention to content with higher shares.

## Don't overlook the number one way people share

Facebook and Twitter get a lot of buzz, but in reality, 80 to 82 percent of all shares on the web occur from users copying and pasting text. This activity is often referred to as Dark Social since marketers and publishers don't have an easy way to track it unless they use a third-party tool like Po.st. Advanced sharing platforms can track not only how many users are sharing text from certain articles or product pages, but also which keywords they are sharing. This keyword information can help inform your SEO and SEM efforts in addition to offering unique consumer insights.

Another strategy to gain access to Dark Social activity is to include a link back to the page where the text originated, driving users back to your website. This way when the content is shared by the copy and paste method,



## 80 to 82 percent of all shares on the web occur from users copying and pasting text, also called Dark Social.

friends who see the shared text know that it came from your owned or earned media.

For example, on our own blog we put thoughtful consideration into the share functionality around our copy-and-paste tracking. When a user highlights then copies and pastes any portion of text on our articles, a customized “read more” attribution link and text is added underneath.

*“Lately, you may have noticed larger sharing buttons cropping up. Publishers across the web are starting to increase the size of their social sharing buttons. Read more at <http://www.po.st/blog/#m7RjWqc68txKLorW.99>. Follow us on [Twitter](#) / [Like us on Facebook](#) / [Sign up for our Newsletter](#).”*

### Leverage social analytics and virality to boost results

While all marketers want their content to be shared and even go viral, we find there’s often an over emphasis on outbound performance versus the inbound acquisition results.

Let’s take an example. Say a content marketer looks at the analytics dashboard and sees that *Video A* drove 2,000 Facebook likes, while *Video B* had 800 Facebook shares, 500 tweets and 200 Tumblr shares. The content marketer may consider *Video A* a bigger win because it earned more likes than the combined number of shares for *Video B*. However, looking back at the click-back volume, *Video A*

only drove 150 new viewers to the video, whereas *Video B* drove 400 new viewers. So *Video B* actually performed better overall even though the team was initially more excited about 2,000 likes. (And creating and promoting more pieces of content similar to *Video B* will likely drive more new traffic for the brand.)

Virality is an important indicator of successful user acquisition, reflected by the number of click backs derived per shared piece of content. When we dug into data from the past year, we found several interesting insights about virality trends:

Technology, news, humor and entertainment content has higher virality

Travel, business and food content has lower virality

Facebook and StumbleUpon have a short time lapse between the share and click back  
Tumblr, Google Plus and blogging platforms have a longer time lapse between the share and click back

Reddit, Twitter and Tumblr provide the most click backs per one share

The bottom line: simple tweaks, all of which are free, to your owned media pages can drive an immediate boost in content viewership and user acquisition. By executing the approaches mentioned above, you’ll be on your way to increasing your content marketing’s ROI.



Rebecca Watson is vice president of business development at RadiumOne, owners of Po.st and Real Girls Media.



Want even more tips for socializing content? Find out how to audit your social media content:  
<http://bit.ly/AuditingSM>

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# STRATEGY IS DEAD. LONG LIVE MEASUREMENT!

Are you going to toss your strategic plan and cow to the demands of measurement dictocrats?

By Eric Wittlake

**T**he measurement tail is wagging the marketing dog ... and it's turning your marketing into a dog. Unfortunately, few marketers have the insight needed to illustrate the problem, and even fewer have the guts to take it on within their organizations.

Marketing strategy begins with an understanding of audience and context—everything from analyzing your competition, assessing economic pressures and exploring competing priorities. Based on that understanding, you identify the opportunities or challenges marketing needs to tackle.

Are you losing opportunities because of a **perception problem**?

Are you not in the consideration set at all because of **low awareness of what makes your solution different**?

Are you **not being discovered** when people look for a solution to the problems you solve?

Is the problem your product or solution addresses one that has simply become accepted as a part of doing business today and **no longer seen as a source of pain**?

Now you should be ready to establish

your strategic plan. But instead, you are going to toss everything you just did and cow to the demands of the measurement dictocrats.

Here are just a few of the changes you will make. By the time you are finished, there won't be anything left of the plan you could have created, or the difference it could have made.

**You will ignore the biggest opportunity you have.**

You could create a great article, white paper and video that address the opportunity or challenge you identified and ensure it is broadly distributed, consumed and discussed. For many marketers this is probably appropriate.

Not so fast. You need to measure that effort and tie it definitively back to revenue. Easy enough; you add a registration form.

