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@juntajoe Joe Pulizzi
Before you choose, check out my post, 4 Truths about Content Marketing Agencies. http://bit.ly/15it7Th

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CONTENT MARKETING INSTITUTE

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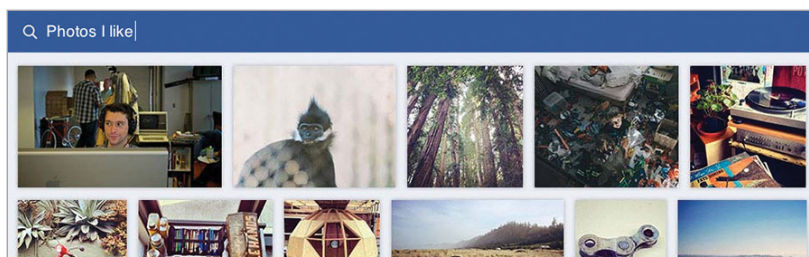
Graph Search allows members of the world's largest social network to find content through their Facebook social connections. Find out what you need to know to optimize your Facebook content, and employ a more holistic social strategy—both essential in a Graph Search-enabled world.

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Effective Content Marketing with Visuals: A Five-Step Guide

2013 is the year of visual content, or so we've been told. But exploiting channels like Instagram and Pinterest is just scratching the surface. Find tactics top content marketers are using to supersize their visual impact.

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Secrets to Build a Virtual Content Creation Team

Video: Content Marketers Share Expert Tips

Find out what top marketers at brands like Kelly Services, SAS, SAP and Intel are doing to scale their content efforts to reflect a larger brand's needs and scope.

http://bit.ly/YJC9WU
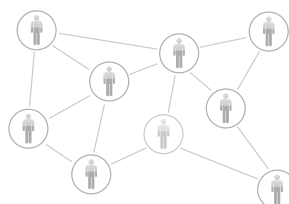
Some of the most in-demand knowledge workers (think writers, strategists and designers) are freelancers and "solopreneurs." If you're considering a virtual content creation team, find out how to recruit, screen and hire top contract talent.

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Why Do We Fail?

The Content Marketing Institute (CMI) has released benchmark research projects in North America, Australia and United Kingdom. One overwhelming consistency across all the marketers we've surveyed relates to content marketing effectiveness. Across the board, only 33 percent of marketers deem their efforts as effective. If that was a batting average, we'd be all-stars, but …

There are a number of reasons for this, including the fact that this whole content marketing thing, even though hundreds of years old, is still relatively new to us marketers. After all, who told us that we'd actually have to be publishers at some point in our career?

But each of us has our own challenges that we need to bear and break through. Here are a few that have been on my mind:

Your content is all about you. Remember, customers don't care about you; they care about themselves and their problems. We often forget that point when we describe how wonderful our widget is (that no one cares about).

You're afraid to fail. Taking chances with your content and experimenting a bit reveal the possibilities for your content marketing, and uncover new and valuable customer stories.

> ## Do something completely unexpected with your content from time to time.

You're setting the bar too low. Your content marketing should be the best in your industry … better than all your competition, and better than the media and publishers in your space. How can you be the trusted expert in your industry if your content marketing is not?

You're not sourcing correctly. The majority of brands outsource some portion of the content marketing process. Don't be afraid to find internal content champions as well as outside journalists, writers and content agencies to help you tell your story.

You operate in silos. Are you telling different stories in PR, corporate communications, social media, email marketing, etc.? Do all departments follow a consistent corporate storyline? Epic content marketing means that your company is telling a consistent story.

You don't seek out discomfort. Seth Godin states in his book Linchpin, that if we don't consistently step out of our comfort area then we are doomed to the status quo. Do something completely unexpected with your content from time to time.

You do not have calls to action. Every piece of content should have a call to action. If it doesn't, at least recognize it as such and the real purpose behind why you developed the content.

You are too focused on one particular channel. Stop thinking email newsletter or Facebook. Think about the problem you are solving for your customer. Then tell that story in different ways everywhere your customers seek authoritative information.

Your content isn't owned. Someone in your organization (possibly you) must take ownership of the content marketing plan.

Your C-level doesn't buy in. Organizations without C-level buy-in are three times more likely to fail at content marketing.

You are not niche enough. You need to be the leading expert in the world in your niche. Pick a content area that is both meaningful to your business and attainable.

Your team's too slow. As much as I hate to say it, speed beats perfection in most cases. Figure out a streamlined process for your storytelling.

You execute inconsistently. Your content marketing is a promise to your customers. Think about the morning paper (if you receive it): When it doesn't come on time, how upset are you? You need to have the same mindset with your content marketing. Distribute content consistently and ON TIME.

I'm sure you've just thought of a few more reasons that are holding you back. Whatever the reason, none is insurmountable. What's great about where we are as an industry is that there are so many great case studies and industry leaders helping us get to the next level (including a few in this issue).

Identify the challenge, tackle it and move on to tell your story. You can do it!

All the best,

Founder
Content Marketing Institute

High-integrity Health Content

By Andy McCartney

How health care companies safeguard their credibility in online communities.

Health-related research is in the top three of online activities in the world. In the United States alone more than 100 million Americans per year will visit the health-related sites such as Web MD, Familydoctor.org, Healthfinder.gov and CNN Health among thousands of others. Within the massive ecosystem of health-related content websites, community-based sites are critical sources of trusted information for patients and caregivers. They offer a single spot for multiple stakeholders—including marketers—to interact with and contribute content to the community. And that's where marketers need to get smart.

To understand the issue, let's focus on one of the top disease communities. Diabetes-related content sites are among the most active online health hubs because of the staggering number of people diagnosed with the disease: more than 370 million worldwide. For big pharmaceutical companies, these sites represent a tremendous opportunity … as well as potential risk. Patients are the most wary consumers, and health care companies must build a content strategy that ensures online engagement is absolutely credible and trustworthy.

Roche Diagnostics, makers of Accu-Chek insulin pumps and blood glucose testing devices, is extremely conscious of its position and responsibility in the diabetes community—both due to the sensitivity of working in a highly regulated industry as well as the desire to position the brand as a valued resource. Jim Lefevere, director of global marketing explains, "We must not be self-serving, but be here to provide better information, education and value to people so that they can take better care of themselves and live better, healthier and longer lives."

Offering trusted content is also essential to prevent a backlash. The diabetes community—like most other socially driven online communities—is self-protective when it comes to inappropriate content. A contributor or vendor stating unlikely claims or being in any way promotional will be shut out of the conversation and lose respect with associated negative sentiment/reputation scores. Marketers need to be especially conscious of their role within the ecosystem, and look to influence, inspire and educate audiences where the value is appropriate and steer clear where their opinion isn't warranted.

