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THE AGENCY ISSUE

THE WHOLE STORY

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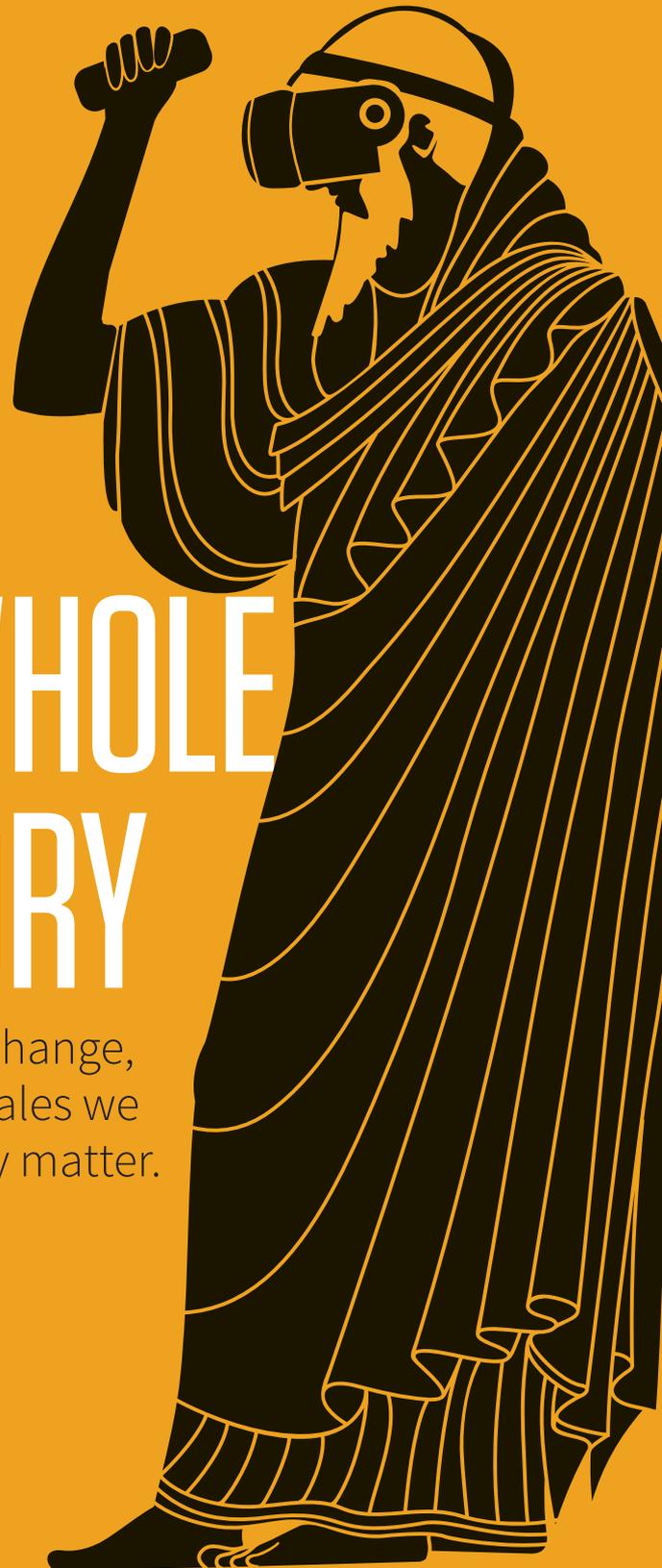
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What's Your Story?

I t's a common question when you're getting to know someone. It begs for details about the person's past, career, family, hobbies. You probably never hear anyone reply: "I studied content marketing as an undergraduate and earned a Ph.D. in creating great customer experiences."

Those degrees don't exist, of course, but that's OK. Great storytellers come from all sorts of places. And they tell stories in so many new ways that each day seems to add proof to Daniel Pink's dramatic 2006 assertion:

"The future belongs to a different kind of person with a different kind of mind: artists, inventors, storytellers—creative and holistic 'right-brain' thinkers whose abilities mark the fault line between who gets ahead and who doesn't."

Captivating examples of this different kind of mind at work emerge seemingly one after the other these days. In his keynote at Content Marketing World last September, Joseph Gordon-Levitt served as a living example, being an actor, a producer, a director and a writer. Phew!

His talk explored how thinking differently about creativity led him to form a new kind of collaborative production company. Anyone anywhere in the world can contribute to one of the company's "creative challenges" by submitting text, video, music, or art through the HITRECORD website. Ideas get remixed and refined by other contributors, and the best examples make their way into short films, online videos (some sponsored by brands) and other creative works. (Read our interview with Gordon-Levitt on page 32.)

In January, virtual reality made its debut at the Sundance Film Festival, where Oculus Story Studio showed several VR shorts. These movies both represent and require different ways of thinking about story delivery and experience.

In his new book Storytelling for Virtual Reality, John Bucher interviewed Lisa Brillstone, Google's principal filmmaker for VR, about this storytelling shift. "What's interesting is shared experience—having something big happen," she said. "You're right there next to the hero watching it. That creates camaraderie. That creates shared experience. That creates empathy."

If you're starting to see how these new storytelling tools create opportunities for you as a marketer, you'll want to catch Bucher's session at Content Marketing World 2018. But first, read our interview with him on page 18 to hear about a few of the VR experiments marking the early days of this exciting new medium for storytelling.

And yet, as Denise Roberts McKee reminds us in her article on documentary filmmaking on page 8, the fundamental elements of powerful stories remain the same. Whatever the medium—fireside ballad, printed page, documentary film or VR experience—the same storytelling formula applies as it has for thousands of years. In the end, it is the power of the story, not the medium, that determines whether an audience will applaud our content or click away too soon.

The heart of content marketing is the ability to tell compelling stories that attract (and retain) an audience. The most successful brands, agencies and media properties are those that continue to tell great tales and adapt to new ways of doing it.

I started this piece with one question: What's your story? I'll end it with another: How will you tell it? ∞

*Stephanie Stahl*
General Manager, Content Marketing Institute

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CHIEF CONTENT OFFICER

MAY 2018

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ELECTRIC CAMPFIRE STORIES

SHOW, DON'T TELL: THE STORYTELLING ART OF DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKING

With organic brand reach in social media
rapidly becoming a thing of the past with every new algorithm update,
content marketers need to produce more compelling stories capable of creating
a deeper impression.

Denise Roberts McKee

"Those who tell the stories rule the world."
– HOPI NATIVE AMERICAN PROVERB (APOCRYPHAL)

When Facebook announced the latest changes to its news feed in January, its intention was clear: to reduce further the amount of content users see from brands and publishers, particularly what it deems low-quality "engagement bait." Across the industry, this latest update has been interpreted as the final nail in the coffin of organic reach. Strategies can no longer rely on short, snackable pieces of content that only seek to momentarily pause people's attention while they scroll through their feeds. Building your audience wholly (or mostly) through rented social sites isn't going to produce sustainable results anymore.

Marketers have to produce stories that transcend these ephemeral 15-second cotton-candy spots to create loyalty beyond the like button.

So, let's talk about producing content that your audience not only wants to consume but will seek; content that's deeply and personally relatable; content that people interact with and share with their networks.

While there are a multitude of ways to create truly memorable and compelling content, I believe documentary storytelling has amazing potential, partly because I see so few brands using the format well. (Full disclosure: I work for a documentary film company so, yes, I am biased but only because I've seen firsthand how effective this form of storytelling can be.)

Vans embodies skater culture

In 2001, apparel brand Vans sponsored the feature-length documentary, Dogtown and Z-Boys, chronicling the early skateboarder culture of southern California. While Vans funded the project, the filmmakers retained creative license. There are no Vans ads running along the bottom of the screen and no gratuitous shots of major characters wearing Vans outfits head to toe.

Of course, some of them did wear Vans shoes. Or hats. Or T-shirts. But as the brand was already making inroads into skateboarding culture, it felt natural to see Vans apparel in the film.

Flash forward to today and Vans is still producing documentary films to capture the attention of its customers.

Watch a Vans mini-doc:
http://cmi.media/vans2

Living Off the Wall is Vans' latest documentary video series; a series of short films in which we meet punk rockers, skateboarders, tattoo artists and other young people who not only exist but thrive outside of the mainstream. Vans created the content to both celebrate its 50-year-old "Off the Wall" slogan and reaffirm the brand's values: authentic, individual, fearless, youthful. The series has attracted almost 300,000 views while the Vans YouTube Channel has more than 325,000 subscribers.

Why is the series effective? Why do people watch it? Everyone wants to belong to a culture or community. People want to see inside the world of like-minded people. Vans customers and non-customers alike watch these shorts to experience subcultures and characters they either identify with or are fascinated by. Though Vans' first film project was released in 2001, the brand is still creatively knocking it out of the park in 2018.

The essential elements of an audience-grabbing documentary
At the heart of documentary filmmaking is the art of telling a good story and the best have a few ingredients in common.

The story landscape: For a documentary film to resonate with an audience, it should feel authentic. A brand-made documentary must be honest and true to the brand's values and culture. Just as importantly, it also has to appeal to the target audience's interests.

Think of a Venn diagram in which one circle is your company's core values and the other is your audience's passions and desires. The story landscape lies at the intersection: a setting your audience can't help but be curious about or drawn to, and where your company can embody its human side.

A great example of an artfully crafted story landscape is from outdoor-clothing brand Patagonia. 180 Degrees South is a 2014 feature-length documentary that follows a small group of young men on a journey to the farthest reaches of Patagonia

MacBook

 Watch the Intel mini doc about Jack Andraka: http://cmi.media/intel_doc

(the place, not the brand) in South America. The film firmly resides within that intersection between the brand's core values—high-quality clothing made responsibly and a commitment to conservation—and its customers' aspirations—experiences and appreciation of the outdoors and adventure travel.

This film does not show Patagonia products (though it does include conversations with Patagonia founder Yvon Chouinard). Instead, the film explores the complexities of environmental conservation in countries where the need for economic development threatens some of the most wild and stunning scenery in the world. The documentary—and the brand behind it—was covered widely in the media, including major global publications like The Wall Street Journal.

A powerful story archetype: The strongest stories in any format feature a hero facing some type of conflict. Frodo taking the ring to Mordor.

Rocky fighting for the championship belt. Every doctor on every TV show who persevered to save a patient's life. Documentaries are no different. Before you begin crafting a story, you must identify a hero and his or her conflict.

The hero's journey is a classic story archetype in which the hero has a clear goal underlined by an emotional import with obstacles to overcome along the way.

Consider how Intel's documentary, Look Inside: Jack Andraka (produced by Venables Bell & Partners), follows the classic hero's journey.

Sixteen-year-old Jack won the grand prize at the 2012 Intel International Science and Engineering Fair for his part in developing a new method to detect pancreatic and other cancers.

The film is only two minutes, but it's a strong example of the hero's journey: an underdog high school student with a goal of fighting cancer overcomes multiple obstacles to successfully develop a new diagnostic technique and win a prestigious award. Intel and Venables Bell did a fantastic job finding

and telling that story.

A relatable hero: While every story should have a hero, I'm not necessarily talking about the good Jedi taking on the evil empire. Anyone can be a hero if framed correctly, particularly if the person is a compelling character.

Is the person entertaining, like the vibrant characters in Dogtown? Is the person quirky or fascinating to watch? Does he or she have a passion for something that the audience can feel burning through the screen like Intel's Jack Andraka did? Above all, is the hero relatable to the audience? Will the hero create a connection? Will people care about what happens to him or her?

The central character shouldn't be a scripted corporate mouthpiece because that won't feel authentic to the audience. A corporate insider usually sits outside that story landscape sweet spot. Avoid this mistake and push for compelling over bland.

Church's Chicken found a number of compelling characters for its documentary series Fast Company. Each episode follows a group of people competing for the title of world's fastest drummer in a speed-drumming competition. If you're looking for characters best described as "a little bit quirky," the world of competitive drumming has them to spare—and that's why this series works so well.

Church's Chicken wanted to increase brand awareness and traffic. Fast Company not only achieved those goals but delivered a significant uptick in sales at Church's restaurants.

Where to begin?
I've touched on a few different aspects of brainstorming documentary stories. Now let's talk about how you and your company can best use the documentary format.

Don't DIY your dental work: You wouldn't have your company's payroll accountant do your root canal, would you? Work with professionals who know how to create and produce documentaries with a proven track record (and a proven show reel). If you have professional filmmakers and storytellers in house, great. If you don't, find them elsewhere. Bring in people from the entertainment industry. After all, that's where the best practitioners are working. And, believe it or not, many do make themselves available to work on projects for brands.

While hiring an industry pro may be more expensive than buying a camera for the marketing team, the right person adds massive value to your project through experience, business savvy, distribution expertise and metrics know-how.

Manage hopes and fears: Any discussion with internal stakeholders about producing a video too often results in the question, "Will it go viral?" Strike that phrase from all conversations. Most people can't define what it means to "go viral" anyway, never mind connect it to concrete business goals. Instead, get specific. Identify your objectives. Who do you want to interact with your documentary? How? How many video plays do you expect? How many new subscribers would be considered a good result? Define success so you have a goal to aim for.

Also, keep your fears in check. You may worry that outsourcing to an external team risks diluting your story's power or making it more generic—after all, they don't live and breathe your brand every day. However, the opposite result is more likely as filmmakers know how to weave your company's values into a story without being heavy handed.

You are armed with the basics of a successful brand documentary approach. Now get out there and bring your clients' stories to life. ⚭

Watch the Church's Chicken doc: http://cmi.media/churchschicken

Finding Your Story

Story finding isn't always easy. How often do you stumble across a slam dunk of a story like Intel's Jack Andraka? Here are a few tips to help you identify and develop strong stories your audience will want to see:

- **Always be looking.** Create a story database and capture interesting ideas when they surface even if their use or relevance isn't immediately apparent.
- **Don't take your own stories for granted.** What might be routine to you could be fascinating to your audience.
- **Be creative.** Don't let your objectives rule your concept development. Ideate the stories, then map them to your objectives to see what aligns.
- **Think about the voice.** Who's the best fit to share the story you're telling?
- **It doesn't need to be epic.** Often, the smaller, more intimate or personal stories can be the most powerful.

Denise Roberts McKee is the COO at About Face Media. Follow her at @AboutFaceMedia.

For more advice on structuring a great story in any medium, read the content marketer's guide to story structure. http://cmi.media/structure

AN UNLIKELY LOVE STORY

COME TOGETHER

As chief marketing officer at **InsightSquared**—which provides business intelligence for sales teams—**Joe Chernov** knows that the relationship between marketing and sales isn't always hearts and roses. He explains to CCO how account-based marketing could be the beginning of a beautiful liaison.