Now you know who actually saw your content (not just how many times it was seen) and can tie future revenue back to that form completion and your marketing effort. There are just two elephant-sized problems you are overlooking: You decimated the distribution of your content and replaced your original strategy with rote lead capture.

Sure, your results look OK on paper,

but you are now all but ignoring the biggest challenges or opportunities you have.

**You will sacrifice the customer experience.**

Creating a great experience is critical, right?

Unfortunately, there is often a tradeoff between measurement and experience. Usually marketers opt for the measurement and end up leaving results on the table. Here are three examples that are far too common.

**Social-sharing buttons that require authorizing a new application before sharing.** Sure, you get some great data, but at what cost to the visitor experience or the social distribution of your content?

**Limiting RSS feeds to headlines and**

**abstracts** lets you track views of your content but increases the distance between your audience and your content. You created that content because you wanted people to see it; now you are making it more difficult. **Unnecessary thank-you pages** make measurement a snap but they often become a dead end, keeping visitors

out of the experience you were drawing them in to.

Every break point you add to the experience gives you a way to measure activity or collect additional data, but each additional step may compromise customer experience and your ultimate results.

### You will slowly adopt the most obnoxious marketing tactics.

Strategy is not infallible, but measurement is not either.

Visits, signups, sales meetings and closed deals may be in nearly every report, but you will never see a line for the number of people who screamed “I am sick of Acme Company!” because of an aggressive appointment-setting firm you hired.

You likely know to avoid aggressive telemarketing, but what about these common content missteps? Would your strategy lead you down these obnoxious and destructive roads, or just your measurement?

## Measurement-driven tactics that go too far.

- Social-sharing buttons that require authorizing a new app before sharing.
- Limiting RSS feeds to headlines and abstracts.
- Unnecessary thank-you pages.



**Interruptive online ads**—like the not-at-all-welcoming welcome ads major publishers sell—deliver traffic from everyone who missed that tiny close button by just two pixels. That includes practically every mobile visitor to the site. How many of them frantically hit the back button in frustration while your landing page loads?

**Sensational, yet misleading, headlines** increase traffic but leave your visitor feeling duped and wary of clicking again.

**Expanding your retargeting program.** I recently saw five retargeting ads for a single company on

one page, each one bought through a different provider. Measurement, not strategy, made an agency do that. Obnoxious marketing tactics look great in reports, but are they really great for your business?

It is time to resurrect strategy and stop sacrificing real results for the sake of misleading numbers on a piece of paper.

Are you with me?



Eric Wittlake is the director of media at Babcock &

Jenkins. Find him @wittlake.



# Content Talent Agent

As co-founder and CCO of one of the hottest content-tech companies, and a writer for magazines like *WIRED* and *Fast Company*, **Shane Snow** thinks brands need to hire talent like media companies do.

### CCO: How should content-heavy brands access top writers?

Snow: We've found what works best for brands is what works for media companies. A print magazine, for example, will always have an in-house editor, and maybe a handful of additional editors and writers. But they also rely heavily on freelance journalists. We think brands need to look at how media companies work with freelancers and duplicate that model ... because it works.

### Can freelancers be as effective as in-house writers?

I write for *WIRED* magazine and every month I get an email from *WIRED* that explains the themes for upcoming issues.

When I pitch an idea, it's accepted on the merits of the idea and *WIRED's* experience working with me. The more I write for *WIRED*, the more I understand what an appropriate pitch is. I can foresee what an editor wants and my pitches get accepted more often. A brand wants to reach that point where its pool of freelancers feels a lot like its own dedicated team of writers.

### How can you tell if a brand runs a great content factory?

The more mature a company is in adopting content marketing, the more likely it is to hire someone from traditional media to run the show. And generally it's easier for writers to work with those

companies. A marketing manager who has never managed editorial and a team of writers can quickly become overwhelmed by the role. And freelancers in those cases also get frustrated. We tell companies they should have either an in-house editorial helmsman or a freelance managing editor.

Shane Snow's new book, *Smartcuts: How Hackers, Innovators, and Icons Accelerate Success*, is out in September.



**See Shane Snow speak at Content Marketing World on Storytelling & the Next Level of Content Marketing.**  
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# THE CONTENT MARKETING PYRAMID

A framework for efficient cross-channel content campaigns.