So how should a content marketer approach an online health care community and ensure that content is credible, relevant and supportive of the organization's objectives? Here are a couple ideas:

The customer journey of trust
Online engagement is usually modeled in relation to the customers' journey. When creating the customer lifecycle journey, consider your "degrees of trust" for content categories at each stage. For example, a diabetes care provider may consider the customer lifecycle to be: Symptom Diagnosis Treatment Use Renewal.

Now think about these stages of the lifecycle for each of your target audience segments, and consider the classifications of content that each of these roles would find beneficial along the lifecycle. (See table, top right.)

Navigating the Diabetes Community Ecosystem

Large portals created by big pharma (e.g. **Aetna's** Intelihealth) maintain editorial independence to ensure content is regarded as valuable and impartial. On these types of sponsored sites, there's a relatively strong wall between editorial and advertising.

Smaller sites are also important players. Diabetes blogs such as **Diabetes Daily**, **DiabetesMine** and **Six Until Me** are popular destinations, often created by patients who were unable to find credible information online.

Role/Stage	Symptoms ⟫⟫	Diagnosis ⟫⟫	Treatment ⟫⟫	Use ⟫⟫	Renewal
Patient	Early-stage Research	Diagnosis Test Info/Options	Recommendations	Device Instructions	Offers, Loyalty Benefits
Caregiver	Early-stage Research	Diagnosis Test Info/Options	Recommendations	Device Instructions	Offers, Loyalty Benefits
Doctor/HCP	Symptom-specific Research	Industry Research	Comparison Studies	Benchmark Reports	Incentive Programs
Influencer	Symptom-specific Research	Industry Research	Comparison Studies	Best Practice Guides	Product Loyalty Benefits

DIABETES JOURNEY CONTENT MATRIX

A diabetes product supplier, for example, maps the customer lifecycle for key customers and influencers, and then fills the grid with sample content types for each scenario. Next, the company identifies which content categories are deemend "credible" coming from the vendor, shown in orange. The point? Just because *you can* doesn't mean *you should*. Health care marketers must tread carefully to ensure content is trustworthy.

Now consider which content categories would be regarded as credible if submitted by your organization. These are shaded in orange in the graphic. A provider of diabetes insulin pumps, for example, can credibly supply usage instructions and renewal offers to sufferers and caregivers, and supply early-stage research (ideally independent) to all audience roles. This is somewhat simplified, but starts to define trust categories of content that could be sourced directly from providers.

A layered content strategy

Many health care organizations are adept at creating, optimizing and disseminating personalized content to specific targets. Yet social media has changed the landscape in so many ways, and in health care in particular it elevates the role bloggers and other online influencers play in the information value chain. A patient is highly influenced by these independent players when weighing treatment options and purchase decisions. While it is not entirely credible for a health care provider

to provide, for example, a product comparison, a layered content strategy can enable a third party to supply information indirectly on your behalf.

Be very conscious about how to approach and engage with third parties, however. Bloggers are obliged, sometimes required, to be transparent about their associations with health care companies. (Advertisers be aware— in the United States, the Federal Trade Commission published new guidelines in March 2013

> **Marketers need to be especially conscious of their role within the ecosystem, and look to influence, inspire and educate audiences where the value is appropriate and steer clear where their opinion isn't warranted.**

requiring clearer disclosures in digital advertising.) Using a matrix similar to the one provided, identify the high-value, redistributable information you can to supply to bloggers and influencers. Providing industry research, market tests, treatment tips (e.g. diabetes recipes) or red-carpet access to in-house product experts are ways to earn the respect of influencers. Layer your content depending on the number of levels of direct and indirect distributors.

Bottom line: Always be cognizant of your organization's overriding role and ability to maintain trust. This principle is never more applicable than in health care.

Andy McCartney is a broadly experienced marketing strategist, practitioner and entrepreneur who has spent the last 25 years consulting and collaborating with hundreds of companies of all sizes in Europe and North America. He is the founder of iMCCmarketing and a senior contributor to Econsultancy. Connect with Andy at linkedin.com/in/andymccartney.

The Press Release: Still a Content Marketer's Workhorse

By Sarah Skerik

Today's noisy media environment poses challenge for brands, but the press release is still remarkably adaptable and effective, provided communicators refresh their approach. What's the attraction? Press releases are on-record statements from the organizations issuing them, and are viewed as credible sources of information. If well optimized for search, they are read not only by journalists, analysts and bloggers, but the public.

Explains Steve Farnsworth, chief strategist at Jolt Digital Marketing, and publisher of the widely read Steveology blog, "Most press releases aren't read by the media, they're read by the people. Your readers are going to be your stakeholders, and you'll reach more directly that way than through the media."

Once distributed, press releases develop an amazing ability to work their way into key industry niches, attaining the credibility of earned media status as they are liked, commented upon and shared. To serve a brand well, the message needs to be both interesting and useful, and it needs to provide direction for interested readers to take.

"The press release needs to be a guide to something bigger or better than itself, such as an infographic or e-book," comments Eddy Badrina, co-founder and chief strategy officer at BuzzShift, a digital strategy agency. "In fact, all those things you spend time creating probably deserve a press release."

Building stickiness with storytelling

Don't assume you need to use dry language and a pre-fab format for press releases; in fact, that's the wrong approach. "We're kind of stuck on making an old format meet a new purpose," says Jeff Domansky, CEO of Peak Communications and author of the popular public relations blog, The PR Coach. "The first social press release format came out seven years ago, but we're not using it. People are falling back on the old format, and complaining that it doesn't work."

So what does work? Build storytelling into the mix. Building a story into a message as succinct as a press release can be challenging, but the key is to ensure the release includes compelling narrative elements:

- **Add a quote** from the member of the product development team (instead of a canned exec quote) discussing the genesis of the product, and the problem it solves or the opportunity it creates.
- **Include a video clip** of a customer describing a successful outcome or demonstrating the utility of a product.
- **Create an infographic** illustrating potential savings or efficiencies that could accrue.

"There's a huge opportunity for communicators who are brave enough to deviate the status quo and try new things," says Lou Hoffman, CEO of the Hoffman Agency, a leading Silicon Valley PR agency, and author of the Ishmael's Corner blog, where storytelling is a common theme.

"Look at the release as the executive summary of any newsworthy things that come out," says Badrina. "Break the formula. Dive into the value proposition, the benefits, case studies, the feature set and the CEO's visionary take on what the announcement means to the company and the market."

Making stories come alive

Press releases don't need to be flat, static, one-way messages. Include interactive elements into the story to spark social conversations and drive qualified traffic into the funnel.

- **Links:** Many press release writers neglect to embed links to more information, overlooking an important call to action. Embedded links turn press releases into mini-portals that lead readers straight to your website or to another prescribed call to action.
- **Multimedia:** It's difficult to overstate the importance of including multimedia assets—such as images and video—with the content you distribute. The popularity of Pinterest, Instagram and the emergent Vine underscores the importance of visual content. Search engines and social networks like Twitter and Facebook place a premium on multimedia content, boosting the visibility of the message to the audience.
- **Social connections:** Invite interaction by including links to the Twitter handles of quoted experts, using a popular #hashtag in the headline or inviting response via one of the company's social channels.