CCO: How much confusion is there about account-based marketing and its relationship to content marketing?

Chernov: ABM comes around largely because of a massive shortcoming in the classic content-driven demand-gen model. That massive shortcoming is it takes an unbelievably long time for a company to produce enough content that it provides enough demand generation to drive the business.

Each blog post you write, each e-book you create will provide some increment of leads. But what you need is an accumulation of lots and lots of content to be able to drop enough hooks in the water to catch enough fish to feed your town. Companies got frustrated with this. Boards got frustrated with this. Executives got frustrated with this. Marketing leaders got frustrated with this.

Along comes ABM, which is essentially a better way to do outbound marketing.

Isn't ABM a reversal of the top-down funnel approach of content marketing?

Yes, absolutely correct. In content marketing, the burden shifts to sales. Marketing's job is to build as large an audience as possible, shove that audience into a funnel, and then let sales worry about which leads are good and which leads aren't so good.

But I'm prone to say, "Show me how I'm measured, I'll show you how I behave." And if marketing is measured on a raw number of leads coming in, then marketing is going to do what marketing does; which is write content that appeals to the widest audience possible with relevance taking a back seat.

Along comes ABM. It reverses the whole thing. Marketing now bears the burden. Sales says, "What specific accounts do I want to sell to next year?" And they come up with a list for marketing to worry about.

In a perfect world, marketing would help them come up with this list, but usually sales comes up with this list and then says, "Hey, marketing. Joke's on you this time. You've got to figure out a way to command the attention and get me in front of these companies."

It's really in marketing's best interest

ACCOUNT-BASED MARKETING (ABM) 101

"The customer journey exists independently of sales and marketing," says InsightSquared's Joe Chernov. "Sales and marketing have to figure out how to add value to that journey."

If you've never encountered it, the term account-based marketing might seem vague and unhelpful. However, the central point of ABM is to create greater clarity and specificity within both marketing and sales departments.

In an ABM strategy, the traditional sales funnel becomes less scattershot across the widest area (or audience) possible and more focused toward those handpicked accounts your sales team wants to get on the phone.

ABM represents a reversal of the usual demand-gen approach taken by most marketers—particularly content marketers.

"In ABM, there is no concept of a lead," says Chernov. "(Marketers) have a casual relationship with the word 'lead.' (To most) it means somebody who's not yet bought. But if you're in operations, lead has a very specific meaning as it relates to the CRM.

"Leads are essentially people that are untethered to an account; they're just floating around. It's a person. In ABM, you need to have accounts, and all of the people on those accounts—the employees—need to be associated with those accounts.

"We have a swear jar internally where if you use the word 'lead' you have to put a dollar in it."

"There's no such thing as leads. It's accounts and contacts. We have a swear jar internally where if you use the word 'lead' you have to put a dollar in it."

---

to have some say in the companies that are on the list.

A little rivalry between marketing and sales departments isn't unusual. How do you bring together the two sides for an ABM strategy to be effective?

Sales and marketing need to start by coming together and developing an ideal customer profile (ICP). Before naming accounts to try to sell to, the head of sales and the head of marketing can look each other in the eye and say, "We're going to sell to companies with this employee range, in these industries, that have this particular role on the account, that are in these geographies, that have these types of technologies in their technology stack."

Collaboratively, get really specific about the attributes of the companies you're trying to sell to. Then, and only then, go about figuring out who is going to do what and when to try to get in front of these organizations.

In the content marketing world, a lot is made of sales and marketing alignment, but in ABM, alignment isn't enough.

You almost need the two functions to be integrated because it's very much a dance. Jon Miller (CEO and co-founder of Engagio and co-founder of Marketo) uses the word "orchestration" a lot. It's a very good term because each plays a part. Sometimes one part leads or one part is louder. Then there are times when that part recedes, and the other group takes the fore. It tends to go back and forth. Simply being aligned—that is, one side knowing what the other is doing—is not enough. It really needs to be orchestrated.

How might an ideal customer profile for an ABM strategy differ from customer profiles marketers may be using?

It's not different. Companies may have this. What changes is the fidelity to it, the degree of rigor applied to it. You really cannot get too specific.

I've talked about ICP in the singular, but you really have to think about it in the plural because big software is bought by committee.

When you implement these programs, what you also find is there are these sorts

of proxy personas. In larger companies there may be a junior person who is dispatched by the head of sales operations or dispatched by the CFO or the COO to do the (product) research. We could see a fairly junior person spending a lot of time on our website and on our pricing page and consuming our content. If we were stubborn, saying, "Well, this person doesn't match the ICP," then we could essentially fail to follow up on a good account.

Here's how we've gone about engineering this. There is no way we're going to be able to know everybody who matters on an account because there are any number of these ghost or proxy personas. (Instead) we have a concept called a marketing-qualified account—a named account that shows a level of engagement with us deep enough that we require sales to follow up.

There are three ways to become a marketing-qualified account. You can request a demo or contact sales . If it's somebody that's reasonably close to our ICP, we'll take a hard look. There can be a single person deeply involved in the account. Or there can be a committee of people, each of whom is involved lightly. We can go about it horizontally or deeply. Either will trigger the MQA to be created.

However, once the MQA is created, the salesperson's job is to engage the contacts on the account. But if the head of sales operations is not on the account, then the salesperson's job is to use the engaged people to try to reach the target persona.

They've got to "enrich the account," as we call it, to be able to engage the entire buyer committee and fill in the missing persona from that account.

Is it advisable or even possible to run a wide play, audience-building content marketing strategy and an ABM strategy in parallel, or is it one or the other?
Look, there's really no wide play. If you have a specific list of companies that you're going to try to sell to, then there is no wide play.

My father-in-law sells software to nuclear power plants. If he went with a wide play, he's going to attract prospects that he will never sell to. So, what is the point of a wide play?

What does this mean for the content marketing the team may already be doing, such as blogs and e-books? Are tactics traditionally thought of as wide plays still relevant in an ABM context?
Everything needs to get more targeted. Yes, the funnel still has a top. It's just a narrower top.

I'll give you a very specific example. Before we made this shift, we wrote blog posts (with) headlines
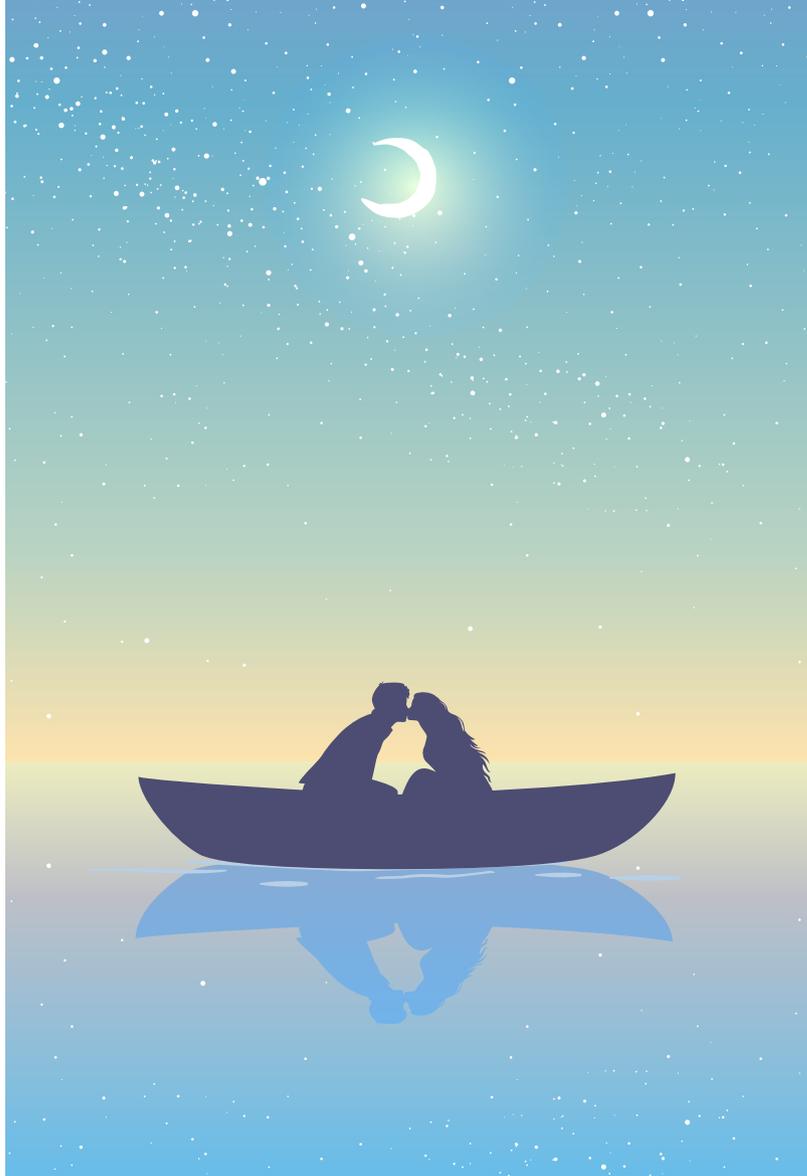
IS ABM RIGHT FOR YOU?
If you or your team is considering whether to adopt an ABM strategy, Joe Chernov recommends hashing out a few points in the boardroom.

Are your deals big enough to justify this strategy?
If you're selling a $10 a month product, you can't spend too much time encouraging a company to buy. Consider if your deal size supports this high-investment strategy.

Is the necessary win rate achievable?
If you need 1,000 deals a year to grow the business, and you have 2,000 accounts to try to sell to, is a 50-percent win rate realistic?

Can the marketing budget withstand the demands of an ABM strategy?
You might decide to host a specialized customer or user conference. You might spend more on licensing middle-of-funnel content from analyst firms. You might send premium direct mail, personalized for each recipient. All these tactics can be very expensive.

What about post-sale?
Sales may think they know the right kind of company to sell to—one they can win easily or at a high deal size—but retention is just as important. If a profiled customer doesn't renew, is it really your ideal customer? Not only does marketing have to align with sales, but it also needs to align with customer success.

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like, "How B2B sales is like the Game of Thrones." They would get predictable day-one traffic. Maybe some of them got shared a bunch of times on social and the blogger felt good because he's measured on views and he did his job. But I don't really care if Game of Thrones fans happen to read that blog post unless they meet my ideal customer profile.

Our blog now is really inside baseball; very niche. It's very specific to the needs of sales operations people. None of these posts will ever "go viral." They are just too wonky. But our traffic is up significantly because we have found a home with the right readership.

You still need that top-of-funnel content, but you need to resist the temptation to aspire to a larger audience. What you want is a greater composition of the right audience. What is the ratio of right reader to reader? That's more important than absolute number of readers.

How does an ABM strategy impact how marketers use data and measure performance?
What's hard is that you're working with smaller data sets so your data can be skewed more easily, especially early on.

If you have a bunch of reps, each with 25 accounts, it's going to take you a while to be confident enough in the data to know that this subject line is performing better than that subject line because you're not sending it to thousands, you're sending it to handfuls. When a handful of customer wins can skew your results, you have to apply more judgment than you might in a marketing-automated, classic demand-gen world.

You know this strategy is working when you see that deals are getting bigger, deals are closing faster. Our conversion rates within the funnel are all increasing so that the funnel shape is changing to be more cylindrical. Those in the end are the metrics.

This is a really great opportunity to jerk the wheel on the way marketing has historically been measured: How many leads did we procure? What's the quality of those leads? What were the sources for those conversions? What's the cost per lead?

Get away from some of those indicator metrics and look at output. Did the accounts that marketing engaged close at a higher clip? Did they close faster? Did they close larger?

If marketing sourced the deal, if we were the first ones to engage the account, did they engage with sales more frequently? Did they pick up the phone faster when sales called?

(Your) marketing KPIs can start to sound an awful lot like sales KPIs—and that's a good thing. If you're measuring the marketing team in those ways, it's going to force them to think a lot more like sales.

That's really what ABM is. It's the fusion of those two functions. ○○○

Learn more about ABM and what content marketers need to know. http://cmi.media/abm

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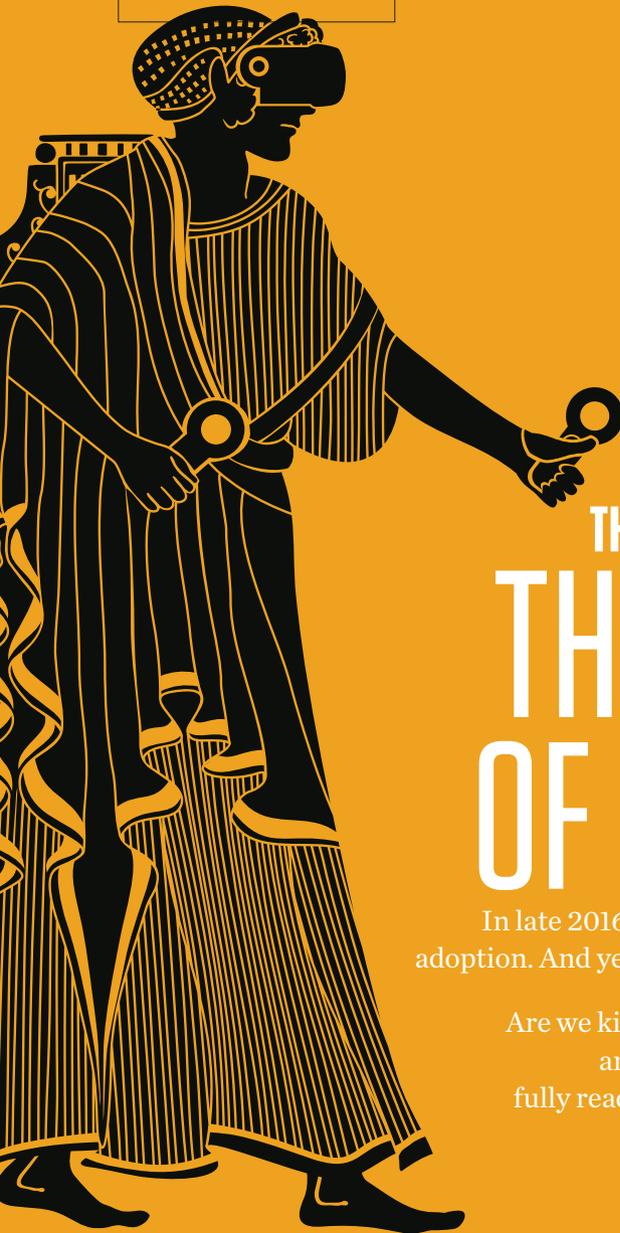
THE TRUTH BEHIND THE MYTH
THE ONGOING SAGA OF VIRTUAL REALITY

In late 2016, pundits declared 2017 would be the year virtual reality won mass adoption. And yet here we are, well into 2018, still waiting for it to fully materialize.