## By Pawan Deshpande

These days content marketing teams are expected to create content in all shapes and sizes. Following the advice of content marketing sages, we're posting tweets every few hours, blogging every day, podcasting every week, publishing an eBook every month ... and the list goes on. Trying to keep up with the seemingly insatiable demand, content teams often feel overwhelmed and stretched too thin. Even worse, all this frenetic activity often lacks an underlying strategy or focus.

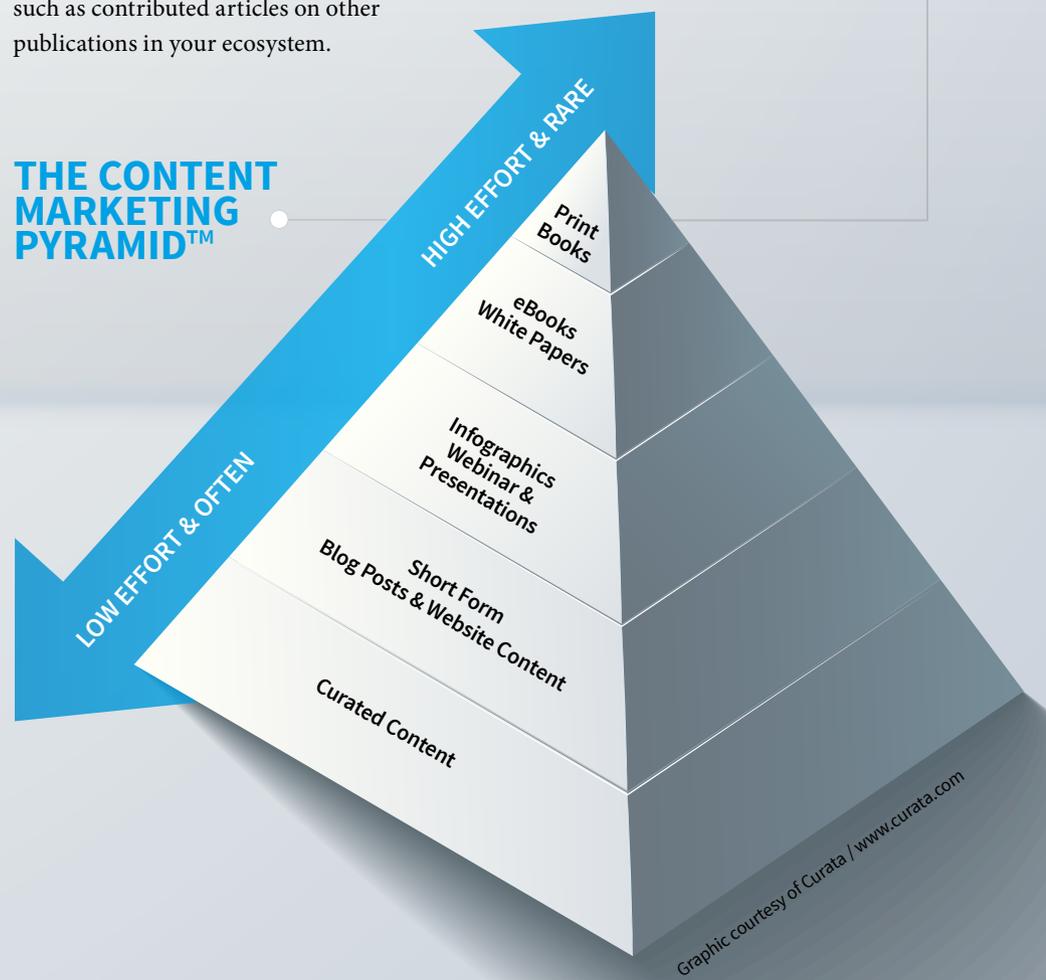
But it doesn't have to be this way. Back in 2010 I proposed the Content Marketing Pyramid™—a strategy that allows you to get more out the door with the same effort. It's done by combining infrequent, time-intensive content with low-effort, recurring content.

### INTRODUCING THE CONTENT PYRAMID

**Here's how it works:** The foundation of the pyramid consists of curated content, social media tweets and off-site blog comments. These snackable pieces of content are spontaneous, frequent and low-effort as compared to other content forms. Such content is not planned on an editorial calendar and is often spawned in reaction to a third-party blog post, tweet or comment. While low in effort, it makes up the largest part of your content marketing program.