And remember, the headline and lede are crucial real estate. Headlines have

THE NEW MIT:

Eduardo Conrado, SVP Marketing & IT for Motorola Solutions, talks about marketing's alignment with IT (MIT) and how content comes out ahead.

By Carla Johnson

Eduardo Conrado has proven himself to be a nonconformist. An engineer-turned-marketer, Conrado not only oversees marketing for Motorola Solutions, but also recently added IT to his management portfolio. Throughout his 20-year career with the company, he's underscored his ability to lead through innovation and establish new expectations for the realm of marketing.

With his recently expanded role at Motorola, Conrado spoke to CCO magazine about his blended responsibilities and how marketers must thrive comfortably in multiple worlds.

The most powerful marketers have multiple disciplines under their belts. Tell me how you started as an engineer and ended up as head of marketing.

My background is in industrial engineering, and I worked for Texas Instruments out of college. But I knew I wanted earn an MBA and obtain more international experience. I went back to school and ended up with two MBAs, one in marketing from Thunderbird (Phoenix) and another in finance from ESCADE in Barcelona.

Motorola hired me to do market research, and early on my role changed every year or two. Part of the culture at Motorola is to always talk with your manager about what you want to do next. I wanted experience working in a different county, which led me to an opportunity in Argentina.

It was a different type of marketing than what I'd done before—the head of marketing for a 300-person joint-venture company. This gave me a whole new dimension early in my career without having to wade through multiple jobs. I oversaw PR, advertising, customer experience and distribution marketing; it was a role with comprehensive responsibilities.

When I came back to the United States, I worked in consumer marketing then moved into the corporate role. At the time, marketing was split into different roles in various groups. I wanted marketing to be more than communications, so we integrated three disciplines under a single marketing function: product/solutions marketing, integrated marketing communications and field marketing. It's what we still have today, we've just added capabilities, beefed up our digital component and we're closer to IT.

Given the extent that technology drives budget and decision-making, is it imperative that the head of marketing for a company like Motorola have a technical background? How do you see this role as being more than just a manager of people?

There are two sides to a CMO. One is the role as a general manager, and the other is as a marketing technologist. More and more, technology enablers and solutions drive marketing strategies. Feeling comfortable with technology is a key driver for marketers going forward.

Marketers struggle to understand to what extent IT drives marketing, especially when marketing and IT are two distinct departments. Who should drive IT discussions/decisions as they relate to content marketing?

One of marketing's primary strengths is that we're customer-facing, which is why we should drive these decisions. Sixty percent of a customer's content consumption happens before they engage with a company, and marketing needs to continually evaluate this. Distribution is technology driven, which enables you to position customers to your specific sites and sales channels. You need to base the analytics on the customer personas, what company they're from, their roles, and what's relevant. Marketing needs a technology ecosystem that can empower this plus content testing and personalization so you better appreciate what's generating action.

From Transactions to Solutions

Motorola successfully shifted customers' perceptions of the company from preferred vendor to trusted thought leader. Its content delivers a distinct point of view and challenges the status quo, helping customers think about what the future could look like. To reflect this change, Motorola Solutions came up with a new way to think about the marketing process, shifting from the traditional 4 P's of marketing to a SAVE model:

Instead of Product, think Solution: Define offerings by the needs they meet, not by their features, functions or technical superiority.

Instead of Place, think Access: Develop an integrated cross-channel presence that considers customers' entire purchase journey instead of emphasizing individual purchase locations and channels.

Instead of Price, think Value: Articulate the benefits relative to price, rather than stressing how price relates to production costs, profit margins or competitors' prices.

Instead of Promotion, think Education: Provide information relevant to customers' specific needs at each point in the purchase cycle, rather than relying on advertising, PR and personal selling that covers the waterfront.

How do you actually go about breaking down the barriers between marketing and IT? What mechanisms have you put in place to ensure there is collaboration between marketing and IT?

An analyst from Gartner told me that just over one-third of CIOs report directly to a CEO. That means two-thirds report through another function. If it's under operations, the CIO's focus will be supply chain and distribution channels. Under the CFO it will be costs. But under the CMO, the CIO will focus on systems of engagement and the customer while providing a holistic view on how the IT function can be a strategic differentiator for the company. That's the emphasis we wanted for technology.

A few years back, our CIO and I carved out part of the IT staff to focus on marketing and sales. That was our starting point, to have an IT staff that honed in on customers and our systems of engagement.

Fast-forward 18 months, and we had a digital team and an IT team that focused on marketing. The CIO and I agreed that we'd be more efficient and effective with a single structure that reported into marketing with a dotted line into IT. That gave the team a better ability to architect solutions, select vendors and build the system. That move took us into a hybrid environment.

As of January, the CIO now reports within my group. There are two ways marketing benefits from this. First, we have 22,000 employees worldwide and IT systems make it easier to identify our internal experts and bring visibility to them. Second, marketing benefits from improved knowledge and content management. We focus a lot of our marketing and IT efforts on systems of engagement (i.e. anything that interacts with a customer, from a single portal for channel partners to systems for direct sales). We see IT as a strategic differentiator and, if we do it right, a revenue generator.

What's been your strategy with content?

We start with the customer and make everything relevant to them. Because we do solutions-based marketing, we have to know customer personas very well, understand their drivers and challenges, and make all of our content speak to that. Customers look to Motorola to deliver a point of view on major trends.

We also look at how to deliver content to our teams based on their customers, the channels they use, what content they consume and how they consume it. Our deep integration with IT enables marketing to tailor content to the buyer we're talking to during a specific engagement.

How do you see content marketing affecting your channel marketing?

We look at content that the channels can personalize, similar to a direct sales team. We create it with involvement from sales, marketing and product marketing. Instead of collateral of the past, we're elevating our sales teams to trusted advisers with a distinct point of view. Our customers view us as the expert.

We spend time training sales teams on products, but it's just as important that they're fluent with our point of view and can tailor conversations to any level within our customer's organization. The more complex the solution, the more important our point of view. Customers have complimented us for taking the story of "why change" to a point where everyone gets it.

What's the thing that you worry about, whether it's because you haven't mastered it, don't know enough about it or feel the company isn't doing well?

There are two things, and we're still working on them. One is our ability to leverage content creators around the world more effectively. The demand for content will increase, and we have to have real-time visibility into what's being created. The other area is inbound marketing. If you do outbound well, then inbound will work well. Testing in real time and across multiple variables is the next challenge.