Are we kind of, nearly, almost there? **John Bucher**, virtual reality producer and consultant, makes the case for trying the medium even if it's not fully ready for prime time, with examples of brands actively experimenting with virtual and augmented reality.

Clare McDermott

John Bucher is a renowned strategist, communicator and cultural mythologist based in Hollywood. He is the author of six books, including the bestselling Storytelling for Virtual Reality. Bucher has worked with a wide range of media brands, including HBO, DC Comics, The History Channel, A24 Films and The John Maxwell Leadership Foundation, and has served as a consultant and writer for numerous film, television, and virtual reality projects. Bucher has spoken on five continents about using the power of story to reframe how products, individuals, organizations, cultures and nations are viewed. Find him @johnkbucher.

CCO: How do you feel about the ways brands have used VR to date? Are you hopeful or frustrated by the examples you encounter?

Bucher: Brands for a number of years have mastered the art of storytelling to audiences in order to engage them in products. VR offers a new way to tell stories to an audience. It's a storytelling medium that goes far beyond novelty; it allows you to immerse your audience in the stories you're telling, and it affects the brain differently than a flat-screen version of the same story.

While brands have been somewhat cautious and slow to move into VR, I think the early experiments have been good. It's a new language for communicating with audiences, and brands are still figuring out how to best tell stories with this new medium. And it's significant that brands are doing it at all since there hasn't been a mass adoption of VR just yet. VR is a popular buzzword, but as far as everyone having a headset ... we're not quite there.

Which brands have made the deepest inroads with VR?

There are brands doing interesting things with VR. The New York Times is a great example, but even brands like Nike are using VR in interesting ways. (See sidebar on page 20 for more about those examples.)

Today's VR projects may reach small audiences, but they teach brand leaders the medium and how to communicate with this form of storytelling.

Brands that keep experimenting with VR will be the most successful because the way to figure out how to best use the medium is to keep creating small projects on a limited basis. Today's VR projects may reach small audiences, but they teach brand leaders the medium and how to communicate with this form of storytelling. If you look at the early days of cinema, you see a similar pattern. Creators have to invent, then perfect and articulate new visual languages before they can be used with mass audiences.

How about less obvious applications for VR?
I think it's more exciting to look at the companies doing innovative things with augmented reality (AR) in the current space. Some of the fashion magazines are offering opportunities for advertisers to align products with editorial in the same issue. Magazines like Time are introducing new ways to read print by overlaying AR. They are essentially taking the product they've been successful with for years and finding new ways to bring it to audiences that might have left the medium altogether. It's possible these new methods and ways of approaching emerging technology can help to revive a dying industry; using AR, publishers are figuring out ways to engage audiences with new lenses and ways of interacting rather than reinventing their product from the ground up.

Another really interesting example are the many comic book companies figuring out ways to use AR to make comic books come alive. They are adding motion and action to what was a static medium.

In all these examples, when you're able to take what has been a static image and create something that has dynamic motion, it's of high interest to advertisers. It draws the eye in ways static images can't.

There's really interesting work being done in the food industry as well, where companies are trying to create AR experiences that appeal to foodies. Recipes, cake decoration and even technology that can scan certain foods to determine if they have cooked long enough are all being developed for AR applications. Creators of this technology are using the tools people already have, their smartphones, to add practical functionality to their daily experiences—something that lies at the core mission of so many brands.

Are there certain types of stories (even archetypes) particularly well suited to VR?
Much of my background is in the intersection of story and psychology. One of the most successful ways to tell a story in any medium is to establish a protagonist. Who's the character you should be rooting for? Great storytelling also relies on some sort of conflict, ideally embodied in an antagonist. It's difficult in our culture because we don't like to demonize people, but a story is most successful when you can identify some sort of human factor standing in the way of the protagonist. I advise clients that in order to determine what content is going to resonate most, they must create a conflict of some kind and find ways to humanize it. It must be a nuanced approach, but it can be highly effective if you have creators who understand how to navigate the desires and motivations of their audience.

What do you find particularly exciting about this moment in VR adoption?
AR is going to be a real gateway into VR experiences for many people. Most consumers have AR capabilities on their smartphones and likely don't even know it. This is low-hanging fruit for brands to connect to their audiences. Pokemon Go

VIRTUAL REALITY VS. AUGMENTED REALITY

Virtual reality immerses you in an environment that's either make-believe (e.g., video games), intended to replicate real life (e.g., a flight simulation) or somewhere in the real world (e.g., scuba diving in the Bahamas). The most common VR headsets are those that hold your mobile phone in front of your eyes while blocking out light, such as Google Cardboard; more high-end options include Oculus Rift and HTC Vive.
Tip: A VR viewer is *opaque*. You can't see through it.

Augmented reality combines digital elements and the real world, adding an augmented layer to what you can see.
Tip: An AR viewer is *transparent*, whether literally (e.g. Google Glass) or digitally (e.g. seeing the world in front of you "through" your mobile screen in Pokémon Go).

AR is most successful when you provide the audience a sense of agency—or a way for them to feel they are controlling what they are seeing, not just augmenting it.

MEDIA BRANDS

Investigative journalism brands have been the early pioneers in how to tell stories with virtual reality.
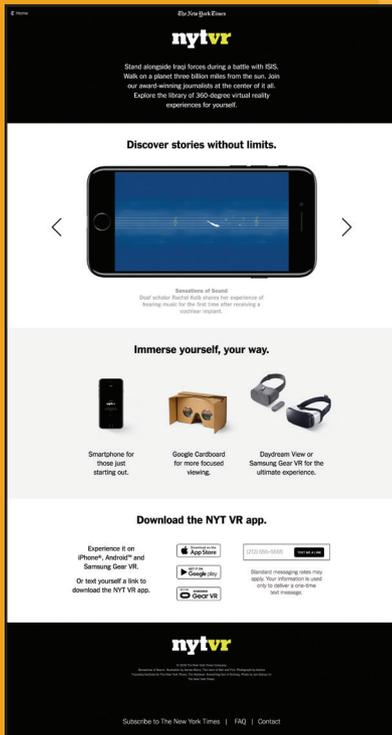
◀ **The New York Times** runs a dedicated VR channel called nytvr. It holds a library of videos beautifully filmed in places readers cannot ordinarily visit. As the channel's editors explain: "Stand alongside Iraqi forces during a battle with ISIS. Walk on a planet 3 billion miles from the sun. Join our award-winning journalists at the center of it all."

▼ **Frontline's** award-winning documentary, After Solitary, gives viewers a haunting look at what it feels like to live in solitary confinement and the sequela follows prisoners long after they are released.

CONSUMER BRANDS

VR and AR projects from brands sometimes feel like flash over substance, but John Bucher says experimentation is critical for brands to get a feel for this new medium.

Nike shot out of the gate early; three years ago, it was publishing 360 videos—long before most of us knew what they were. More recently, Nike developed a conceptual video to show how it imagines product design will change in the near future. In the video, a designer builds a shoe in mid-air, using an AR headset to see and manipulate a running shoe design, and haptic sensory feedback to give the feeling of a physical product in the designer's hands. While designers at Nike aren't designing shoes using AR (yet), Nike is offering a much more limited AR experience in store for customers who want to style their own sneakers.

was a lot of people's introduction to AR at scale, but now we have everything from makeup and clothing companies showing you how you look in their products to car companies showing you what it looks like to sit inside the car they manufacture. And many of these projects open the door to even more immersive experiences through virtual reality.

What are the best applications for VR vs. AR?
AR is similar to VR in many ways but there are some specifics that differentiate the two, especially if you're trying to tell a story to your audience using AR.

AR is most successful when you provide the audience a sense of agency—or a way for them to feel they are controlling what they are seeing, not just augmenting it. If you tell an audience: you can use this interface to see yourself wearing a shirt we produce, they may say, "The shirt looks nice, but I'd like to see what it looks like in blue and purple." That's very important. You need to not only provide the augmented reality experience, but also give users the agency to make the experience immersive.

Describe the far horizon. What excites you most?
I'm interested in seeing how VR will play a part in making the world a better place. For example, we are able to capture places and moments that exist right now using VR. You can film your nephew's birthday party now with VR technology, and then in 20 years put on a headset and relive the experience in a way that's very vivid and realistic. Being able to replay experiences that were meaningful in your life—and to do so in a very realistic way—is the most exciting opportunity that the technology presents us with as human beings. And it's important to remember that advertisers aren't necessarily excluded from these types of experiences. In fact, they could play a major role. In that captured memory, you'll see products—the cake, the soda everyone drank, the gifts—and create associations. ⬡⬡

Clare McDermott is co-founder and head of research at Mantis Research. Follow her @clare_mcd.

WHAT'S HOLDING BACK VR ADOPTION?

Of the over 6 million VR headsets shipped in 2016, most were lower-tech devices that require a smartphone to view the content, such as the Samsung Gear VR. However, according to games market research firm SuperData, there were 800,000 fewer Samsung Gear VR headsets shipped in 2017. And while the Oculus Rift represents a more immersive, high-tech VR experience, the company only sold 326,000 headsets in 2017. Without more sales of higher-tech headsets like the Oculus Rift, the audience for truly immersive VR experiences is limited.

Adoption of VR in non-US markets

John Bucher points out that while adoption of VR in the United States has been slow, the medium is gaining ground in other regions, particularly APAC countries and the Middle East. "Any

brand communicating with international audiences is having the conversation about VR," he says.

Why the technology may be ready for faster uptake: As VR technology advances, there's optimism that applications will broaden and the price for consumer headsets will come down. In 2018, several major brands are releasing standalone VR headsets that will be significantly cheaper than any predecessors. What are some of the biggest barrier-bashing advances?

Volumetric photogrammetry: I won't dive into the finer points of VR video capture and editing, but it's safe to say that in its current form developing VR experiences is extremely complex. It entails setting up multiple cameras to capture a 360-degree sphere of video inputs, as well as various angles and depths. Stitching all those takes into a seamless whole is extremely labor intensive. With volumetric photogrammetry, there are no multiple takes edited in post-production. As TechCrunch explains,

"Using the volumetric capture method, footage of a real person is recorded from various viewpoints, after which software analyzes, compresses and recreates all the viewpoints of a fully volumetric 3D human." And even more than making the process less painstaking, volumetric photogrammetry translates to a vastly superior VR experience for the viewer.

Inside-out tracking: Advanced VR headsets require expensive computers to run, and users must stay tethered to those computers—which puts a major damper on game play. Yet a new solution called "inside-out tracking" uses sensors built into the headset to track movement rather than the external computer, meaning they can ditch the wire. Time reports that Intel, Google, Microsoft and Facebook are all testing the technology.

Six degrees of freedom (6DOF): A handful of headsets scheduled to be released in 2019, including the Oculus Santa Cruz, will include what's called "six degrees of freedom." Rather than simply tracking the movement of your head, a 6DOF headset tracks your body as well— opening a much wider set of options for gameplay and VR experiences.

Lowered pricing: Perhaps the most promising development of all is what appears to be lower consumer pricing for vastly improved VR and AR technology. Both HTC and Facebook dropped pricing of their flagship VR headsets in late 2017— the HTC Vive dropping from roughly $800 to $600 before the 2017 holiday buying season. And analysts expect the entry point for VR headsets will continue to drop in the coming year.

Sales of VR Headsets

2016
2017

Headset	2016	2017
Samsung Gear VR	4,513K	3,712K
PlayStation VR	745K	1,693K
Oculus Rift	243K	326K
HTC Vive	420K	297K
Google Daydream	209K	153K
Windows Mixed Reality	N/A	95K
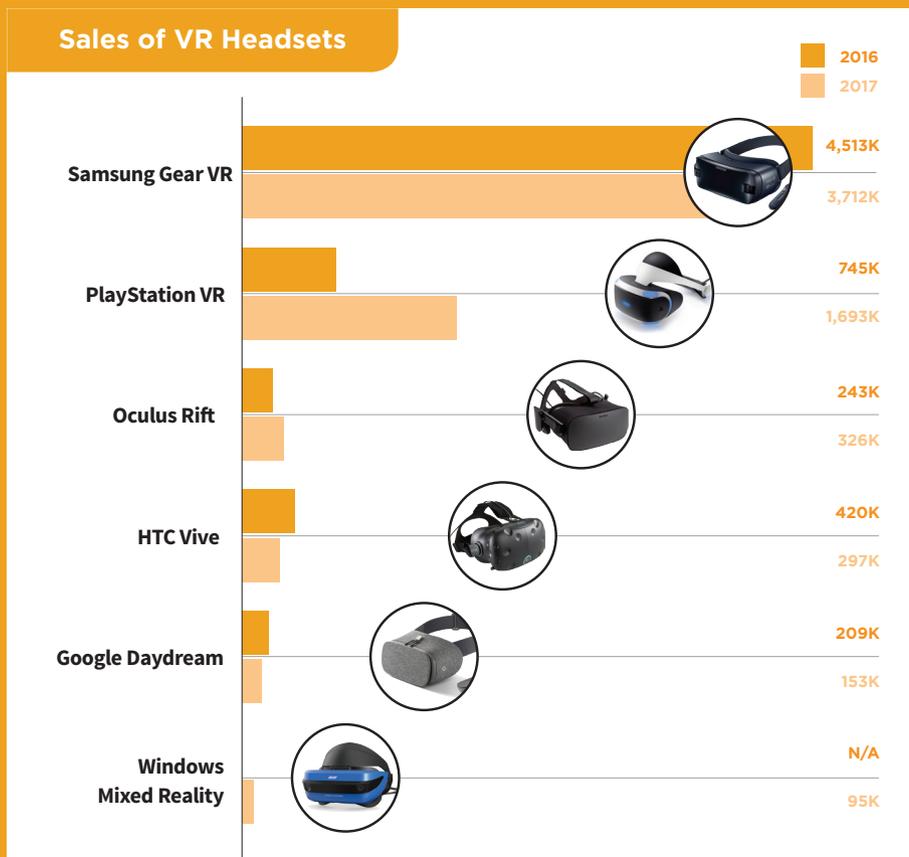
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Key Clients: Cane & Austin, Hanson Robotics, Versa Products, PCA Skin

☀ **Madden Media**
maddenmedia.com
Tucson, AZ
Key Clients: Visit Tampa Bay, Explore St. Louis, Experience Kissimmee, Missouri Division of Tourism