The middle of the pyramid is forged by consolidating content from the foundation. For example, a series of insightful blog comments and commentary on curated articles can serve as the basis for a short-form blog post on a specific topic. Content in the pyramid does not have to be relegated to owned properties, but can extend to off-site, earned media as well—such as contributed articles on other publications in your ecosystem.

Moving a step higher in the pyramid, several short-form blog posts can be consolidated into eBooks and webinars. Finally at the pinnacle of the pyramid, for the ambitious, you may choose to produce a print book by aggregating a series of eBooks, speaking notes from webinars and long-form blog posts.



The pyramid model ensures you offer the same marketing message in multiple shapes and sizes that cater to all audiences—regardless of content consumption preferences.

Conversely, you may start your pyramid at the top with a heavy-duty piece such as a cornerstone research study, which can then serve as fodder for eBooks, white papers, webinars and blog posts in the middle of the pyramid and ultimately tweets at the bottom.

#### WHY THE PYRAMID IS SO EFFECTIVE

The content marketing pyramid is effective because it inherently incorporates several content marketing best practices such as:

**Repetition.** It's a well-known rule that a marketing campaign is most effective when a buyer sees the same marketing message in several places at different times. The content marketing pyramid abides by this rule by reinforcing the same message through multiple content formats.

**Consumability.** Some may prefer to sit through an interactive webinar, while others may prefer the leisurely feel of a print book. The pyramid model ensures you offer the same marketing message in multiple shapes and sizes that cater to all audiences—regardless of content consumption preferences.

**Content saturation.** The most effective content marketing campaigns extend far beyond owned properties by distributing and promoting content to earned and paid media channels. Using social media, sponsored content and contributed postings, your content gets wide reach to multiple audiences across multiple channels without you

having to reinvent your core message for each respective audience.

Repurposing content is nothing new. But rather than doing it haphazardly and sporadically, use a pyramid-based approach to make your content marketing operation efficient, effective and sustainable for the long term.

## BUILDING YOUR PYRAMID

BUILDING A CONTENT MARKETING PYRAMID REQUIRES SOME HEAVY LIFTING UPFRONT. HERE ARE A FEW KEY PIECES TO PUT IN PLACE:

**HAVE AN OWNER.** Though many people may be involved in the process, it's crucial to make a single individual responsible for the timely implementation of the pyramid. "Having a content marketing lead—someone who oversees all the pieces of a strategy, development and management of content—is paramount," says Christine Elliott, associate director at Crowe Horwath. "Without such an orchestrator, a content marketing initiative could collapse, or even worse, never get off the ground." Curata research shows that only 43 percent of companies have a content marketing executive.

**PLAN AHEAD, BUT NOT TOO MUCH.** Your content pyramid is a strategic tool and requires planning to gather sufficient resources to sustain a campaign or theme. "Strategic editorial topics need to be very broad and planned out on a yearly or monthly basis," says Pam Didner, global integrated marketing strategist at Intel. At the same time, you should allow for agility and flexibility when it comes to tactical execution. She advises, "For tactical planning, you should review and plan out your calendar on a weekly or monthly basis."

**GATE CONTENT SELECTIVELY.** To muster support for a pyramid strategy, you may need to support lead-generation efforts by gating premium content with landing pages. "Gate based on value," recommends Jason Miller, senior manager of content marketing at LinkedIn. As a rule of thumb, the higher in the pyramid, the more you should consider gating since the content is of higher value. He also suggests, "Leave smaller derivative content ungated to drive consumption. Have those content pieces link back to your high value content through calls-to-action."



**Pawan Deshpande**

is the founder and CEO of Curata. Find him @TweetsFromPawan.



Find out which technology tools content marketers can use to curate content and promote engagement in the Content Curation & Conversation Tools technology report. <http://bit.ly/ContentCurationTools>



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# DESTINATION: *Cleveland*

## FREE HALF DAY?

### The Cleveland Museum of Art

The Cleveland Museum of Art is internationally renowned for its substantial holdings of Asian and Egyptian art. And with a \$600 million endowment (among the wealthiest of art museums in the United States) the museum doesn't charge patrons for general admission. Take the RTA Red Line toward Windermere to the University Circle stop (about 15 minutes from Tower City), then board the Circlelink shuttle. [11150 East Blvd.; (216) 421-7350]



## DINNER PLANS

### East Fourth Street

With over a dozen restaurants in a single city block, East Fourth Street is a no-fail choice for casual dining. Our favorites include Lola (from famed Chef Michael Symon), Pickwick & Frolic and the Greenhouse Tavern—a James Beard Award winner for Best Chef, Great Lakes Region. [2000-2100 East Fourth Street]

# DESTINATION: Cleveland



## LATE NIGHT

### Velvet Tango Room

This old-school speakeasy takes cocktails seriously. (Don't embarrass yourself by asking for a Fuzzy Navel.) Our favorite concoction is the Bourbon Daisy: Maker's Mark, ginger beer and grenadine swilled together in a fruity, luscious trinity. Open until 1 a.m. [2095 Columbus Road; (216) 241-8869]

.....

