

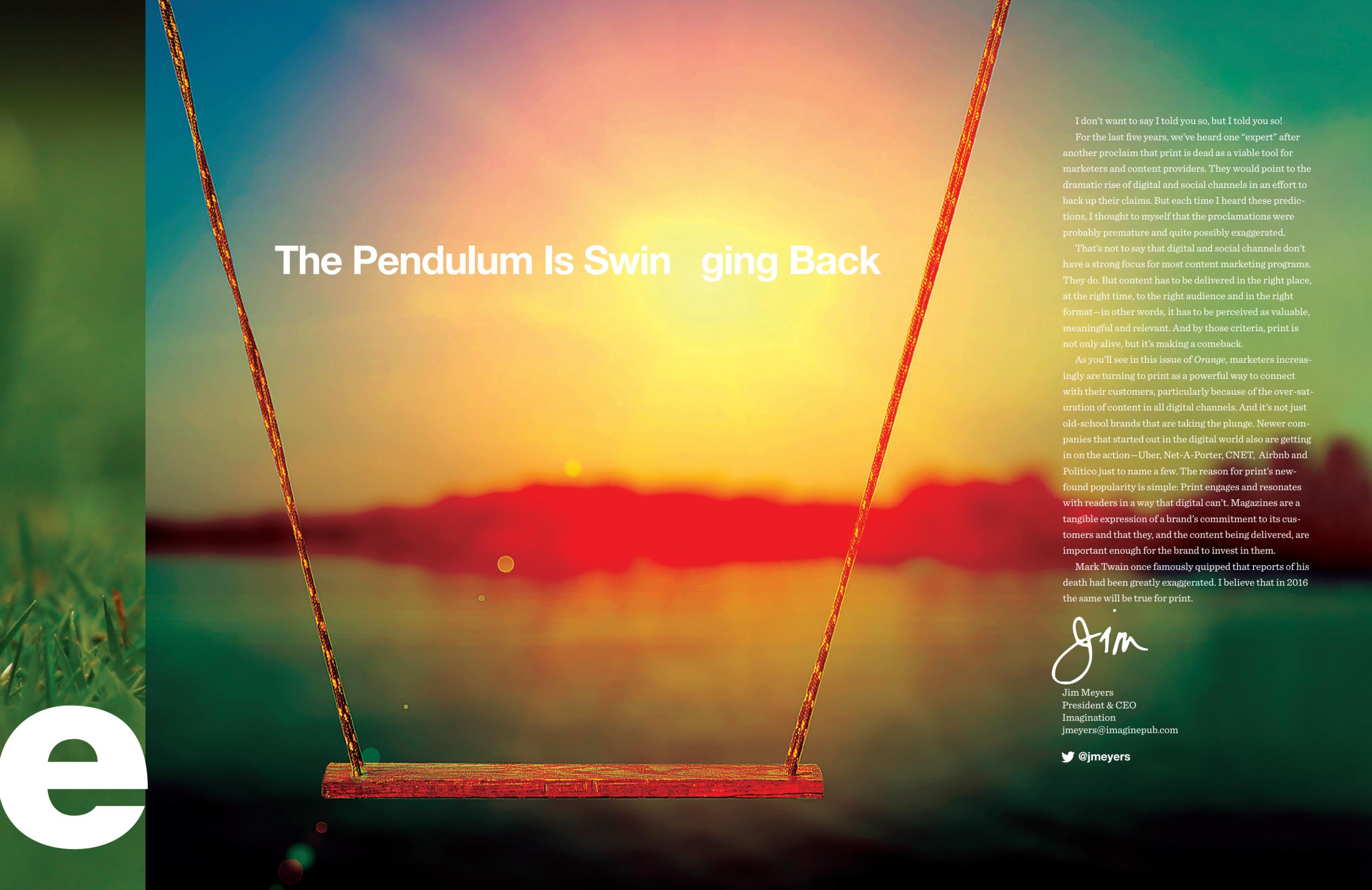


orange

Issue Ten

STRATEGY • CREATIVITY • MARKETING

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The Pendulum Is Swinging Back

I don't want to say I told you so, but I told you so!

For the last five years, we've heard one "expert" after another proclaim that print is dead as a viable tool for marketers and content providers. They would point to the dramatic rise of digital and social channels in an effort to back up their claims. But each time I heard these predictions, I thought to myself that the proclamations were probably premature and quite possibly exaggerated.