🏆 ☀ **madison/miles media**
madisonmilesmedia.com
Arlington, TX

Magnetika
magnetikagroup.com
Denver, CO
Key Clients: Miracle Foundation, UCEC, VeilSun

Magnificent Stuff
magnificentstuff.net
North Weald, United Kingdom
Key Clients: Clifford Thames, The English Cream Tea Company, HTS, The Harlow Arena

🏆 ☀ **Mahlab**
mahlab.co
Balmain, Australia
Key Clients: Engineers Australia, Pharmaceutical Society of Australia, Cisco, Thomson Reuters

☀ **Make Your Mark**
makeyourmark.se/eng
Stockholm, Sweden
Key Clients: Stadium, E.on. Lidl, Swedish Armed Forces

🏆 ☀ **Manifest**
manifest.com
Chicago, IL
Key Clients: CDW, University of Michigan Health, Alamo Rent-a-Car, JW Marriott

March Communications
marchcomms.com
Boston, MA
Key Clients: Sophos, Dynatrace, Nokia

☀ **Marcus Thomas LLC**
marcusthomasllc.com
Cleveland, OH

☀ **Marketing CoPilot**
marketingcopilot.com
Barrie, Canada
Key Clients: Clearmount, SIGG North America, Normerica, Darcor

Marketing Insider Group
marketinginsidergroup.com
West Chester, PA
Key Clients: Adidas, SAP, Cisco, GE

McCann
mccann.com
New York, NY

McConnell Marketing
mcconnellmarketing.com
Canfield, OH
Key Clients: Mandarin Oriental New York, The Willard InterContinental Washington D.C., Hutton Hotel Nashville, Keswick Hall & Golf Club

McGarryBowen
mcgarrybowen.com
New York, NY

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Mediaplanet
mediaplanet.com
New York, NY

MediaSource
mediasourcetv.com
Columbus, OH
Key Clients: The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center, Ohio Development Services Agency, Orlando Health, Nationwide Children's Hospital

Medium Rare Content Agency
mediumrarecontent.com
Pyrmont, Australia
Key Clients: Qantas Airways, Coles Supermarkets, David Jones, Foxtel

Meredith Xcelerated Marketing (MXM)
mxm.com
New York, NY

Merkle
merkleinc.com
Columbia, MD

MESH Interactive Agency
meshagency.com
Boston, MA

Midas Media
midasmedia.co.uk
Melton Mowbray, United Kingdom

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Brandpoint
C+C
C3 Creative Code and Content GmbH
Hileman Group
madison/miles media
Manifest
MSP-C
Red House B2B Marketing

Mindgruve
mindgruve.com
San De, CA
Key Clients: Martinelli's, MDVIP, Agilent Technologies, Renovate America

Mirum
mirumagency.com
San Diego, CA

Mojo Media Labs
mojomedialabs.com
Irving, TX

Momentum
momentumww.com
New York, NY

Monday Loves You
mondaylovesyou.com
Chicago, IL
Key Clients: Yamaha, Cities of Chicago, Denver and Salt Lake, Society of Arts and Crafts, New World Symphony

Moochur
moochur.com
London, United Kingdom

Motion PR
motionpr.net
Chicago, IL
Key Clients: Gladiator Garage Works, FELD Entertainment, Simon Properties, Cancer Treatment Centers of America

Movable Media
movablemedia.com
Stamford, CT
Key Clients: Intel, MasterCard, MYOB, Pitney Bowes

Moxie
moxieusa.com
Atlanta, GA

MRM//McCann
mrm-mccann.com
International

MSP Communications
msp-c.com
Minneapolis, MN

MullenLowe Profero
mullenloweprofero.com
New York, NY

MWG /
mindworksglobal.com
Noida, India
Key Clients: PwC, HCL, Dow Jones

Narrative
narrativemedia.co.za
Cape Town, South Africa
Key Clients: Massmart/Walmart, RCS Cards Credit and Loans, Phillip Morris South Africa, Sanlam Reality

nDash.co
ndash.co
Natick, MA
Key Clients: TechTarget, ThriveHive, Datadog, Coldwell Banker

Nelson Schmidt Inc.
nelsonschmidt.com
Milwaukee, WI
Key Clients: Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), Lennox International, Panduit, McKesson

New Content
newcontent.com.br
Sao Paulo, Brazil
Key Clients: LATAM Airlines, Natura, Vivo Electrolux

New Media Publishing
newmediapub.co.za
Cape Town, South Africa
Key Clients: Sanlam, Woolworths, Ackermans, Multichoice

Nina Hale
ninahale.com
Minneapolis, MN

North Strategic
northstrategic.com
Toronto, Canada

Notch Video
notchvideo.com
Toronto, Canada
Key Clients: Samsung, AMEX, Cadillac Fairview, Canadian Tire

O'Keefe Reinhard & Paul
okrp.com
Chicago, IL

Ogilvy
ogilvy.com
New York, NY

OglivyOne Worldwide
ogilvyone.com
New York, NY

One Productions
oneproductions.com
Dublin, Ireland
Key Clients: Guinness, Primark, LinkedIn, Citi

Origin Design & Marketing Limited
origindesign.uk.com
Marlow, United Kingdom
Key Clients: Marlow, United Kingdom GSMA, Expedia, VMWare

OTW
otw.se
Stockholm, Sweden
Key Clients: Scandinavian Airlines, IKEA, Red Cross, Volvo

Pace
paceco.com
Greensboro, NC
Key Clients: Wells Fargo, Walmart, Four Seasons, Invista

PAN Communications
pancommunications.com
Boston, MA
Key Clients: SAP, Informatica, Maestro Health, MediaMath

Pennington Creative
penningtoncreative.com
Tucson, AZ

PJA Advertising + Marketing
agencypja.com
Cambridge, MA
Key Clients: Shire, Red Hat, Pegasystems, Pimacott

PM, poslovni mediji
p-m.si
Ljubljana, Slovenia
Key Clients: Adria Mobil, Porsche Slovenija, Škoda, Zavarovalnica Triglav

Point Taken Communications
pointtakenpr.com
Jacksonville, FL
Key Clients: Pet Paradise, Clay Humane, Spectrum Stone Designs, The Old Dog House

POLISH CREATIVE GROUP / OFF CREATIVE
polishcreativegroup.com
Warsaw, Poland
Key Clients: Nobile Sports, Ergo Hestia Group RGO, KPMG

POP
wearepop.com
Seattle, WA

PopArt Studio
popwebdesign.net
Novi Sad, Serbia
Key Clients: Schneider Electric, Opel, Nike, Schwarzkopf

Possible
POSSIBLE.com
Seattle, WA

Preacher
preacher.co
Austin, TX

Primafila AG / Primafila Correspondents
primafila-cm.com
Zurich, Switzerland
Key Clients: Siemens AG, Siemens Healthineers, American Express (Swisscard AECS GmbH), SV Group

Printing Services London
printingservices.london
London, United Kingdom

Propaganda
propaganda.be
Zaventem (Brussels), Belgium
Key Clients: Carrefour, Proximus, Delhaize, Toyota

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propelgrowth.com
Fort Collins, CO
Key Clients: Synthesis Technology, Megalytics, Midland IRA, Deltix Labs

Prose Media
prosemedia.com
New York, NY
Key Clients: Google, Twitter, Elsevier, Canon

Proximity
proximityworld.com
London, United Kingdom

Publitek Limited
publitek.com
London, United Kingdom
Key Clients: Intel, Mouser Electronics, Keysight Technologies, Murata

PwC Digital Services
digital.pwc.com
San Francisco, CA

Quarry
quarry.com
St Jacobs, Canada
Key Clients: Windstream Enterprise, IBM Watson Health, Oracle, Workfront

R/GA
rga.com
New York, NY

🏆☀ **Radical**
radical.ie
Dublin, Ireland

🏆 **Raw London**
raw.london
London, United Kingdom

Ready State
readystate.com
San Francisco, CA
Key Clients: Google, Airbnb, Sonos, Torani

Red Chair Communications, a division of AH
redchaircommunications.com
Mount Laurel, NJ
Key Clients: Juvenile Products Manufacturers Association, National Air Duct Cleaners Association, Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nurses Society, Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs

Red House
redhouseb2b.com
Alpharetta, GA
Key Clients: Bayer, Cognizant, McKesson, RELX Group

Reputation Ink
rep-ink.com
Jacksonville, FL

Right Source Marketing
rightsourcemarketing.com
Hunt Valley, MD
Key Clients: GoCanvas, Steel Market Development Institute, NetCraftsmen, Westwicke Partners

☀ **Roberts Communications**
robertscomm.com
Rochester, NY

☀ **Rodgers Townsend**
rodgerstownsend.com
St. Louis, MO

Rokkan
rokkan.com
New York, NY

S&G Content Marketing
sandgcontent.com
Miami Beach, FL
Key Clients: OUTshine Film Festival, Las Vegas Tourism Board, SchoolApply, Eperi

Sandstorm Digital FZE
sandstormdigital.com
Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Key Clients: First Abu Dhabi Bank, Etisalat, Meraas, OSN

🏆☀ **SapientRazorfish**
sapientrazorfish.com
New York, NY

☀ **Scorch Agency**
scorchagency.com
St. Louis, MO
Key Clients: Microsoft, LinkedIn, Cisco, Dun & Bradstreet

🏆☀ **SHIFT Communications**
shiftcomm.com
Newton, MA

Siegel+Gale
siegelgale.com
New York, NY

☀ **Siren Group**
sirenltd.com
Switzerland

Sixth City Marketing
sixthcitymarketing.com
Rocky River, OH

Slack and Company
slackandcompany.com
Chicago, IL
Key Clients: Ingredion Incorporated, Bemis Company, Inc., Choice Hotels International, Inc., Society of Actuaries

Small Batch Labs
smallbatchlabs.net
Chicago, IL
Key Clients: Bank of America, Wells Fargo, William Blair, University of Chicago

☀ **Spectrum Group**
spectrumgroup.is
Sydney, Australia

🏆☀ **SPH Magazines Pte Ltd**
sphmagazines.com.sg
Singapore, Singapore

☀ **Spoon Agency**
spoonagency.com
Stockholm, Sweden
Key Clients: Volvo Trucks, PostNord, KIWI, Wärtsilä

Square 2 Marketing
square2marketing.com
Conshohocken, PA
Key Clients: Gliffy, Staples, South Jersey Energy, Miller Welding & Machine Co.

Starcom
starcomww.com
Chicago, IL

🏆☀ **Stein IAS**
steinias.com
New York, NY
Key Clients: HSBC, Tetrapak, Oracle, Trelleborg

🏆☀ **Storyation**
storyation.com
Sydney, Australia
Key Clients: Tourism Australia, Bupa, Tourism New Zealand

Stripes Agency
stripesagency.com
Dallas, TX
Key Clients: Stanford Graduate School of Business, Bertolli Olive Oil, Texas Rangers, Live Soda

Stryde
stryde.com
Draper, UT
Key Clients: Alex and Ani, IHG, Sports Illustrated, Signs.com

SyncShow
syncshow.com
Rocky River, OH

☀ **T3**
t-3.com
Austin, TX

T3 Custom
t3custom.com
Woodinville, WA
Key Clients: TD Ameritrade, Fisher Investments, Options Industry Council

Tallwave
tallwave.com
Scottsdale, AZ
Key Clients: Mobile Mini, Dime Bank, Farmers Insurance, Spear Education

Tane Digital Video
tanedv.com
New York, NY
Key Clients: Weber Shandwick, Netflix, DDB, Remy Cointreau USA

☀ **Taylor & Pond**
taylorpond.com
San Diego, CA

TBWA
tbwa.com
New York, NY

TDA Group
tdagroup.com
Redwood City, CA

That's Nice LLC
thatsnice.com
New York, NY

The Community
thecommunityagency.com
Miami, FL

The Dubs
thedubs.com
Pyrmont, Australia
Key Clients: CFSGAM/First State Investments, Aberdeen Asset management, TAL insurance, BT Financial Group

☀ **The Fat Lady**
thefatlady.be
Gent, Belgium
Key Clients: Var, Takeda, DNS, Van Marcke

☀ **The Foundry @ Time Inc.**
thefoundry.nyc
New York, NY

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**90octane
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C3 Creative Code and Content GmbH
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IEEE Engineering 360 Media Solutions
MSP-C
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theideapeople.com
Charlotte, NC
Key Clients: Samaritan's Purse, LeeBoy Commercial Equipment, Innspector Hotel App, Anita Goodesign

The Mx Group
themxgroup.com
Burr Ridge, IL
Key Clients: Tempur Sealy, Siemens, Zekelman Industries, vAuto

The Pohly Company
pohlyco.com
Brewster, MA
Key Clients: Medtronic, Suffolk University, Boston University, Massachusetts Maritime Academy

The Whole Brain Group
thewholebraingroup.com
Ann Arbor, MI
Key Clients: Total Security Solutions, EOS Worldwide, Federated Service Solutions, RL Deppmann

AGENCIES BY INDUSTRY: EDUCATION

Content Science
Fathom
Manifest
OTW
Pace

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Bader Rutter
Fusionspark
Imagination
madison/miles media
Mahlab Media
OTW

The Yellow Ink Content Agency
theyellowink.com
Barcelona, Spain
Key Clients: Sumitomo Chemical, Kevin.Murphy Spain, ICC - International Cooking Concepts, Coordonne

Third Door Media
thirddoormedia.com
Redding, CT

☀ **To The End**
totheend.co.uk
King's Lynn, United Kingdom

Tomorrow People
tomorrow-people.com
New York, NY
Key Clients: Oracle, Solvay, TeamViewer, Tech Data

TopRank Marketing
toprankmarketing.com
Minneapolis, MN
Key Clients: SAP, LinkedIn, Dell, McKesson

Torque Digital
torque.digital
Chicago, IL
Key Clients: Hearn, CBRE, Hines, Glenstar

Totem
totemcontent.com
Toronto, Canada
Key Clients: CAA, Honda Motor Company, Porter Airline

Traction
tractionco.com
San Francisco, CA
Key Clients: Apple, McCormick & Company, Dolby, Lenovo

Translation
translationllc.com
New York, NY

TREW Marketing
trewmarketing.com
Austin, TX
Key Clients: Wineman Technology, Silex Technology, Vertech, GSystems

Triangle Publishing
triangle-publishing.com
Newton, MA
Key Clients: Microsoft, Oracle, PWC, SAP

🏆☀ **Tuber Productions Pte Ltd**
tuber.sg
Singapore, Singapore
Key Clients: Public Service Division, Prime Minister's Office, Singapore, CapitaLand, Singapore, Changi Airport Group, Singapore, PSA Singapore