Carla Johnson, principal, Type A Communications, helps companies tell better stories to build stronger brand and customer engagement. Her clients include Motorola Solutions, Sybase, VMware, Encana Oil & Gas and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Carla's a consultant to the Content Marketing Institute and a frequent speaker for high-tech, industry and business audiences. Follow her on Twitter @carlajohnson.

THE NOT-SO-STODGY PRESS RELEASE

FireSpotter Labs proves press releases need not be boring. The company created a mock breaking news story to publicize its conferencing solution's new product features. In a two-minute fake newscast video, a team of reporters—with pitch-perfect gravitas—announce San Francisco streets are empty due to UberConference's new file-sharing features. While the video is entertaining, it also manages to fit in the company's key product messages. Win. Win.

to have a powerful hook, and the lede should motivate the viewer to keep reading—this is no place to re-hash your company's boilerplate.

"We're competing for voice and awareness with our press releases today, and on multiple screens," notes Domansky. "Press releases used to be just for one audience. Today, the opportunity and the competition force us to make news releases better."

Sarah Skerik is PR Newswire's vice president of content marketing and the author of *Unlocking Social Media for PR.* Follow her on Twitter at @sarahskerik .

NEW METRICS FOR PR

By Scott Severson

Five years ago, our clients were asking for PR-related outcomes like impressions, ad value and placements. Today those metrics just don't cut it. More and more, our clients are looking for performance-based outcomes—and metrics that clearly show how traffic and sharing adds to the bottom line. When planning, launching and tracking any PR activity, we recommend these four categories of metrics to evaluate the power and reach of your content efforts:

Traffic Metrics
Referral
Direct
Organic

Search Metrics
Assisted conversions
Unique visitors and page views from organic search
Top landing pages

Social Metrics
Unique visitors and page views from organic social referral
Social engagement such as shares, likes and mentions
Share of voice
Sentiment

Lead generation and e-commerce metrics
Assisted conversions (how content influenced the conversion path)
Assisted conversion value (determining the monetary value of the conversion path)

Between **Google Analytics** and monitoring tools like **Radian6**, you can access and track most of these metrics. Keep in mind, it's not necessary to go this deep for every campaign. The point is to understand what matters to each campaign, then measure and optimize to those metrics.

And don't get too bogged down with all the focus on measurement, conversion funnels, SEO tactics and the like. Content marketing's key imperative can often be missed in all the data—and it's the part PR pros do best: telling a story.

Scott Severson is president of Brandpoint, a company that helps brands and consumers connect through the power of content.

High-integrity Health Content

By Andy McCartney

How health care companies safeguard their credibility in online communities.

Health-related research is in the top three of online activities in the world. In the United States alone more than 100 million Americans per year will visit the health-related sites such as Web MD, Familydoctor.org, Healthfinder.gov and CNN Health among thousands of others. Within the massive ecosystem of health-related content websites, community-based sites are critical sources of trusted information for patients and caregivers. They offer a single spot for multiple stakeholders—including marketers—to interact with and contribute content to the community. And that's where marketers need to get smart.

To understand the issue, let's focus on one of the top disease communities. Diabetes-related content sites are among the most active online health hubs because of the staggering number of people diagnosed with the disease: more than 370 million worldwide. For big pharmaceutical companies, these sites represent a tremendous opportunity … as well as potential risk. Patients are the most wary consumers, and health care companies must build a content strategy that ensures online engagement is absolutely credible and trustworthy.

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Role/Stage	Symptoms ⟩⟩⟩	Diagnosis ⟩⟩⟩	Treatment ⟩⟩⟩	Use ⟩⟩⟩	Renewal
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Caregiver	Early-stage Research	Diagnosis Test Info/Options	Recommendations	Device Instructions	Offers, Loyalty Benefits
Doctor/HCP	Symptom-specific Research	Industry Research	Comparison Studies	Benchmark Reports	Incentive Programs
Influencer	Symptom-specific Research	Industry Research	Comparison Studies	Best Practice Guides	Product Loyalty Benefits

DIABETES JOURNEY CONTENT MATRIX

A diabetes product supplier, for example, maps the customer lifecycle for key customers and influencers, and then fills the grid with sample content types for each scenario. Next, the company identifies which content categories are deemend "credible" coming from the vendor, shown in orange. The point? Just because *you can* doesn't mean *you should*. Health care marketers must tread carefully to ensure content is trustworthy.

Now consider which content categories would be regarded as credible if submitted by your organization. These are shaded in orange in the graphic. A provider of diabetes insulin pumps, for example, can credibly supply usage instructions and renewal offers to sufferers and caregivers, and supply early-stage research (ideally independent) to all audience roles. This is somewhat simplified, but starts to define trust categories of content that could be sourced directly from providers.

A layered content strategy

Many health care organizations are adept at creating, optimizing and disseminating personalized content to specific targets. Yet social media has changed the landscape in so many ways, and in health care in particular it elevates the role bloggers and other online influencers play in the information value chain. A patient is highly influenced by these independent players when weighing treatment options and purchase decisions. While it is not entirely credible for a health care provider

to provide, for example, a product comparison, a layered content strategy can enable a third party to supply information indirectly on your behalf.

Be very conscious about how to approach and engage with third parties, however. Bloggers are obliged, sometimes required, to be transparent about their associations with health care companies. (Advertisers be aware— in the United States, the Federal Trade Commission published new guidelines in March 2013

> **Marketers need to be especially conscious of their role within the ecosystem, and look to influence, inspire and educate audiences where the value is appropriate and steer clear where their opinion isn't warranted.**

requiring clearer disclosures in digital advertising.) Using a matrix similar to the one provided, identify the high-value, redistributable information you can to supply to bloggers and influencers. Providing industry research, market tests, treatment tips (e.g. diabetes recipes) or red-carpet access to in-house product experts are ways to earn the respect of influencers. Layer your content depending on the number of levels of direct and indirect distributors.

Bottom line: Always be cognizant of your organization's overriding role and ability to maintain trust. This principle is never more applicable than in health care.

Andy McCartney is a broadly experienced marketing strategist, practitioner and entrepreneur who has spent the last 25 years consulting and collaborating with hundreds of companies of all sizes in Europe and North America. He is the founder of iMCCmarketing and a senior contributor to Econsultancy. Connect with Andy at linkedin.com/in/andymccartney.

Spinning Plates: Are Your Social Networks Wobbling?

By Jonathan Crossfield

"**D**rumroll please as we welcome to the stage The Amazing Brando and his spinning social media plates!"

[Polite ripple of applause followed by a cheesy organ rendition of "Baby Elephant Walk."]

The more plates The Amazing Brando spins, the greater the applause. Until … Oh no! Quora just crashed to the floor! And Pinterest is beginning to look wobbly!

The audience gasps as Brando manages to set YouTube spinning again with a hurried "unboxing" video on his smartphone. They clap as a few quick @ replies save Twitter for a few more spins. And then LinkedIn crashes to the floor. No longer impressed, the audience wonder when the clowns will be back.