### Horseshoe Cleveland Casino

Poker anyone? Opened in 2012, the casino has 2,000 slot machines and 89 game tables. Plus the casino's second floor is home to smaller versions of Cleveland's most famous restaurants, including Michael Symon's B Spot and Corky & Lenny's. Open 24 hours. [100 Public Square; horseshoecleveland.com]

.....



## HISTORIC CLEVELAND

### The West Side Market

Dating back to 1840, the West Side Market is a city gem and a source of pride for area foodies. Featured on the Travel Channel and Food Network, the distinctive yellow brick markethouse is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. It's home to over 100 vendors selling everything from fine meats and cheeses, to fresh produce and ready-to-eat ethnic delicacies. A five-minute cab ride from the convention center, or a 30-minute walk. Want a sit-down meal? Head across the street to the Great Lakes Brewery. [Limited weekday hours; visit westsidemarket.org for up-to-minute schedule; 1979 W. 25th St.]

## OTHER NOTABLES



### Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum

Don't miss the hall's most recent exhibit, "Rolling Stones: 50 Years of Satisfaction." [1100 East 9th Street; (216) 781-7625]

.....

### Steamship William G. Mather Maritime Museum

Learn about the maritime history of the Great Lakes aboard this retired bulk freighter docked permanently in Cleveland. Buy tickets at the Great Lakes Science Center in downtown Cleveland. [601 Erieside Ave.; (216) 694-2000]

.....

### Tower City Center

Built in the 1920s, Tower City Center is a collection of Beaux-Arts Art Deco-inspired architecture. Today it houses the city's central train station, hotels, a casino and large shopping mall.

.....



### Christmas Story House

If you're a fan of Andy Rooney and *A Christmas Story*, consider a quick trip to see Ralphie's original house and the adjoining museum. [3159 W. 11th St.; (216) 298-4919]

Need more ideas? Visit [PositivelyCleveland.com](http://PositivelyCleveland.com).

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# Don't Kill the White Paper Just Yet

Leading services marketers explain how they leverage the age-old content tactic.

By Roanne Neuwirth

Contrary to headlines in the marketing press, the white paper is not dead. While versions of the concept have proliferated and greatly diluted its potential power, if done right the white paper continues to serve as the basis of highly effective content marketing. The question is, what is the best way to leverage this old marketing workhorse given our plugged-in, multi-channel world?

First let's understand why the white paper has staying power. The best examples include:

Rich, substantive content that educates, not sells

New ideas that prompt and provoke innovative thinking

A clearly communicated point of view on issues that are highly relevant and timely

Statistically sound data and well-researched findings

Regardless of the format or delivery mode, these elements are the key to content that resonates with clients and prospects. As Rob Leavitt, director of thought leadership at PTC, puts it, "There is no substitute for well-researched, well-thought-through points of view on issues that really matter to your customers. If you don't take the time to do

that it doesn't matter what format you are using. It just won't be effective."

Chris Koch, editorial director at SAP, emphasizes these themes as well: "You need to do all of the work required for an in-depth white paper regardless of what you want to publish."

## Jettison the fluff

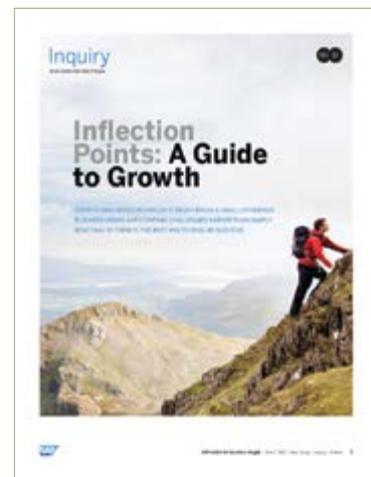
Not all white papers are created equal. Scattershot ideas, poorly researched perspectives, white label third-party reports, rehashed promotional materials and feature/function descriptions all give the white paper a bad name. There is so much competition for attention in the marketplace, those poorly conceived efforts will quickly consign your content to the garbage bin.