☀ **TUNE**
tune.com
Seattle, WA

Upward Brand Interactions
goupward.com
Columbus, OH
Key Clients: PolyOne Corporation, Illinois Tool Works (Hobart, Baxter, Traulsen, Vulcan), Sodexo, OCLC

🏆☀ **va bene publishing GmbH**
vabene.biz
Munich, Germany

🏆 **Value Intersect Consulting**
valueintersectconsulting.com
Austin, TX

🏆☀ **Velocity**
velocitypartners.com
London, United Kingdom

VERDINO & CO
verdino.co
Commack, NY
Key Clients: Blackbaud, FIS Global, AVEVA Group, Great Hill Partners

Vertical Measures
verticalmeasures.com
Phoenix, AZ
Key Clients: CalAtlantic, CVS, Thunderbird School of Global Management, Business Enterprise Mapping

VIRGEN Digital Brand Marketing
virgenlv.com
Henderson, NV
Key Clients: United Health Group, MGM Resorts International, Make-A-Wish Southern Nevada, Miracle Mile Shops

VML
vml.com
Kansas City, MO

Voicings
voicings.fr
Neuilly s/Seine, France
Key Clients: Euler Hermes, Edenred, Elior Services, Cegid

🏆 **Walker Sands**
walkersands.com
Chicago, IL
Key Clients: Accenture Interactive, Worldpay, Nintex, Sprout Social

Wax Custom Communications
waxcom.com
Miami, FL
Key Clients: Cleveland Clinic Florida, Baylor Scott & White Health, Humana, AvMed

☀ **Weber Shandwick**
webershandwick.com
New York, NY

WebStrategies
webstrategiesinc.com
Midlothian, VA

Weill Media
weillmedia.com
Los Angeles, CA
Key Clients: Disney, Mondelez

Wieden + Kennedy
wk.com
Portland, OR

Wired PR Group
wiredprgroup.com
Phoenix, AZ
Key Clients: Infusionsoft, WebPT, LeadMD, Tallwave

☀ **WITH/agency**
thewithagency.com
Atlanta, GA
Key Clients: Pacific Gas & Electric, Southern Company, AT&T, Neenah Paper

☀ **Women's Marketing Inc.**
womensmarketing.com
Westport, CT

Work & Co
work.co
Brooklyn, NY

☀ **Wpromote**
wpromote.com
El Segundo, CA
Key Clients: Marriot, Forever 21, CIT Bank, Greystar

WSJ. Custom Studios
wsjcustomcontentstudios.com
New York, NY

Wunderman
wunderman.com
New York, NY

Xponent21 Inc
xponent21.com
Richmond, VA
Key Clients: Solar Film, Grady Management, Stensland Dentist Studio, Hertzler & George

Yeager Marketing
yeagermarketing.com
Phoenix, AZ
Key Clients: NetApp, Cisco, Riverbed, Dell/EMC

🏆☀ **Yesler**
yesler.com
Seattle, WA
Key Clients: Amazon, Zillow, Microsoft, Google

☀ **Zahra Media Group**
zahramediagroup.com
Bray, Ireland
Key Clients: ESB, Virgin Media Ireland, Irish Life, Aviva

🏆☀ **Zandbeek**
zandbeek.com
Eindhoven, Netherlands
Key Clients: ABN AMRO Bank, Rijkswaterstaat, Vebego, KPN

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FACTS

The Fiction of Facts

Fast facts, quick quotations and statistical snippets are popular social media content drivers. They're easy to produce, attention grabbing and highly sharable. Unfortunately, the first casualty of all this "did-you-know" social media content can be accuracy.

Jonathan Crossfield

"IF WE'RE SERVING UP THESE BITE-SIZED SNACKETTES OF INFORMATION INTO SOCIAL MEDIA, IT'S OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO ENSURE THEY WON'T ROT THE VERY TRUST AND AUTHORITY WE HOPE TO INSTILL."

You may be familiar with the oft-quoted line attributed to Mark Twain, "A lie will fly around the whole world while the truth is getting its boots on." It's cropped up quite a bit over the last couple of years in discussions about fake news and alternative facts. Twain's words seem a particularly apt description of social media's role in spreading misinformation faster than ever, while amplifying the confusion of who or what to trust.

Putting aside any political connotations, let's instead consider whether marketers are guilty of inadvertently spreading inaccurate, outdated or just plain wrong information. Sure, getting a fact wrong or misinterpreting a stat isn't necessarily the same as a bald-faced lie. But neither is it trivial when our content is supposedly intended to create the impression of authority and expertise. In short, fact checking matters just as much in a 280-character tweet as it does in a 10-page white paper. But, boy, has the bar for accuracy slipped worryingly low in this fast-paced, attention-seeking online world.

Taken on trust
Almost all the information we consume, particularly online, is crowdsourced in one way or another. Wikis are the obvious example of the community collating, curating and certifying the vastness of human knowledge. Yet most of the information we encounter is filtered and reinterpreted through a series of books, blogs, infographics, explainer videos, articles and, of course, social media updates.

Unfortunately, this means a lot of the information we encounter as consumers of content may be the result of garbled repetition. Error builds upon error until what may once have been accurate morphs into something inaccurate. As we are also content producers, we then risk compounding the mistake.

———

"A little research is precisely what many people don't want when it comes to their digital diet ... because many of the information environments we inhabit are magnificently hospitable to meme-sharing, attention-grabbing and OMG-have-you-seen-this moments—and relatively uninterested in hang-on-a-second-let's-pause-and-think-twice."

Fake News, Tom Chatfield, New Philosopher #17, Aug-Oct 2017

———

Most social media users can't afford to check the validity and accuracy of every factoid that crosses their feeds. How could they? Therefore, there's a huge element of trust inherent in that relationship between publisher and audience.

But that means we as the producers of this content must continually prove we are deserving of that trust. If we're serving up these bite-sized snackettes of information into social media, it's our responsibility to ensure they won't rot the very trust and authority we hope to instill.

Misinfographics?
A client once supplied me with a crucial statistic for an infographic I was creating and cited a government e-book on business as the source. So I was surprised to discover the footnote for the stat in the government e-book claimed it came from a blog post published the previous year on the client's website. That post claimed the stat came from an earlier edition of the government e-book, which in turn

referenced an earlier article on the client's website. The two had been unwittingly handballing the same stat back and forth for years, each attributing it to the other and each giving the information a veneer of freshness by failing to include any other contextual information or mention how outdated the information actually was. To this day I'm still not clear who conducted the initial research.

I certainly didn't continue the chain of inaccuracy by using this stale stat in the new infographic.

In my mind, an infographic without checkable references is just an untrustworthy set of icons and numbers. I'm not saying every infographic should undermine its visual appeal and brevity with a long list of fine print at the bottom. But you should still make it easy for readers to check each and every stat and fact. Too many sources? List them on a webpage and post a short URL at the bottom of the infographic.

Sources by themselves aren't necessarily a guarantee of accuracy. The way in which the fact or stat is summarized and represented can also mislead. I've lost count of the times I've scrolled to the bottom of an infographic and followed the references to discover the original research is years out of date or taken out of context. And that's if the sources are even included.

A+ for effort: D- for diligence

Having worked as a writer, journalist and editor for many years, I've learned the hard way to be extremely skeptical when researching. If I can't verify a fact or claim, it makes me nervous.

OK, I admit I'm quite the pedant. You never forget the first time a university lecturer marks you down for failing to provide adequate references (correctly formatted) to back up the claims in an assignment into which you poured so much effort.

But this is about far more than just "showing your work." It's about applying appropriate rigor in research. When you have to document your own references so precisely, you soon learn to distrust any source that doesn't do the same.

So much content is published, shared and remixed every day that checking the veracity of an individual claim can

mean following a trail of breadcrumbs from infographic to blog post to article and so on—stripping away each filter or reinterpretation to get back to the source. Therefore, it is extremely frustrating when—after spending an hour trying to confirm the accuracy of a statistic I desperately want to use—my journey ends at a blog post from someone I have no reason to trust and who didn't bother to mention where the information was first sourced.

This is why the original source is all that matters—not only when fact checking for your own sake but also for your audience who deserves the same courtesy when verifying your claims. Otherwise, you're relying on a source less diligent than you—and then why should your audience trust anything you say? I don't care if TechCrunch says 84 percent of Twitter users have developed an addiction to blancmange. If I want to use the stat in a future column ("The disturbing connection between social media and pink desserts"), I need to check and cite the original research. After all, it's not unknown for a stat to be *gasp* made up!

Who said that?

Social media loves quotations. These days, it seems all you have to do to achieve viral gold is slap an inspirational quote onto a sunset and spam it to every network. But while the right quote correctly attributed can lend authority and gravitas to your content, an inaccurate or misattributed quote can just as easily undermine it. (Just saying, but Albert Einstein and Winston Churchill most likely didn't say half of the pithy bons mots commonly attributed to them.)

The level of inaccuracy can sometimes be spectacular, but the majority of dodgy quotations isn't necessarily deliberate. Most probably arise from poor editing, a lack of context or unreliable sources (Wikiquote, I'm looking at you!).

A great example of how social media can mangle a quote is discussed in a 2011 article from The Atlantic, which investigates how a Facebook user's words ended up being attributed to Martin Luther King Jr. — "mangled to meme in less than two days."

What surprised me most about The Atlantic article was the number of people who defended the quote as legitimate even after learning of the

mistake. To them, the message is the thing. People most commonly share quotations that represent and support their view of the world. Because they identify with the sentiment, it feels "right." And because it feels right, they are less likely to question its accuracy or authenticity.

However, if the person didn't say or write it, it isn't a quote. Period.

Fact-checking tips

Yes, fact checking can be both boring and frustrating, but that doesn't mean it can be skipped or taken less seriously. Fact checking was once the responsibility of that highly endangered species, the copy editor (something for which they were never fully appreciated). However, very few of us have the luxury of a dedicated fact checker on the team these days, so the unshirking responsibility falls to us.

So just how does a busy content producer, infographic designer or social media manager navigate this maze of online information to separate fact from fiction?

Always search for the most recent statistics. No one cares about a social media stat from 2010 when so much has changed in the intervening years. Use your search engine tools to restrict searches to a particular time frame, such as the last year.

Trust no one. Even if the stat is published by a leading brand you think would be above reproach, check its sources.

Wikipedia is NOT a source. But it does contain a lot of references and citations, so follow those links.

And get a reputable quotations dictionary.

Speaking of which, let's return to that Mark Twain quote I mentioned at the beginning. Even if you skip past the difficult fact that the quote was first attributed to him in 1919, nine years after his death, there is absolutely no evidence he ever wrote or said it.

According to the indispensable site Quote Investigator (there's another tip for you), numerous versions of the quote pop up throughout the previous two centuries, morphing with each paraphrase to become the (disputed) Twain version we're familiar with today. The earliest recorded version was penned by the satirist Jonathan Swift in 1710: "Falsehood flies; and the Truth comes limping after it; so that when Men come to be undeceiv'd, it is too late; the Jest is over, and the Tale has had its Effect."

The jest is over. Check your sources. ∞

DEPARTMENT EDITOR

Jonathan Crossfield is the Chief Consulting Editor for CCO, and also a writer, journalist and content marketing consultant. Follow him at @Kimota.

A (COMMUNITY-GENERATED) STAR IS BORN

Don't be fooled by his moniker on **HITRECORD**, the collaborative production company he founded with his brother in 2004. Actor, director, writer and producer **Joseph Gordon-Levitt** is anything but a regular Joe.

Joseph Gordon-Levitt's acting career already spans three decades and includes a long list of popular and acclaimed TV shows and movies: 3rd Rock from the Sun, The Dark Knight Rises, Lincoln, Looper, Inception, Snowden, 500 Days of Summer ... Having graduated from child actor to blockbuster star, it's hard to imagine Gordon-Levitt ever struggled to find work. Yet an actor's life is never certain, and dry spells are not uncommon.

At Content Marketing World 2017, Gordon-Levitt talked with CCO's Clare McDermott about how just such a career dry spell led him to seize control of his creative destiny and to build something few startups and brands ever achieve: a thriving online community that not only pays for itself but also shares the wealth with its contributors.

CCO: How did the idea for HITRECORD come about? Were there moments in your life that formed the seeds for this project?
Gordon-Levitt: I've been an actor since I was 6 years old. At 19, I quit to go to college. When I wanted back in, I couldn't get any acting roles. That was painful.

When you're an actor, you depend on someone else to give you a role. That couldn't be how it went in my life. I had to be creative and express myself on my own terms. HITRECORD became a symbol for me taking responsibility for my own creative outlet—for being the one to push that record button on the video camera. It's also a pun. In the past, media was an object you would consume, like a hit record. Now media is more and more something you do, an action you take, something that you're a part of.

HITRECORD evolved organically as the (online) community grew over the last 10 years. I think that's a huge strength. You can feel the homegrown origins in the nature of HITRECORD when you go there. It's not just a startup that was conceived as a business model. I think people feel that. It's a big part of why creative people—who are notoriously difficult—really do trust HITRECORD. They come. They contribute. They participate. It's not just a scheme to make money or to collect

> "When we issue creative challenges, it's about people working together to fulfill the challenge in the best way possible."

your data.

HITRECORD feels like a community for creative brainstorming and ideation. But the platform also generates finished/monetized projects. Do those projects produce enough revenue to support the community or will there be other ways to monetize?

For a while, it was purely a hobby I worked on with my brother. We didn't spend money or make money. And then, starting in 2010, we launched as a production company with our co-founders.

We wanted to do ambitious things: create things good enough to become feature films, make records, write books. A TV show was our pie-in-the-sky goal.

To accomplish those things, we had to figure out the legal, intellectual property side. How would it pay for itself? How would artists get paid?

I'm a big believer that if someone works on a project and the project earns money, that person deserves some of the money. It's great that artists are putting their stuff out there for free if that's what they want. What I don't like is when companies make money from contributors without sharing the money. That happens a lot on the internet.

So we figured out how to launch HITRECORD as a product. For the first three years, I was bankrolling it. For the last four years, it's been profitable. It's paid for itself and grown.

What's the role of non-media brands that produce content on HITRECORD?

We make money from two categories: branded content and licensed content. Licensed content is like our TV show. We make it and license it to cable companies or Netflix to distribute.

The far more lucrative revenue stream for us is branded content. We have partnerships with lots of different brands. We've just wrapped our third

year with LG, so we've now made three wide-playing TV spots for them. The centerpiece of one campaign was a 30-second commercial during the World Series that performed really well. We also make 60-second versions to go online.