OK, I think I've stretched the analogy enough. Yet many businesses still spin plates by tackling too many social networks without the time and resources to do so effectively.

Does your business really need to be on six, seven or eight social networks? Really? The more networks you use, the less effective you're likely to be. Instead of amplifying your content, you may be killing it.

Before you reap genuine benefits from a network, there are many hours of building and nurturing an audience. Thousands of followers won't appear overnight just because your new e-book is ready to "go viral."

You need to earn the necessary status, trust and authority–attracting followers along the way, before your carefully cultivated audience will happily share and interact with your content in meaningful numbers. But this takes time and effort; you'll have to share, talk and participate on their terms, their topics and their content.

And then multiply that effort by each network your brand decides to use.

Having an audience in one network might give you a head start in another, but not by much. Just because you're big on Twitter won't help when you join that industry LinkedIn group. You're back to square one.

No wonder I get stabby when some simplistic marketing wünderkind blogs about how social media marketing is free and easy. Time costs, even when it's your own. Content costs, even if you produce it yourself.

There is No One Size Fits All

It might seem more efficient to create one piece of content and then use it across all your social networks—spinning many plates with a single push. Many brands attempt this, posting the same white paper URL or even the same carefully scripted, generic update to all channels.

By doing so, you're short-changing both your content and the various audiences you've cultivated in each network. Not only do different social networks suit different content types and formats. The demographics, expectations and interests of the audiences also may differ.

Is your typical YouTube follower interested in the same content as someone subscribed to your Pinterest boards?

A half-hour video might fail on Twitter because it's such a rapid-fire, short form medium. But share the same video to Facebook and your followers may be more willing to give it the time and attention.

Instead of trying a one-format-fits-all approach, reinvent your content with each network in mind. Break out key information and display it in the most suitable format—an article for the blog, a video for YouTube, an infographic for Pinterest, a slideshow for SlideShare (and by extension, LinkedIn) and so on.

Tailoring your content strategy for each network means more production time, more budget, more planning. But by designing each piece of content to suit the strengths of your chosen networks, you'll achieve better results.

Choose Your Networks Wisely

The recent Edison Research report The Social Habit 2012 included plenty of stats demonstrating the dominance of Facebook.

One in three social media users now actively follow brands. Seventy-nine percent of those do so on Facebook. Forty-seven percent also identified Facebook as the network with the most influence on their
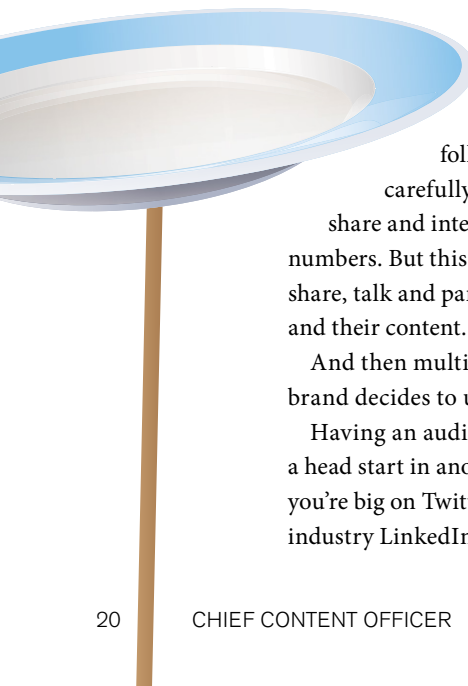
purchasing decisions, far ahead of any other network.

But despite the hype, Facebook is not the default choice for social media marketers. Such general stats, encompassing every vertical and every demographic, mean absolutely nothing when it comes to what's right for your business, your customers and your content strategy.

So whenever a client or a manager approaches me with, "We want a Facebook page," I die a little inside. It's an answer to a question that hasn't been asked. Hey, it may even be the right answer. But until the right questions are asked, who's to know?

Who are you trying to reach and how do they use this network? What content are you trying to distribute? Is this network the best way to do so or are there more effective channels? What action do you want people to take? (Hint: "liking" your page is a pretty low goal to set. You've motivated a non-committal action

that took less than a second. Then what?)

The wrong network will erode resources and attention from those that already are working well for you. And once adopted, if results from the new network are disappointing, there will no doubt be pressure from above to divert more time and resources to get it spinning.

Choose your plates wisely and spin them well. And only spin more plates when you have the time, resources (people) and budget to do so without so much as a wobble or a chip.

If it involves putting words in a row with the occasional punctuation, then Jonathan Crossfield has most likely given it a bash. Jonathan is part copywriter, screenwriter, blogger and journalist. He has won awards for his articles on digital marketing and his over-opinionated blog, Atomik Soapbox. Follow him on Twitter @Kimota.

Susan LaPlante-Dube, Precision Marketing Group
@susanldpmg

Quality over quantity is the key here. If you start your social media program with a focus on your audience, you will select the right mix and the right number. Too many businesses get caught up in having to be in all the popular channels. If your social media is tied to key business goals, you only need to be where your target market is actively participating and listening.

Andrew Davis, author, *Brandscaping*
@TPLDrew

I always recommend marketers pick one social platform at a time. The goal: kick ass on one platform by providing

high-quality, relevant, frequently delivered insight; and when you're doing it better than everyone else on that platform, expand to another one.

Alan Belniak, Senior Manager of Global Content Strategy at Staples
@abelniak

If you struggle to find a unique voice for each channel, scrape together content or worry that you haven't posted enough lately … then you have too many channels. Depending on your market (B2B, B2C, broad, niche), you might want to start with the big ones. Then test. It's easier to add more than take them away. After several are in play, look at your site analytics. Which are driving traffic to your site? If you're after conversions, then you have your answer. Prune. Lather, rinse, repeat.

GETTING PAST PAID, EARNED & OWNED

By Clare McDermott

A look at how brands and agencies are adjusting to a new media landscape.

Paid, earned and owned. The phrase may be a marketing workhorse, but with the explosion of digital channels and new technologies, "paid, earned and owned" is a lot less useful as a way of looking at media strategy and spend than it used to be. As the lines between the three categories of media have eroded beyond recognition, marketers need to rethink how they spend marketing dollars, staff teams, drive strategy and collaborate with agencies.

CONTENT AGENCIES ON THE RISE

Just as brand marketers are reinventing themselves, so too are agencies in a race to transform. Top ad agencies are opening niche content capabilities, and custom publishers are racing to become content agencies. Below find our short list of content agencies. For a full list, visit http://bit.ly/CCO_Agencies.