## Rethink the potential of the white paper

To revise the model for today's environment, consider the white paper as the backbone of your content and a roadmap to engage and communicate about the unique value you bring.

## Use the paper to pave the way

A well-crafted white paper can essentially serve as an editorial calendar, feeding a range of entry points to reach your audience in



"We break the white paper into 'bread-crumbs' of content. I start with the white paper and from there I disseminate the content in other formats and link them together. For each topic, we do a Q&A discussion to showcase the experts and the clients who have contributed to the research. We also create a short briefing document and an e-Book, an insight-rich short slide deck. All of these pieces contain links to the white paper and are meant to introduce the topic. The key to this approach is having the work on the in-depth white paper completed up front for these follow-on pieces to be successful. If you haven't done that work, you won't achieve the kind of mastery of the topic that will give you credibility with your audience."

**Chris Koch,**  
editorial director at SAP

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Read the magazine and learn more about brand publishing at [www.contently.com/strategist/](http://www.contently.com/strategist/)

“The point of view is what creates the loyalty and the interest. Content marketing powerhouses like McKinsey and IBM get attention and a loyal following for their *content*, not because of the format they choose. While slicing and dicing material can help engage the readers, the content has legs because it has a really well-developed point of view.”

**Chris Koch,**  
editorial director at SAP



## The bottom line is good content makes for good content marketing. The white paper isn't dead, but the stakes are higher than ever to get it right.

you go too far from where your clients or prospects see you having permission to speak, you will lose credibility as an expert. Leavitt cautions, “Not everyone is going to be credible talking about the same things. When developing your point of view, ask whether it is reasonable for your company to develop thought leadership around a particular topic.”

### Involve your clients

Reach out to your clients and customers to collaborate and help to refine your point of view. They will provide the voice of reason on the relevance of your ideas, while offering peer insights and information that will strengthen the work in the eyes of your audience. If you are short of research resources, you'll want to augment third-party data with real-world insights, clients can play the role of expert research panel, adding unique fodder to enhance and strengthen your perspective.

The bottom line is good content makes for good content marketing. The white paper isn't dead, but the stakes are higher than ever to get it right. Done well it can drive your content train and keep you on track.

different formats, whether through blog postings, videos, briefings or other vehicles. Establish your perspective on the topic and define the storyline with the white paper, and build a range of accompanying content pieces to expand on key themes; highlight experts; uncover research nuggets and drive different conversations.

### Hone your point of view

The point of view provides the pillar of a good white paper, and represents the opportunity to differentiate your company in the eyes of your readers. Leavitt explains, “Flitting from topic to topic dilutes the impact of your content. Instead focus on presenting, refining and iterating your primary point of view.”

Koch adds, “Most marketers will never beat the journalists or big content marketing players like McKinsey on their own turf so they need to do something that is

unique.” Finding your own angle on important business and strategic issues creates the lever for the right kinds of conversations and positions your expertise clearly for those who want to engage with you.

### Connect to your audience

With so many voices in the marketplace, it is more vital than ever to ensure your perspective is relevant to your audience and tackles the challenges and issues your clients care about. As Koch advises, “It is important to create content that is meaningful to the specific audience your company is trying to reach and that content that also fits with your company's strategy.”

At the same time, your audience has to see you as credible in taking on the subject. While creating thought leadership is a good way to expand your reach into new market areas, if