We've also done stuff with Samsung, Sony, Levi's and National Park Foundation.

What's different about the way HITRECORD operates?

There are a few things that feel counterintuitive at first. That's often the case when something's new. One thing that's counterintuitive is how we all work together.

Most creativity online is an individual posting something of their own: "Hey, world, look what I did." On HITRECORD, we're more about what we can do together when we collaborate. Even very successful sites that crowdsource creativity aren't really collaborative. They'll put out a brief and say, "Whoever fulfills this brief the best will win the prize."

What we do is different. When we issue creative challenges, it's about people working together to fulfill the challenge in the best way possible. It's very rare that a single writer will fill the challenge themselves. Other writers will jump in and remix what first writer did. The result isn't limited by what the best contest entry is. It can be better than your best entry to the contest. In that way, working together is more effective than just a bunch of isolated individuals working on their own.

I was inspired by the HITRECORD-produced video of "You're Not the

FIRST STARS I SEE TONIGHT

In his inspiring *Content Marketing World* keynote, Joseph Gordon-Levitt showed this moving short film created from a member-submitted story about how she came to see the stars for the first time at age 16. Gordon-Levitt adapted the "record" into a script and issued challenges to the visual artists in the community to illustrate the story around actors Elle Fanning and James Patrick Stuart. Another member contributed the score, from which member musicians in many countries performed their contributions and submitted the recordings. Watch the video: http://cmi.media/HITRECORD

Only One" as it sums up how a massive group of creatives across multiple disciplines can come together to produce amazing television. How does HITRECORD inspire you personally as an actor and director?**

That song is about not being alone. The internet can be a lonely place even though it brings people together from all over the world. A lot of the platforms on the internet don't actually encourage togetherness. They don't encourage people working together to achieve something they wouldn't be able to achieve on their own.

The result of what online culture has become is everyone trying to be loudest to get the most attention for themselves. There's something really uplifting about seeing people on HITRECORD come together and prop each other up, working together towards a common goal. The internet's potential is in collaboration. In the past, it wouldn't have been possible to have all these people putting their heads together on one thing.

The inherent challenge is how to organize so it doesn't devolve into chaos. That's what we work on. We haven't perfected it yet, but over time we keep getting better at it.

> "The internet's potential is in collaboration. In the past, it wouldn't have been possible to have all these people putting their heads together on one thing."

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800K new readers

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112% increase in engagement

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1

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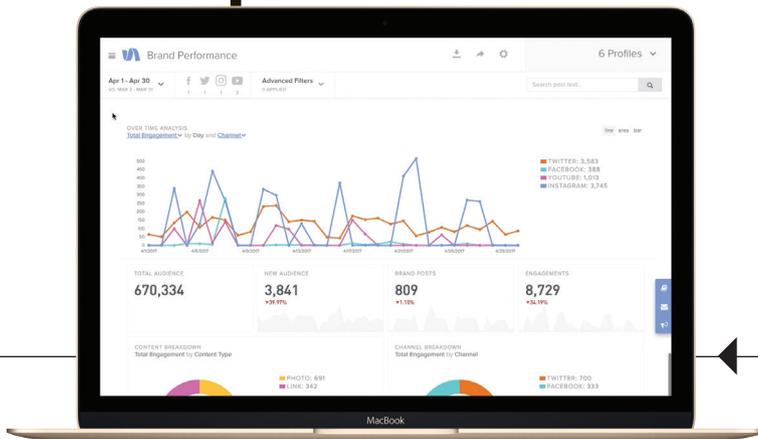
SIMPLY MEASURED

As a luxury handbag brand, we are visual by nature. We have found Instagram to be the most effective social platform for our global business. We use Simply Measured to keep track of key metrics like engagement rates. We also use it to find our top fans and influencers so we can start conversations with them, offer them promotions and show them we value their business.

IBRAHIM ALHAIDOS, FURSAN, @IBRAHIMALHAIDOS

CROWDTANGLE

As a columnist for Inc. magazine and content marketer by trade, one of the frustrations I have is it can be difficult to find the people sharing my content on social media, especially if they don't tag me in the post. CrowdTangle solved this problem for me. The Chrome extension displays the aggregate share counts for a specific URL, as well as the social shares receiving the most engagement. The tool lets me quickly find the top influencers sharing my content. Then I can click through to their posts on social media and engage with their top fans.

JOHN WHITE, SOCIAL MARKETING SOLUTIONS, @JUANBLANCO76

HUBSPOT

We use HubSpot's social media analytics tool. The advantage of using your marketing automation software's social analytics tool is simple—you have all your content marketing data in one convenient, integrated "hub" or "spot." Ahem. Better yet, HubSpot's tool allows us to tag social posts to any content series we're promoting, giving us the chance to isolate and compare the performance of individual campaigns.

JAMES DILLON, GORILLA 360, @JD_JAMESDILLON

SPRINKLR

Sprinklr is one of the most comprehensive social media management tools for enterprise brands. It's especially valuable for programs with a large volume of channels, as well as stakeholders, to coordinate on the local, regional or global level. Everything (scheduling, monitoring, listening, responses) can be centralized and managed within the platform. It also has incredibly powerful analytics and reporting functionalities, ensuring your hard work translates to measurable business impact.

MEGAN CONLEY, SOCIAL TRIBE, @MEGCONLEY

NUVI

We try to remain agnostic so we can work with whichever tools our B2B clients prefer. However, those tools don't always pack enough punch when it comes to influencer insights. That's when we might use NUVI in tandem with the client's preferred social analytics tool as we've found it to be better for insights, tracking influencers, topics and keywords.

SAMANTHA MARKS, MCCORKELL & ASSOCIATES, @MCCORKELL

SYSOMOS

Sysomos is one of a handful of programs with full access to the Twitter firehose, which means a full archive of all tweets since the start of Twitter. Plus, its Listen component means Facebook pages can be tracked and monitored successfully. There's also a visual search tool with sophisticated AI enabling users to search for products, logos, items—even if the person hasn't tagged them via text or hashtag. This makes it easy to track earned mentions and use this data to compare a brand to the industry or competitors. The suite of Sysomos products includes community management tools with full audit trails.

TIPHERETH GLORIA, SOCIAL MEDIA AND DIGITAL STRATEGIST, @TIPHERETH

TRACKMAVEN

Proving ROI should bring a surge of confidence rather than a shudder of dread. Using TrackMaven, I was able to deliver concise ROI dashboards that wowed my CMO, revealing data-backed proof that our content outperformed the competition and indicating we hit the business objective of earning majority share of voice with our content.

TATIANA BEALE, SCOUT RFP, @TATIANABEALE

CONTENT MARKETING INSTITUTE™
UNIVERSITY

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www.contentmarketinguniversity.com

WHAT APP OR TOOL ARE YOU OBSESSED WITH?

MotoRead

I'm always scouring Feedly, BuzzSumo, Twitter and the blogs of super-awesome folks for articles that are entertaining and useful. But it's not always easy to find the time to read all that great content. Instead, I send each article to the immensely epic app, MotoRead. That way, I can listen to a robot voice reading the article to me as I scoot to a meeting or cook the kids' dinner.

When I'm in super-focused research mode, listening to a blog post also allows me to take furious notes—underlining keywords and drawing pictures—like a more manic and messy version of one of those professional sketch-note drawers I see at conferences.

Jon Burkhart
FOUNDER, TBC GLOBAL

Apple Messages

Apple Messages has become a massive part of my work life. (Believe me, no one is more surprised than me.) With staff spread across three continents and 13 time zones, it's a quick way to get an answer or deliver a bit of news when you don't want to pick up the phone or don't have time to wait for email.

With the integration of Messages across devices, it's more convenient than ever. I refuse to have mail on my phone because I never get a break from work. Instant messaging allows those people closest to me—family, friends and work colleagues—to get me in real time.

Sarah Mitchell
DIRECTOR OF CONTENT STRATEGY, LUSH DIGITAL MEDIA

Evernote

My favorite app—one that I could not live without—might seem pretty boring to most. Other than email, I spend more time using Evernote than any app I can think of. I collect everything there—to-do lists, content ideas, business plans, notes for meetings, notes during meetings, research, travel plans and so on. In fact, when I am writing articles, I always start with my outline on Evernote. I flesh the concept out there, and then move it to Word. I have the app on all my devices and can access it anywhere.

Arnie Kuenn
CEO, VERTICAL MEASURES

Bit.ly

Having a URL shortener has helped me track specific messages I want to draw people to. For instance, I have a weekly podcast (You Are the Media). So, when there are specific pages I want to direct people to, it just makes it easier to give a short URL. While I can't track people, it does show volume and I can see which segments of shows are more popular than others. As a tracking tool, I have used this for years. It's the best. It also integrates really well with TweetDeck.

Mark Masters
OWNER, THE ID GROUP AND
**YOU ARE THE MEDIA CONFERENCE**

TripIt

Some years, I fly over a million kilometers. I don't recommend that to anyone but, even if you only travel a few times a year, there's an app I've been using since apps began that still sits in my most-useful category. TripIt isn't sexy, but it just works and has saved my bacon many times. TripIt has some cool pro features to keep you across gate changes and cancelled flights, but its magic is in automatically grabbing travel info straight from your email confirmations and keeping it in one place.

Todd Wheatland
AUTHOR AND CEO, TILTMARKET
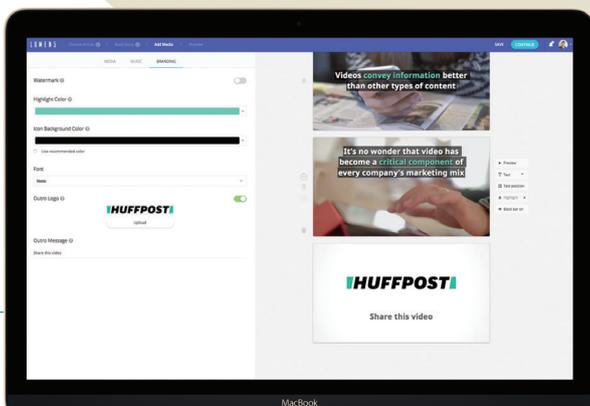
Lumen5

Lumen5 is a social video tool that creates videos from blog posts using artificial intelligence. Simply enter the blog post URL and Lumen5 summarizes the content, matching each scene with relevant royalty-free photos, video and music (or you can upload your own).

The AI system is not perfect, and you'll probably need to manually redo text overlay and replace some images, but it's a good start. Videos don't have to be based on articles. You can manually piece together images, text and music from scratch.

Micro videos help bring blog articles to life in social channels and for that reason Lumen5 is a welcome addition to my content creation kit.

Trevor Young
FOUNDING PARTNER AND PRINCIPAL CONSULTANT, ZOETIC AGENCY

DIGITAL ASSET MANAGEMENT

WHAT IT IS AND WHY YOU NEED IT

The following is adapted from the author's book, Digital & Marketing Asset Management: The Real Story of DAM Technology & Practice published by Rosenfeld Media and copyright by Real Story Group.

Theresa Regli

Since the turn of the millennium, digital media of all kinds have become an increasingly significant part of our everyday experience. Every day, we consume and interact with photos, audio files, video clips, animations, games, interactive ads, streaming movies and even experiential marketing, which has gained a digital edge with the rise of virtual reality and augmented reality.

This digital media boom is driven by a combination of trends and innovations: inexpensive, highly functional digital still and video cameras (even as part of mobile devices); increased network bandwidth; decreased storage costs; low-cost, high-performance processors; high-capacity, solid-state memory; affordable cloud services and the requisite digital media infrastructure.

Yet, navigating all of this digital media creates challenges for consumers and enterprises alike.

Consumers want to organize the experience and consumption of digital media files. They want to be able to find them, categorize them and use them when and where they want—and they want to do all of this across multiple devices.

Meanwhile, enterprises and content marketers have a similar but much broader wish list. Of course, they want to be able to find their assets easily, but most often they want to use digital media "products" to reach prospective customers. They may use digital assets as part of a marketing campaign to reach a specific audience in a specific form, such as a digital or physical brochure, an email promotion, a movie trailer or a website landing page. The digital media could be the product itself—a music collection, streaming television series, video, electronic magazine, e-book or catalog—distributed in a variety of formats or forms.

To produce these products, you need to create, organize, find and use pieces of digital media: not only the individual images, graphics, photos, video segments and audio files that form the elements of your product but also the layout, editing and design files that provide the structure. In most cases, you need to add textual information such as copy, descriptions and product data as well. Finally, you have to assemble everything together in the right format within the specific production process or workflow.

Upon completion, you want to distribute and track all the product components, as well as any changes or versions over time. Additionally (if that weren't enough), many digital files have restrictions and rights that must be monitored and respected.

And this, dear readers, is the raison d'être of digital asset management.

Enterprises and content marketers need to manage each piece of the

WHAT IS A DIGITAL ASSET?

A digital asset is a media file or files that have an intrinsic or acquired value. For example, a movie, television show, magazine or book has an implicit intrinsic value that today is increasingly produced digitally. These types of assets tend to be easier to understand since they are both digital assets and the "products" manufactured for sale. They have (in a manner of speaking) "shareholder" value.

In contrast, for content marketers, a brochure, white paper or banner advertisement may have brand equity and marketing value but no value as a direct income-generating asset. An asset's value may fluctuate over time. The key factors for digital asset management (DAM) are that the asset has some value throughout its lifetime and that someone wants to use or reuse the asset.

But that's not all. This definition also allows for physical objects such as DVDs, videotapes, film reels, product samples, film costumes and even museum items to be included as "assets." While this may appear a stretch, consider enterprises that need to catalog physical items and provide a digital form or proxy to represent them, such as a museum cataloging its collection of Renaissance paintings. Now a digital image or icon represents the physical thing. Therefore, the definition of a digital asset includes both digital and physical things.

brand story, campaign or product independently of, or in addition to, managing the whole.

This management of digital media throughout its lifetime is the general domain of digital asset management. As a discipline and a technology, DAM is all about the control, flexibility, portability, access and reporting of digital assets between organizations, customers, partners and suppliers. DAM is concerned with delivering the right content to the right people, on all devices, mostly in real time, with the ability to track and measure digital asset engagement across an enterprise and its potential global reach.

Technically speaking, a digital asset is more than just the media file. To realize the value of a file (or collection of files), you need to have additional information about that asset. In short, you need metadata.

For most DAM purposes, an asset is defined as the media content plus its metadata. This metadata can be as simple as the name, author or creation date of the file; or as complex as the rights and fees around use of an image or the extracted speech converted to text from a video. Content only becomes a usable asset when metadata is associated with it.