Babcock & Jenkins · Brafton · Brandpoint
Centerline Digital · Distilled · Edge
EnVeritas Group · Imagination Publishing
King Content · Madison Miles Media
Magnetic Content Studios · McMurry/TMG
Pace · PropelGrowth · Silver Square
Spafax · Stein + Partners Brand Activation
Story Worldwide · Studio One
Switched on Media · Totem Brand Stories
Velocity Limited Partners · Visionista
Well Planned Web

CMI curated this list for educational purposes, but don't take our word for it. Check out the full list online and add your own choices.

According to a report from Altimeter Group, The Converged Media Imperative, agencies and brands need help (a lot of help) understanding and navigating the new landscape.

The first and most basic problem? Longstanding organizational silos divide marketing organizations, making them poorly prepared to deploy a desperately needed integrated media strategy. "A brand may consider its Facebook page owned media because the brand controls it and adds their own content to the page," explains Rebecca Lieb, digital advertising and media analyst for Altimeter, and co-author of the report. "At the same time, Facebook is paid media because you're advertising on it or paying for an enhanced page. And Facebook is also earned media because anyone can contribute comments, upload photos and join a discussion." So is Facebook a social media responsibility? PR? Content? And do these people communicate effectively in your organization to drive an integrated approach?

Lieb goes on to explain media convergence is evident across all manner of platforms and channels— not just the "biggies" marketers talk about most often. Native advertising from companies like OneSpot redefine the concept of ad units, delivering sponsored content "in-stream" with editorial content or within rich-media ads. Bazaarvoice offers brands the chance to collect and leverage customer reviews, using customer-generated content (i.e. earned media) and repackaging it in ads (i.e. paid media) or aggregating it on their own website (i.e. owned media). And the New York Time's new media product for brands called Ricochet allows brands to publicize earned media in a controlled environment. If Gucci, for example, promotes a New York Times story on one of its media channels, visitors clicking the URL enter a controlled environment, free of competing ads, on the New York Times site.

Explains Lieb, "Products like Ricochet are calling for new skills sets. Who buys it? PR will say, 'We don't buy media.' Then who? In the late 1990s, the lament of digital was, 'We're balkanized and siloed.' Fast forward 15 years and we are seeing the same degrees of balkanization in digital."

Lieb also points to other critical hurdles marketers face when trying to respond to the converged media imperative. First, the rapid proliferation of technology feels overwhelming to marketers, who struggle to figure out whether an integrated digital marketing suite or one-off purchases of best-in-class tools makes the most sense. Also, heads of social media are on the front lines listening to and engaging with customers, but often don't have the authority or influence to drive strategic

Marketers are screaming for quality content

We've been creating it for nearly 20 years

Impact on Agencies

Just as brand marketers are racing to reinvent themselves, so too are agencies under pressure to adapt. Based on our research, among agencies' top areas of concern:

COMPETING FROM ALL SIDES. Ad agencies are taking on broader expertise in content, digital and analytics. And content agencies, PR firms and social media agencies are expanding and encroaching on ad agency territory. Says **Altimeter Group's** Rebecca Lieb, "All these media changes are threatening to the agency model because it's no longer all about paid media. And social media agencies and PR agencies are making a go at ad agencies' business. Just think of the dust-up related to **Samsung's** promoted tweet by the **Associated Press**—brokered by **Edelman**. Larger PR shops see lots of opportunities. The gloves are coming off."

ENSURING MEDIA TRANSPARENCY. The growing interest in brand journalism, native advertising and "sponsored stories" comes with risk, explains **Empower MediaMarketing's** David Germano. "Conceptually, convergence makes sense. But without transparency, it won't help our industry. That's the big risk. I don't blame journalists for saying, 'You're going to corrupt the system.' There are those agencies (and brands) that are managing convergence irresponsibly. If transparency is not part of your model, you don't have a long-term hand. There's a self-policing nature to all this. In fact, it's become a sport to figure out which brands are behaving poorly. *The Atlantic* case was figured out quickly. Same with the AP/Samsung-sponsored tweets. You can't pull the wool over people's eyes. If you sacrifice the long-term relationship with your audience because of some ham-fisted execution, you're not doing anyone any favors."

COOPERATING INTRA-AGENCY. Increasingly, brands are asking their agencies to put aside rivalry and collaborate more effectively. Converged media requires an integrated approach, meaning multiple agencies need to operate from the same playbook. Says James Meyer, CEO of **Imagination Publishing**, "General Mills, one of our clients, has multiple agencies—branding, advertising and social. We find ourselves collaborating with the others, getting on calls with two or more agencies at a time. The lead agency may provide overall branding or an ad campaign, and the rest of us take that lead and use it to formulate a content creation plan. By the same token, we will take our own insights from the social media space, and bring it to the lead agency. What we see on the ground may inform a shift in thinking different from what the lead agency is currently addressing."

RECRUITING MARKETING GENERALISTS. Agencies used to be on the hunt for creatives. These days we hear agencies say they struggle to hire talented generalists. Lest you think that means someone who dabbles in many areas but masters none, think again. The new marketing generalist understands at a functional level multiple disciplines—including marketing technology, social, content strategy, storytelling and SEO. And they must be comfortable moving quickly, adapting and taking risks. Says Germano, "Coming from an agency, I have to hire generalists—people who understand the relationship between display, social and search. And I'm looking for talent that can tell a story, publish it to a **WordPress** platform, and know how to promote and distribute that story."

> The conversations that used to be started by mass media have now *become* mass media. The conversation is the thing itself of advertising.
>
> **Kirk Cheyfitz,** CEO of Story Worldwide

decision-making for the brand. Finally, many marketing organizations still believe agencies should lead with the "big idea." "Agencies used to determine the creative idea for a campaign because it was the most expensive element," says Lieb. "In a sense, agencies were the boss of everything. In this incredibly iterative, reactive environment, we find what drives the creative train is owned media. Creating, experimenting and listening with owned media—and using those findings to inform paid media."

First, understanding the basics of convergence.

So what's driving media convergence at such a high rate? Content. Specifically, socially powered, technology-juiced content.

Social-powered content has become marketers' new darling; at the same time paid media (in particular online display ads) are increasingly called into question. As Jay Samit, digital media innovator, recently tweeted, "5.3 trillion online ads shown in 2012 & I have yet to click on one. More likely to be hit by a meteor."