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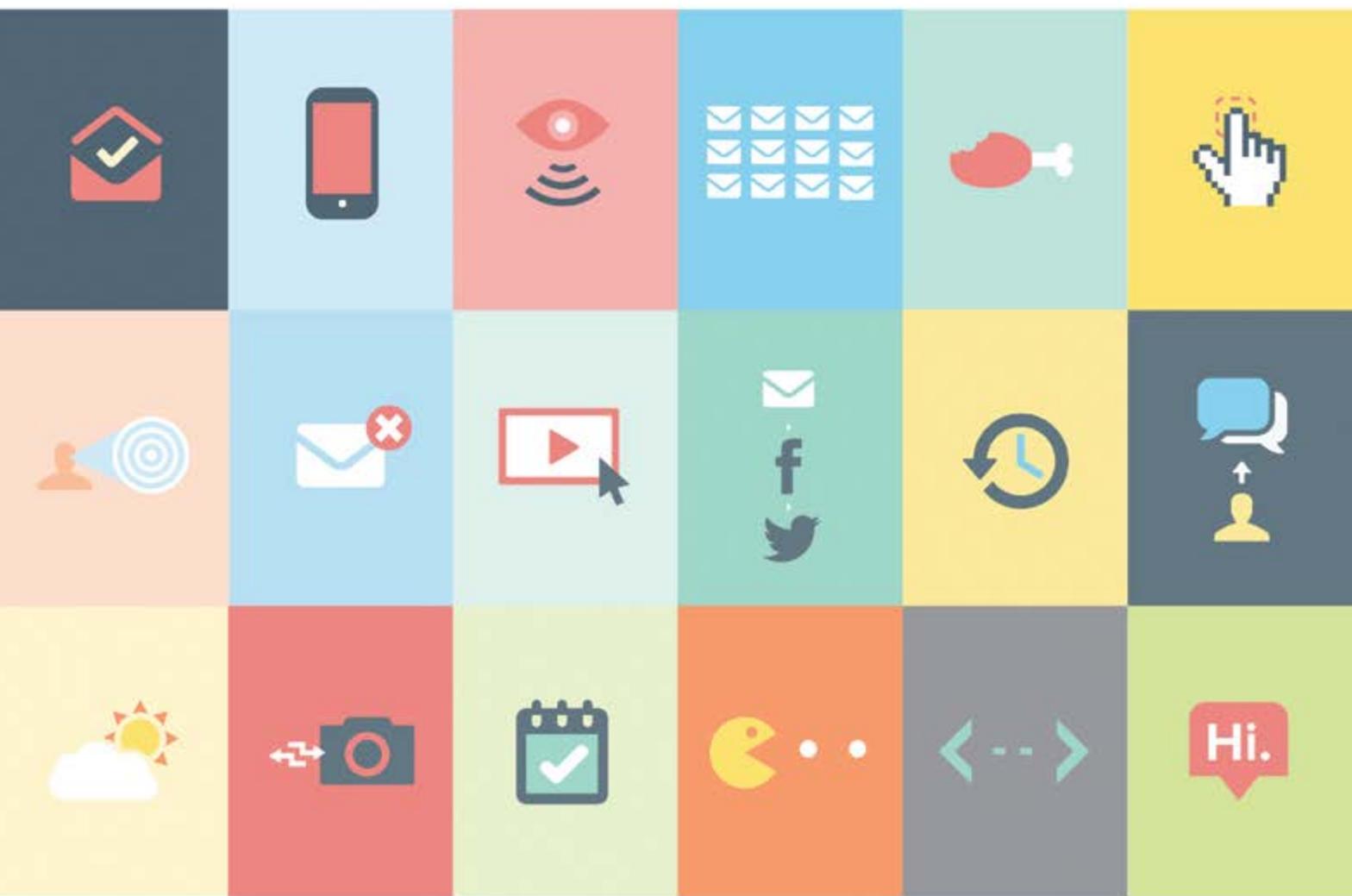


EMMA PRESENTS

# 18

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## Bring Back *Top Hat Tuesday Tips*



In this new column, **Andrew Davis** dishes out content marketing guidance to unsuspecting targets ... whether they wanted it or not. This issue Davis serves up unsolicited advice to video hosting company Wistia, which recently canceled its regularly distributed video series called *Top Hat Tuesday Tips*.

Alyce Currier  
Content Strategist  
Wistia.com

Dear Ms. Currier,

Put your top hat back on and bring back *Top Hat Tuesday Tips*.

Seriously. I want it back.

For the last 22 weeks, your awesome video production, marketing and distribution tips arrived like clockwork in my e-mail inbox. Thanks to the Wistia team you showed me how to record better audio, frame a nice shot and where to embed my videos for maximum impact. You taught me how to “circle back,” do a “rip take” and even how to make my own teleprompter with just a laptop and a chair.

I’ve learned so much from your weekly videos that I want them back. I’ll even pay for them. (That’s Youtility.)

Not only did *Top Hat Tuesday Tips* teach me a lot about getting the most out of the videos I produce, but your simple tutorials positioned you as the most knowledgeable, caring and smart video host on the planet. (Take that, YouTube.)