Metadata is essential to managing these assets, providing useful information about the content, such as: "Older woman holding a baby, photo, taken by Phil Smith, January 5, 2008." This information makes content accessible and searchable, provides context, defines usage rights, shows an asset's history of use and over time can be used to determine an asset's value.

WHAT DO DAM SYSTEMS DO?

Though DAM is first a discipline, it's also a technology. In its simplest form, a digital asset management system provides a secure repository that facilitates the creation, management, organization, production, distribution and, potentially, monetization of media files identified as digital assets.

Like other content management technologies, a DAM system provides basic library services: a common (typically centralized) and secure place to store, organize and retrieve files. It also provides core process services, including specific facilities for the management, manipulation, transformation, security, movement, and processing of rich media files and their metadata. Most DAM systems can now integrate with other tools and systems, which, for a content marketer, can be particularly useful. No more doubts about whether you're accessing the correct or latest version of a logo or asset.

HOW DOES DAM FIT INTO THE BIGGER PICTURE?

It's not always obvious. Choosing the right tools for holistic and effective digital marketing is not unlike crafting a complex cocktail: you have to find the right mix of ingredients in the right balance that works for you. What works for one organization might not work for yours, much like one person prefers a martini and someone else prefers a Negroni. Both drinks contain vermouth—just like two organizations might both have DAM systems—but it's the mixing with other ingredients that mean the results can be quite different.

As a digital marketer, you need to think of yourself as the enterprise technology mixologist, working with your colleagues to come up with the right mix. While DAM is obviously on your ingredient list, it's equally important to understand the role that each technology plays, as well as the potentially different priorities or goals other users may have. Otherwise, your cocktail will be a confused mess in a glass, and no one will come back to your bar.

DAM IN A DIGITAL MARKETING FRAMEWORK

While the term "digital marketing technology" (or "martech") is commonly used within the industry, marketers often disagree on what it means. Construed broadly, digital marketing technology is the collection (another cocktail, anyone?) of digital systems that marketers use to gather, cultivate and nurture leads and customers.

Traditionally, these systems reflected how a marketer wanted to represent a brand or product line. However, as marketing becomes (or aspires to become) more customer-centric, marketers increasingly sense that new approaches must focus more intensely on customer preferences—including their browsing and buying history—and meet them in the channel of their choosing (mobile, in-store, catalog or otherwise). Digital assets are instrumental to realizing this plan.

The most obvious example is ad tracking: when someone browses a product on one site only to keep seeing promotions or banner ads for the same item on a different site a few hours later. Not all potential customers appreciate this kind of retargeting as it can sometimes seem like the sales assistant is chasing them down the street after they've left the store. But it doesn't only have to be ad content. DAM technology can assist other systems to personalize the content served to a returning visitor based on their previous activity.

Top-performing organizations already recognize that a superior customer experience is intrinsically tied to the quality of their digital channels. And companies that sell tangible products are increasingly and effectively tying together in-store and digital shopping experiences (omnichannel marketing). With the right assets and metadata, and a well-mixed cocktail of DAM and martech, it should then be possible to serve targeted content to prospects and customers alike.

At its core, this is the value of DAM: if you're doing it right, your assets are target ready. They have the right metadata to meet up with the right content and target the customer in the most effective way. And that should make any content marketer's job easier. ◐◐

"As a digital marketer, you need to think of yourself as the enterprise technology mixologist, working with your colleagues to come up with the right mix."

Theresa Regli is a strategic consultant focusing on digital asset management, data design and digital stewardship. In addition to her own consultancy (voxveritasdigital.com), she is principal consultant with KlarisIP (klarisip.com) and partner with Jericho Chambers (jerichochambers.com). She can be reached at theresa@theresaregli.com.

The Bookends of a Successful Webinar

Mike Agron

Webinars can breathe life into static content such as a case study or research report, but too often we see a ton of attention paid to creating and delivering the webinar itself and not enough attention to early planning and post-event activity.

Here I focus on those often overlooked bookends of webinar execution. (Keep in mind, for a demand-generation webinar, it should take about six to eight weeks from the time you say "let's go" to show time.)

In the latest Content Marketing Institute research, two-thirds of B2B marketers used webinars and 66% found them to be effective.
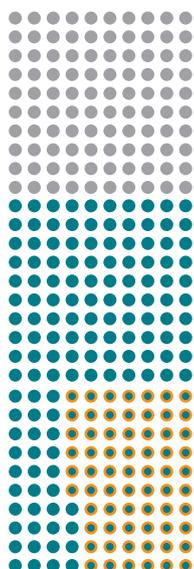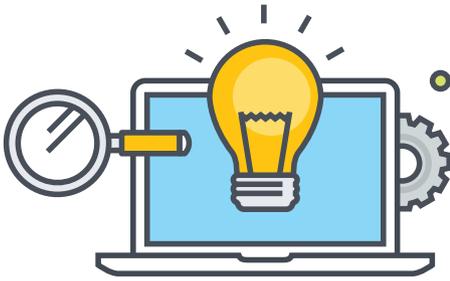
PRE-PRODUCTION

As with any well-produced event, success starts with planning. A webinar is about more than technology. It's about aligning business drivers with desired outcomes while managing the ever-changing scheduling, logistics and human factors. The glue that holds these together is a deadline-driven project-management methodology, a set of best practices, and the use of email and webinar metrics to benchmark performance across the webinar life cycle.

TOP-LINE OBJECTIVES

- Determine the webinar objectives and desired outcomes.
- Identify the technology tools and team skills needed.
- Build a project plan and successfully kick off the project.

TASKS

- ☐ Determine the content type: case study, tutorial/how-to or compliance and standards.
- ☐ Detail the target audience.
- ☐ Develop a working title.
- ☐ Identify the audience pain points this webinar will address.
- ☐ Consider if this a must-have or nice-to-have topic.
- ☐ Identify the sources for content.
- ☐ List the business objectives.
- ☐ Determine the call to action (before, during and after the webinar).
- ☐ List success factors and desired outcomes.
- ☐ Determine when to go live.
- ☐ Develop a project timeline.
- ☐ Identify who will be part of the project team.
- ☐ Determine whether internal and/or external speakers will be used.
- ☐ Evaluate which webinar hosting platform will be used, including compatibility/integration with marketing automation tools.
- ☐ Assess the audio requirements.
- ☐ Hold a kick-off meeting to set the tone with all players.
- ☐ Follow up the kick-off meeting to get buy-in and start the production.

POST-PRODUCTION

Once the webinar is over, it's tempting to deliver the leads to sales and call it a day, but there's still meaningful work to be done. You'll want to assess how well you performed and what specifically can be improved. And it's important to ask, "Now what?" Do you need a post-webinar nurturing campaign? Is there demand for a follow-on webinar or can this webinar become part of a series? This checklist will help you connect the dots.

TOP-LINE OBJECTIVES

- Prepare the final metrics and analytics.
- Convert the analytics into actionable follow-up activities.
- Measure webinar success.

Need the full checklist to plan your webinar from beginning to end? http://cmi.media/ WebinarChecklist

Mike Agron is the executive webinar producer for WebAttract, which he co-founded in 2008.

TASKS

- ☐ Gather the final life-cycle data from the marketing automation platform and webinar hosting platform.
- ☐ Analyze the six key webinar metrics:
  - Click-through ratio: Visits to the registration page compared with completed registrations
  - Attendee ratio: People who attended compared with those who registered
  - Online polls
  - Audience retention
  - Exit surveys
  - On-demand viewings
- ☐ Create a report with a narrative of the final metrics (e.g., email and registration metrics, daily registration tracking summary, polls and surveys, lead sources profiles, attendee details, and results of any follow-up email campaign.
- ☐ Develop an actionable executive summary.
- ☐ Determine who is sales-ready, who needs nurturing and who is not a fit.
- ☐ Hand the sales-ready leads to the sales team.
- ☐ Create a post-webinar nurturing campaign.
- ☐ Determine whether initial planning goals were met.
- ☐ Evaluate how effective the webinar was in meeting your business goals.
- ☐ Detail the lessons learned.
- ☐ Determine if there is enough interest for a second webinar or a series.

VIDEO AND VISUAL CONTENT TOOLS FOR CONTENT CREATORS

LIGHTWEIGHT

S

ROOM TO GROW

M

TAILORED FIT

L

Need some quick and easy visuals for sharing on social media? These apps are perfect for lightweight content tasks. Turn your smartphone into a hand-held design studio.

For visual projects with multiple elements—such as infographics and simple animations—a small touchscreen may not be enough. These web-based platforms and software give your ideas more room to grow.

Drag-and-drop templates and simplified editing tools won't always be a perfect fit. When they become restrictive, it may be time to upsize to more powerful tools big enough to handle any size project.

👁 VISUAL CONTENT

Adobe Spark Plenty of templates, graphics, fonts and tools to create sharable visual content. (iOS)

Enhance by Hootsuite Easily crop images to suite each network, add filters, text and logos. (iOS)

Over Lots of cool fonts, filters and graphics with blending and masking tools for easy visual content. (iOS)

PicMonkey Image editing and design for simple photo retouching before adding text, filters and effects. (iOS, Android)

Snapseed Photo-editing app with an impressive suit of tools and filters for more precise retouching and sharing. (iOS, Android)

Canva Handy templates and tools for everything from simple quote images to detailed infographics.

Easel.ly Customizable infographic templates with backgrounds, shapes, icons and charts.

Piktochart Drag-and-drop infographics using the extensive library or uploading your assets.

Visme Create data visualisations for infographics, reports and presentations.

Venngage Infographic maker with widgets to present your data in different ways.

Adobe Photoshop The industry-standard photo-editing software with a powerful array of tools.

Acorn Affordable alternative to PhotoShop with the usual features to manage layers, filters, paths, etc.

Adobe Illustrator Vector-based illustration program popular with designers, included in the Adobe Creative Cloud suite along with Photoshop.

Gimp Surprisingly powerful open source image-editing software with a wide toolset.

Sketch A professional vector graphics tool with the usual capabilities, plus a bunch of plugins.

🎥 VIDEO CONTENT

Adobe Spark Create animated videos for social media; easy to add voiceovers and icons. (iOS)

Apple Clips Capture video, add text, effects and graphics and share with one click. (iOS)

Cameo by Vimeo Capture, edit and render full HD videos; plenty of pre-set themes. (iOS)

Clippy Makes it easy to create GIFs and clips from any web video and add text and other effects. (iOS)

Slowmographer Create looped slow-motion clips with filters and transition effects to share as a GIF or video. (iOS, Android)

Animaker Create extended animated videos and explainers with a simple drag-and-drop interface.

Camtasia On-screen recording software that captures your voice-over commentary.

GoAnimate Drag-and-drop animation that syncs characters with your narration.

LumaFusion App designed for mobile journalists, with multi-track editing, animations, effects and transitions.

Wideo Animation platform with a library of templates for explainer videos and promos.

AVS Video Editor Create videos in almost any format, suitable for just about any device, even 4K Quad HD.

Adobe Premiere Pro A serious video-editing suite with all the functionality you'll ever need.

Final Cut Pro Designed for MacOS and a popular choice due to its faster rendering and offline editing.

iMovie Comes standard with Apple products. Geared toward the casual video editor.

Wistia A powerful video-hosting and analytics platform with interactive features and API integrations.

Empathetic SEO

If you just look at the keywords people use to search, you're missing out on many of their actual needs and your content may fail to answer the questions they really have in mind.

Wil Reynolds

One day I woke up thinking of my career in search. I looked at all the years and all the time that I had spent trying to understand how Google ranks things. Then I looked at how much time I spent understanding why people choose to buy things.

I was so out of whack. I had spent all this time chasing what Google wanted and where it wanted the words and never took any time trying to understand why people actually make the decisions they make.

We have all these cool tools and platforms that we just throw stuff into so they can tell us what to do, and I think this approach has ruined some parts of our jobs because we no longer take the time to understand how to sell things to people.

We forget that before people type keywords in boxes, they have a thought. They have a need before they typed in that word. We have to understand that need before we go writing the content.

Keyword research will never tell you this need.

However, it's my job as a digital strategist to minimize the distance between the ask and the answer. I fail when people have to do search after search to find what they're looking for. Google wants to minimize the number of different searches people do before they find what they want. Shouldn't content marketers also want to do that?

We need to do more of what I call "predictive content."

How do you understand the need if you never talk to people? The answer is you don't. You make assumptions and that's a mistake.

I'm going to give you a real example. One of our clients is in the rent-to-

> *We forget that before people type keywords in boxes, they have a thought. They had a need before they typed that word.*

own space. I could do what typical SEO practitioners do: type "pay in installments" into Google and then see how the search engine completes that sentence.

And that could lead me to write some content about paying for a laptop in installments, which might do a decent job of getting our client ranking higher for that search term.

However, our client allowed us to talk to their customers.

Some of the people searching for the services were going through divorces. When you hear a woman say, "I'm recently divorced and I'm trying to rebuild my credit," it humanizes her. That is not a keyword. That is the person behind that search. Think about how the content team might build every piece of content after hearing that.

The next conversation was a grandmother on a fixed income. People don't type that in to the search box, but if you think the fact that this woman was on a fixed income doesn't affect how she approaches every purchasing decision, you're crazy. She gets the same amount every month. If she wants to buy a laptop for her grandson, she needs to be able to pay for it over time.

What I love about this kind of work—having conversations—is my team becomes more empathetic the minute we talk to people. We remember these people because we took time to understand them. That always helps us to write better content.

Using tools to uncover search intent

Machines are getting good at understanding what people want. For example, Google knows what people are likely to search for next. If you are targeting search results that bring up "people also ask" suggestions, are you incorporating those questions into your content marketing strategy?

Google's predictions are staring you in the face every day, yet most content marketers haven't changed their content in response to them.

Start typing things into Google and see what shows up. Then think, "Am I addressing the needs of these people?"

I use the tool Answer the Public. You put keywords in and it shows you the questions people ask around the keyword. Let's analyze one keyword phrase: The North Face jacket.

People want to know which North Face jacket is the warmest, which is the best for skiing, which are waterproof, which is the fuzzy one?

Say you're a marketer for The North Face and your SEO report says you rank number one, two and three for that keyword phrase. You might think you're good, right? But if a man clicks on those results and finds a woman's jacket, that's the wrong answer. This is the problem with thinking that you've done your job if you rank well.

It's one thing to rank your website for something. It's another thing to solve someone's problem.