But more than just falling out of favor, the concept of the "ad" has changed. When PandaDaily, a Silicon Valley blog, asked Kirk Cheyfitz, CEO of Story Worldwide, to name the best online ads of 2012, he wrote a post, "The best online ads of 2012 weren't ads." Explains Cheyfitz, "My picks were not paid units sitting between content. They were the content. And they were unpaid. Prime

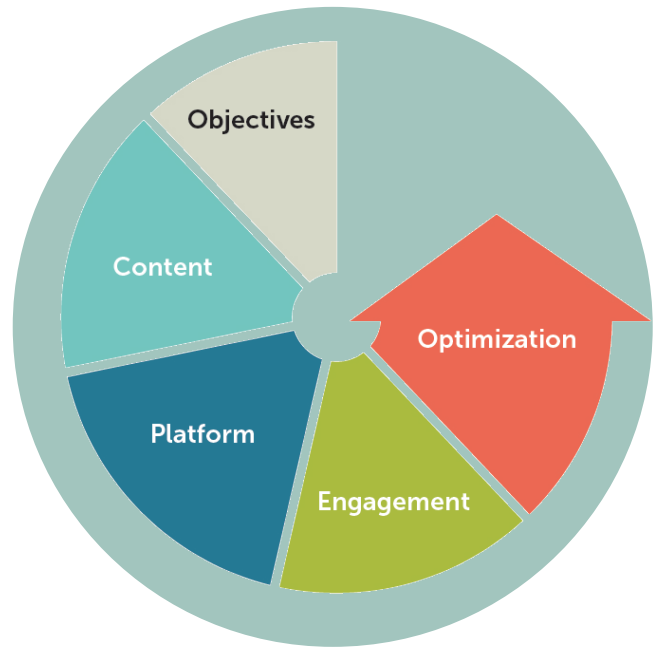# Reaching your audience is complicated. The solution doesn't have to be.

Problem
With so many media channels to reach consumers, navigating through the content marketing landscape can be challenging.
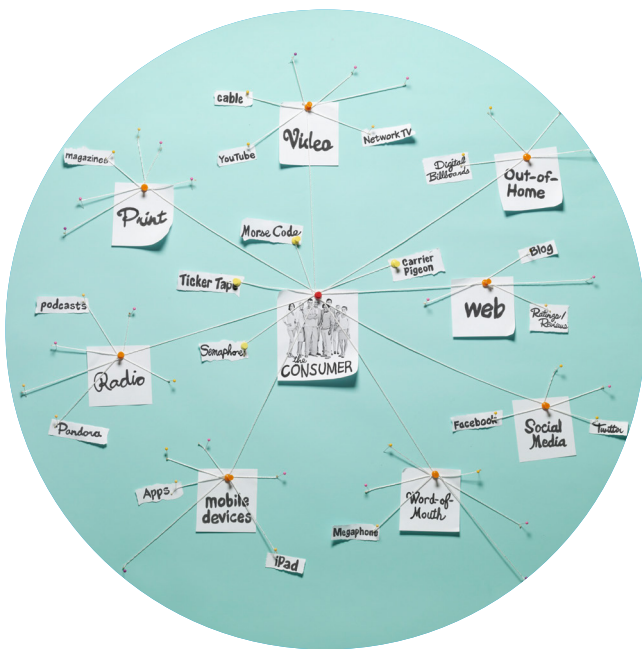
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The question today is not, "Is the media paid, earned or owned?" The question is, "Should I buy the media, or create it?" And many marketers aren't comfortable with that yet.

David Germano,
vice president of Empower MediaMarketing's content marketing practice, Magnetic Content Studios.

example: Felix Baumgartner and the plunge to earth. How right on for Red Bull is jumping out of a space capsule? It was a great story, but it wasn't a paid unit—and yet it got tens of millions of viewers and more juice for Red Bull than an ad could have received. It's the present and the future of advertising. And that's why content specialists need to understand advertising and what it does."

In fact, Cheyfitz claims social content is a new ad unit. "The conversations that used to be started by mass media have now become mass media. The conversation is the thing itself of advertising. Social content is the most powerful because (a) research shows messages from peers are more impactful than messages directly from brands, and (b) sharing increases reach while decreasing cost-per-impression. All this means every serious advertiser must rethink their strategy from top to bottom."

Social is now advertising. Social is also earned media. Owned media is sometimes an ad when it's native. Then again, it can also turn into earned. You get the picture.

Amidst all this, brand marketers are struggling to maintain an "always on," iterative approach to media. Moving away from top-down, campaign thinking in favor of an integrated approach that (a) iterates constantly, (b) leverages technology effectively, (c) operates at scale and (d) tells such a great story it competes effectively against all the other choices your

audience has before them.

David Germano, vice president of Empower MediaMarketing's content marketing practice, Magnetic Content Studios, and former general manager of ManoftheHouse.com (a joint venture between BBDO's Proximity and Proctor & Gamble) puts it this way: "Technology allows consumers to control the 'what, when and how' of media, and so brands have to create content consumers want. It puts brands in the position of having to create brand-agnostic stories. The question today is not, 'Is the media paid, earned or owned?' The question is, 'Should I buy the media, or create it?' And many marketers aren't comfortable with that yet."

The converged media imperative.

Why not comfortable? Well first because it's proven to be hellishly hard. It's uncomfortable because it requires a new way of working, new team members, new areas of expertise, new technology and new strategy. And all of it at prairie-dog speed.

Explains Germano, "Brands are being asked to embrace convergence, to be more fluid, more 24-7. Marketers are told to create multiple assets, publish in real time and iterate constantly. This is absolutely challenging most marketing organizations."

But for brands and agencies alike, an integrated media strategy—regardless of paid, earned or owned—is a brand imperative. Explains

Lieb, "As consumers we know we are on this dynamic journey. The world is a virtual Times Square of brand impressions. But if there's not congruence between paid, earned and owned media, the brand experience will be fragmented. That means you have to get all these disparate digital players around the table and talking the same language—because consumers are not differentiating between all the different channels."

To set out, brands must reach a better understanding of what converged media is and what it means for their marketing strategy. And they must ensure their organizational structure supports rather than

Marketers struggle to make sense of all the choices in front of them. Agencies need to be in a position of helping their clients choose which paths to take, and figuring out which technologies or strategies will be most appropriate to invest in.

Craig Waller,
President, PACE

hinders a converged media approach. Marketers must stop letting "paid, earned and owned" define the conversation, and instead focus on understanding where their customers are and what they prefer. Explains Cheyfitz, "When there were four channels, opening a meeting by summarizing your channel strategy made sense. When you have 40,000 channels, it makes no sense. While you're talking about it, more channels will be invented. The real questions are, 'Where will I find my audience? Who do I want to talk to? And what are their media habits?'"

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LET'S AGREE TO DISAGREE

Are you cookie or are you crème? **Oreo** is asking its fans to choose a side.

Oreo launched its cookie vs. crème campaign with the "Whisper Fight" Super Bowl XLVII ad in February. Now the campaign lives on through digital content.

Always wanted to know what Aunt Gretchen would look like if she were made out of Oreo cookies? Now you can. On **Instagram**, Oreo has been posting images of people, animals and objects sculpted from its product. Fans submit photos by using either #cookiethis or #cremethis, and Oreo selects images to recreate.