Here are four reasons *Top Hat Tuesday Tips* worked and why every marketer should be following your lead:

1. You owned two minutes of my Tuesday. Making a regularly scheduled appointment with me in my inbox ensured that you owned some of my valuable time. Every marketer should be so smart and so lucky.
2. You stuck to a reliable format. Every single video followed the very same format. Why is this important? You managed my expectations. Every time your email showed up I knew exactly what I was going to get. I didn’t fall in love with the tips you sent (at first.) I fell in love with the format of your content.
3. Your content had a unique hook. As bizarre a choice as the top hat was, it worked. This simple

visual hook provided continuity and helped build a real content brand. Your video tutorials were different than everyone else’s on the web for one simple reason: you wore a top hat. Instead of creating branded content you created a content brand! I wish more marketers did the same.

4. You invited me to subscribe to something specific. I don’t want the rest of your blog’s mediocre content. I don’t care about the free giveaways, your trip to the farmers market or your new staff member. That stuff contributes to my information overload and it’s straight-up junk. I appreciated the fact that I could subscribe to *Top Hat Tuesday Tips*—and nothing else.

In your final *Top Hat Tuesday Tips* letter, announcing the end of your “regularly scheduled programming,” you noted that “creating a new tip every week started to feel like a distracting chore, instead of an exciting teaching opportunity.” Here’s the thing: I don’t care if you felt like it was a chore. *Top Hat Tuesday Tips* was unbelievably valuable and stopping it because you got tired of producing the series seems completely backwards.

I appreciate the fact that you decided to reevaluate your content strategy. I just hope you take an audience-first approach while you retrench. Ms. Currier, here’s the deal: I’ll sign up for Wistia’s video hosting services if you bring back *Top Hat Tuesday*. What do you say? Do we have a deal?

Whether you wanted it or not,  
Andrew Davis

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



Join Andrew Davis at Content Marketing World for his keynote presentation, *Inspired Content: How Brilliant Storytellers Create a Sudden Urge to Act*.  
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# #Let's #Start a #Conversation

By Tom Fishburne



**S**ocial media allows brands to start conversations, but are they conversations worth starting?

It seems nearly every ad closes with an invitation to “join the conversation,” paired with a dedicated Twitter hashtag. With Instagram and Facebook incorporating hashtags into their platforms, some marketers are referring to hashtags as the new URL.

But there’s a fundamental difference between hashtags and URLs: Brands aren’t in control of hashtags. JPMorgan Chase discovered this the hard way when it scheduled a live Twitter chat with the hashtag #AskJPM. The hashtag quickly started trending for all the wrong reasons.

*“Did you have a specific number of people’s lives you needed to ruin before you*

*considered your business model a success? #AskJPM”*  
*“If it came out Jamie Dimon had a propensity for eating Irish children, would you fire him? What if he’s still ‘a good earner’? #AskJPM”*  
*“Is it the ability to throw anyone out of their home that drives you, or just the satisfaction that you know you COULD do it? #AskJPM”*

It’s the same lesson McDonald’s famously discovered with #McDStories (which devolved into snarky comments about type 2 diabetes and how McNuggets are made.) When consumers are invited to talk about a brand, they’re not always going to say nice things.

Marketers refer to this phenomenon as “hashtag hijacking,” but that’s a misnomer. Hijacking implies brands own the hashtag

at the start. Unlike traditional marketing messages, brands can’t script the social narrative. Brands can spark conversations, but they can’t control them.

Many marketers assume consumers are dying to join a brand’s conversations ... but they’re mistaken. The best examples of brand conversations are those that enable and extend conversations consumers *are already having*. My favorite remains Oreo’s 2012 “Daily Twist” campaign. To celebrate 100 years of the Oreo, Oreo posted a new image every day for 100 days, using the Oreo to celebrate different events. It launched with a Gay Pride Oreo, and continued with Shark Week, Mars Rover, Elvis Week, 40 years of Pong and 95 other images.

With “Daily Twist,” Oreo didn’t merely start brand-centric conversations that consumers could easily ignore. Instead, Oreo inserted themselves in a positive way into conversations that consumers were already having.

In India, the dairy brand Amul has been executing a similar strategy with a weekly cartoon for decades. Each week since 1966, Amul has released a new cartoon on billboards across India that riffs on topical issues, from politics to cricket. The cartoons aren’t about Amul butter. They’re about conversations that matter to their consumers in India. No wonder this campaign won a Guinness World Record for the longest-running ad campaign in the world.

A hashtag alone does not make a conversation. It is only a means to an end.



Tom Fishburne is Marketoonist and founder of Marketoon Studios. Find him @tomfishburne.

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