When you build content that understands the person behind the query, it will probably be effective for years. ⚭

Wil Reynolds is founder and director of strategy for Seer Interactive, a leading SEO and online marketing agency.
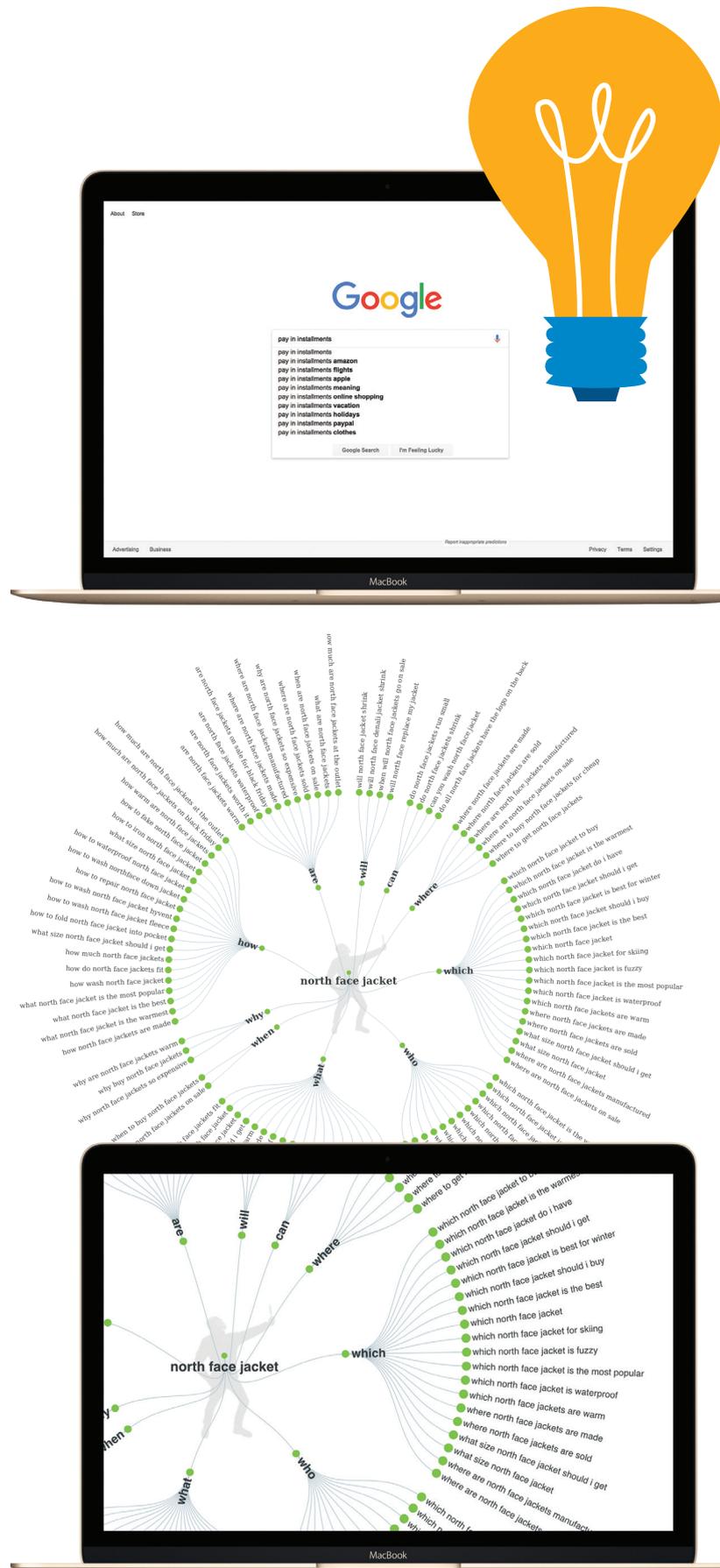
Fairmont Hotels Stages a Virtual Reality Bed-In

I t's 1969. You're at the Queen Elizabeth Hotel in Montreal—suite 1742, to be exact. You see the lyrics to "Give Peace a Chance" written on the wall.

OK, it's actually 2018 and the hotel is owned by **Fairmont Hotels & Resorts**. But, thanks to the virtual-reality headsets on the nightstands, you can still experience suite 1742 as it was in 1969 when John Lennon and Yoko Ono staged an eight-day "bed-in for peace" at the hotel. Lennon and Ono invited journalists to observe their peaceful protest against the war in Vietnam and recorded their "Give Peace a Chance" anthem in the suite.

Although suite 1742 has been available to guests before, in 2017, Fairmont The Queen Elizabeth redesigned the suite to celebrate the iconic moment (e.g., window decals inspired by the original protest signs, interactive storage drawers with historical artifacts). The virtual-reality component is an additional, immersive way for guests to experience the suite from the perspective of Lennon or Ono.

CASPER LAUNCHES WOOLLY MAGAZINE

Reading in bed just got more meta with Woolly, a print magazine launched by mattress maker **Casper**. Dedicated to "a curious exploration of comfort, wellness and modern life," the quarterly publication centers on the idea that sleep is the "third pillar of wellness" along with food and fitness.

Created by an in-house editorial team, with help from publishing company McSweeney's, the content includes personal essays, comedic advice columns and other stories about resting, relaxing and recharging. The print magazine costs $12 per issue ordered via the website or purchased at Casper's recently opened brick-and-mortar retail shops, while some copies are distributed to customers on delivery of their Casper mattresses.

MARKETERS, MEET TWITCH

Companies with livestreaming content ideas might be quick to dismiss **Twitch**. After all, it's a niche network for video gamers, right? Yes, Twitch started as a place for gamers to livestream their gameplay, but there are two important considerations. First, the audience is large and desirable. According to Twitch, the platform has more than 2.2 million broadcasters and 100 million visitors per month. The majority of Twitch users are male (75 percent), with 73 percent in the coveted 18- to 49-age range. Second, nearly half of users spend 20 or more hours a week on Twitch.

While video gamers are the bread and butter for Twitch, the network is growing beyond video gamers to other creators. Foodies, crafters, musicians and others are joining in to livestream their activities, and Twitch recently began incentivizing content creation through partner and affiliate programs.

Brands including **Old Spice** and **Coca-Cola** have experimented with content creation on Twitch, and **Amazon** (which acquired Twitch in 2014) recently broadcast three of its pilots on the platform, allowing viewers to provide feedback in real time. If you're thinking about livestreaming but haven't checked out Twitch, it's time to take a look.
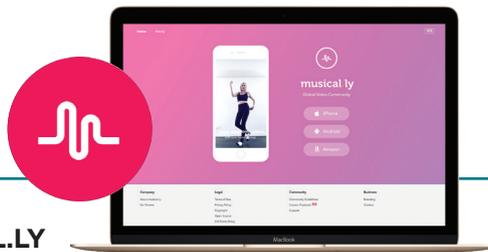
BRANDS TAP INTO MUSICAL.LY

Unless you're the parent of a teenager, you might not have heard of **Musical.ly**, a lip-syncing video app downloaded by more 200 million users. And where there are teens, there are brands trying to capture their attention. **Disney**, **Kit Kat** and German skin-care company **Beiersdorf** were among the first, reaching out to influencers to create Musical.ly content. A fast-growing startup for creating and broadcasting short videos, Musical.ly also has plans to launch original series from **MTV**, **E!** and **Seventeen Magazine**. The content is designed to be interactive, with calls to action for users to post their responses using series-specific hashtags.

The series are the result of Musical.ly's partnership with Viacom, NBCUniversal and Hearst Magazines Digital Media. To start, the shows won't include any advertising or other forms of monetization. While Musical.ly may look for ways to generate revenue from original programming in the future, the current arrangement allows it to launch original entertainment in exchange for giving brands access to its Generation Z audience. Coming in at two to four minutes per episode, the weekly series range from comedy to fashion to celebrity crushes—topics designed to please Musical.ly's teen "musers."
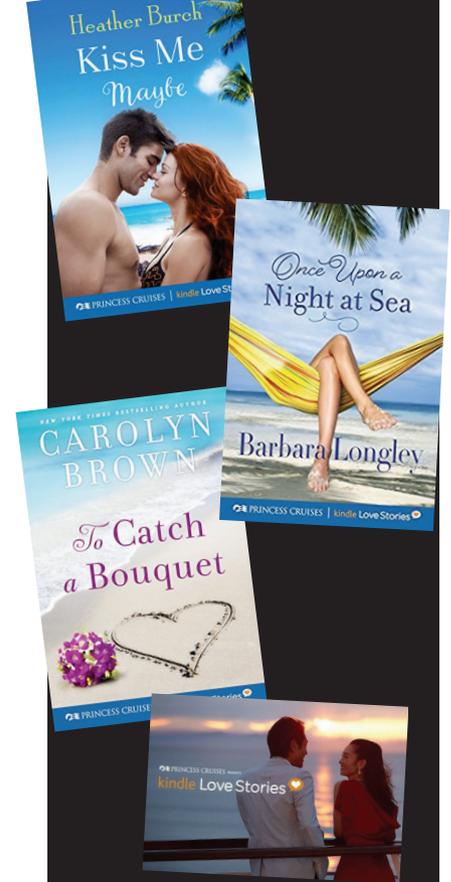
SAIL INTO ROMANCE WITH PRINCESS CRUISES

For many readers, romance novels and vacations go hand in hand. And for those who enjoy love stories set on the high seas, **Princess Cruises** has stepped in with three free original stories. (The original cruise line featured on TV's Love Boat between 1977 and 1986.) Teaming up with **Amazon**'s online romance community, Kindle Love Stories, Princess created the content ahead of a five-day Caribbean cruise that included meet and greets with the stories' bestselling authors, book club discussions and book signings. And what about those who haven't taken a Princess cruise? Since each of the three stories focuses on a couple who finds love aboard a cruise ship, Princess hopes to inspire more readers to plan a cruise vacation.

DEPARTMENT EDITOR

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

UNSOLICITED ADVICE

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

This month, Andrew Davis serves up some unsolicited advice to agency executives everywhere.

Agency Executives
Everywhere

Dear Agency Account Executives,

Please, stop teaching content marketing in your pitch presentations. Instead, sell your results.

Having sat through dozens of content marketing agency pitches in the last four years (and having pitched content marketing accounts for over a decade), I know how much you love to teach content marketing. I admire your passion and enthusiasm, and I appreciate your urge to explain what content marketing is and how it works. But this is not Content Marketing 101. This is a pitch presentation.

Consider the prospective client for a moment. Over the past month, it's heard pitches from three agencies. Every one of those agency account executives taught the prospect about content marketing. They all explained how the world has changed and how content marketing is a slow game. They all showed some stats and presented some case studies to demonstrate how content marketing works. Now, it's your turn. You're the fourth agency to walk in the door and waste 25 minutes reeducating the prospect.

Instead of being the fourth executive in four weeks to explain content marketing, here's what I need you to try: assume your prospects know everything they need to know about content marketing. Your prospects will ask if they need more information. No one has ever been thrown out of a pitch meeting for assuming their prospects are savvy and smart. To do this, all you need to do is invert your pitch: start with the results.

Here's the deal: If you invert your pitch at your next agency pitch meeting and you don't win the account, I'll spend an hour with you working on the presentation.

What do you say? Do we have a deal?

Whether you wanted it or not,
Andrew Davis

DEPARTMENT COLUMNIST

Andrew Davis is the author of Brandscaping: Unleashing the Power of Partnerships. Follow him at @DrewDavisHere.

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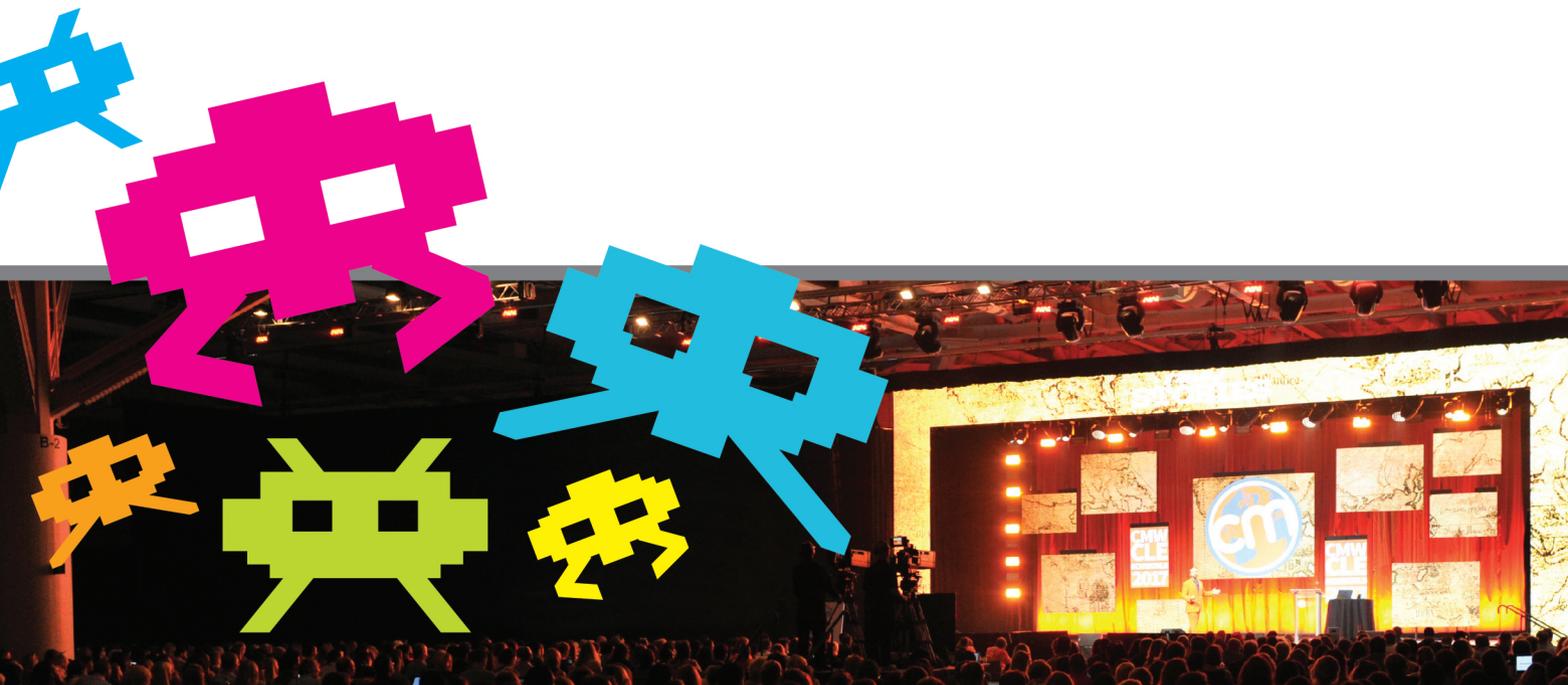
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