And the days of separating cookie from crème by hand could be behind us because Oreo has "contracted the world's best roboticists, artists and tinkerers to create machines that will do the work for us." Those efforts are documented in a series of online videos. In one, a "physicist and copywriter" from Portland showcases the "Oreo Separator Machine"—a device to that scrapes the crème off his favorite part, the cookie. In another video, a pair of toy scientists from Minnesota demonstrates a machine that makes use of both parts of the Oreo.

DRESSED UP AND READY TO PUBLISH

With a wealth of digital content, online luxury fashion retailer **Net-A-Porter** has long blurred the line between editorial and e-commerce. Taking it a step further, Net-A-Porter has launched a weekly digital magazine, **The Edit**.

The Edit doesn't look much different from *Vogue* or *Harper's Bazaar*—not surprising, the former editor in chief of British Harper's Bazaar tops *The Edit's* masthead. From fashion photo shoots to interviews with fashion icons to beauty product reviews, the magazine allows readers to shop directly from its pages.

PRETTY PLEASE?

ACUVUE understands the importance of capturing first-time contact wearers, and so gives teenagers tools to beg more effectively. The company (owned by **Johnson & Johnson**) offers a dozen funny postcards so users can tell their parents on Facebook, "I want contacts!"

FACE WHACKED. SPECS CRACKED.

PEOPLE NEED TO SEE ME SMEYES.

CONTENT TO GRAZE ON

Launched in January in the United States, London-based **Graze** delivers portion-controlled, healthy snacks by mail. Each Graze box comes with a booklet that provides bite-size content in addition to the nutrition label. The colorful booklets are reminiscent of small 'zines, with content ranging from nutrition tips to a food-themed word search to an introduction to the Graze School of Farming charity. Every snack box is customized based on the recipient's preferences, and the booklets include a personalized "hello" and invite codes.

SWEET TURN FOR ICY CRITICS

When a food company receives complaints about a product, the normal response is to send free coupons or the like to assuage customers. **Ben & Jerry's** went a step further. The ice cream company invited its disgruntled customers in the New England area to Vermont to tour the storied ice cream plant. "It's like a Willy Wonka-type journey into a factory and I've got a golden ticket," said one guest. That small event garnered media attention and a flood of social media chatter about the iconic brand. Ever consider calling a press event to highlight and address complaints? We didn't think so.

A MOBILE APP IMPROVES IN-STORE EXPERIENCE

We've all heard about the troubling trend for retailers: Consumers who browse brick-and-mortar store offerings, only to buy the product online from the lowest-price merchant.

Lately retail brands are designing sophisticated apps to improve the in-store experience. While some apps resemble a mobile self-help kiosk (e.g. **Target**) others are builåding in some pretty neat features. **Home Depot's** app helps customers find what they're looking for in-store, tracks orders, organizes projects and shopping lists, and even includes a caliper, digital tape measure and instructional videos for in-store decision-making. For high-volume customers—think D.I.Y. heavyweights and contractors—the app is a welcome virtual assistant.
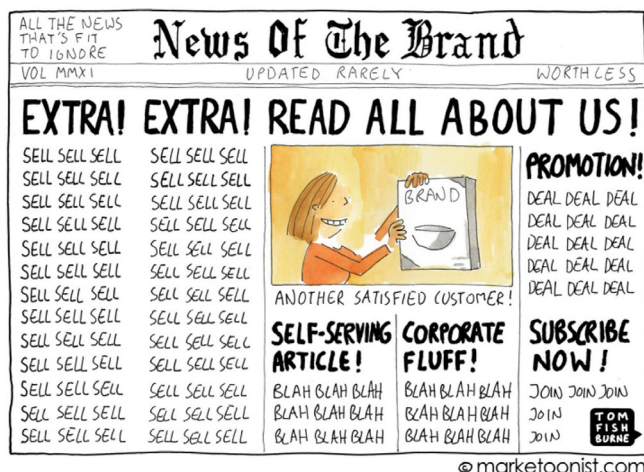
DEPARTMENT EDITOR
Natalya Minkovsky (@hejhejnatalya) is a writer and content strategist who lives and works in the Washington, DC, metro area. She spends a lot of time thinking about grammar, plain language, open source technology, taxonomy and user-experience design.

Publishing is a Privilege

By Tom Fishburne

© marketoonist.com

Nowadays any brand can become a publisher, but we sometimes forget to treat publishing as a privilege. Just because we have a soapbox doesn't mean there will be an audience to listen to us.

Marketers are traditionally trained to repeat our single-minded proposition until consumers buy whatever it is that we're marketing. In an effort to get our features and benefits across, we often lose sight of what's actually valuable to our audience. Great content marketing turns a mirror on the audience.

That's why earlier this year we created a cartoon series for Intuit focused on the world of professional tax preparers. Rather than simply illustrate the features and benefits of QuickBooks, we designed the series to commiserate with tax season headaches. One cartoon called "How To Tell It's April 15th" showed an error

> **Great content marketing turns a mirror on the audience.**

display of the office printer: "Toner Life End, You're All Out, And The Stores Are Closed. Bwah Ha Ha Ha Ha."

We took this series a step further and invited tax preparers to share some of their tax preparation horror stories. The winning story was memorialized in a cartoon, showing a 5-year old pushing the off button on the computer to get her dad's attention, losing all of his tax preparation work. The winner received a framed print of this cartoon capturing the story and recognition from fellow tax preparers who shared the series because it reflected their world.

The cartoon series struck a chord because it wasn't overtly

about QuickBooks. It was about the audience of professional tax preparers.

As software developer Kathy Sierra says, "It does not matter how awesome your product is or your presentation or your post. Your awesome thing matters ONLY to the extent that it serves the user's ability to be a little more awesome."

Start-up fashion brand Betabrand built its company on the premise of making its audience awesome with content marketing. Betabrand describes its brand as "1 percent fashion, 99 percent fiction." Every article of clothing comes with talking points to make the wearer more awesome. For Thanksgiving, Betabrand introduced Gluttony Pants, with extra buttons to create more space in the waist over the course of a Thanksgiving meal. The pants come with their own napkin.

To channel the awesomeness of its audience, Betabrand redesigned its website around its audience of "Model Citizens." They invited customers to send pictures of themselves doing something awesome with their clothes. Every entry received a special link of themselves as if they were the star of the Betabrand website. Betabrand evolved so that the website was no longer about the products; it was about its "Model Citizens."

Betabrand knew it wasn't enough to sell pants made of disco-ball material. It needed someone from the audience to be so inspired that he would sky dive into Burning Man wearing those pants, and then share the awesomeness with the world from the Model Citizen website.

In content marketing, we need to focus less on how awesome we are and more on making our customers more awesome. We need to treat publishing as a privilege.

Tom Fishburne is Marketoonist and founder of Marketoon Studios, a cartoon studio that helps businesses like Kronos, Baynote, Motista and the *Wall Street Journal* reach their audiences with cartoons. Follow his cartoons at his Marketoonist blog or on Twitter @tomfishburne.

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