That's not to say that digital and social channels don't have a strong focus for most content marketing programs. They do. But content has to be delivered in the right place, at the right time, to the right audience and in the right format—in other words, it has to be perceived as valuable, meaningful and relevant. And by those criteria, print is not only alive, but it's making a comeback.

As you'll see in this issue of *Orange*, marketers increasingly are turning to print as a powerful way to connect with their customers, particularly because of the over-saturation of content in all digital channels. And it's not just old-school brands that are taking the plunge. Newer companies that started out in the digital world also are getting in on the action—Uber, Net-A-Porter, CNET, Airbnb and Politico just to name a few. The reason for print's newfound popularity is simple: Print engages and resonates with readers in a way that digital can't. Magazines are a tangible expression of a brand's commitment to its customers and that they, and the content being delivered, are important enough for the brand to invest in them.

Mark Twain once famously quipped that reports of his death had been greatly exaggerated. I believe that in 2016 the same will be true for print.

Jim

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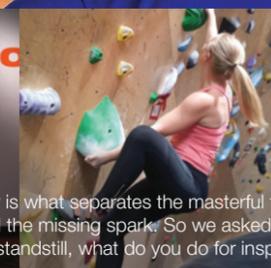
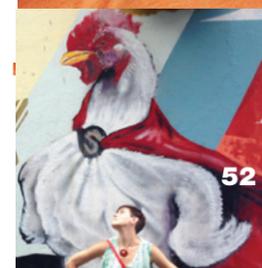
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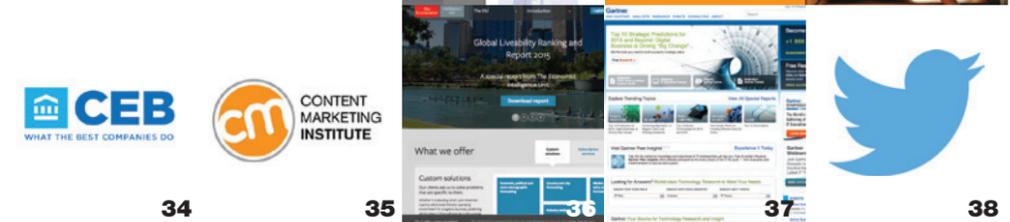


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Everyone knows that creativity is what separates the masterful from the mediocre. But sometimes it's hard to find the missing spark. So we asked Imagineers: When you find yourself at a creative standstill, what do you do for inspiration?

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

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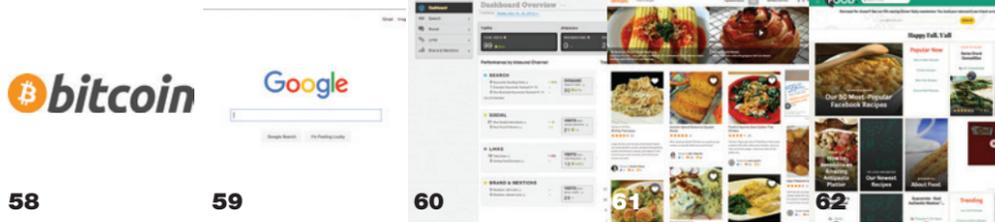
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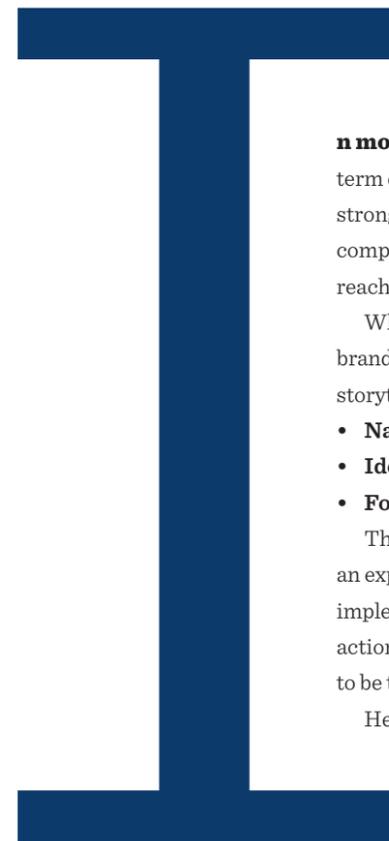
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Differentiate Your Brand Through Storytelling

Five steps to a content marketing program that shines a bright light on your brand.

BY VICKY OYOMBA



In more commoditized markets, sometimes a solid foundation built upon long-term excellence and innovation; a well-designed, responsive Web presence; and a strong brand identity just aren't enough. You need to boost differentiation from your competitors, drive internal buy-in and keep your current audience engaged while reaching new ones.

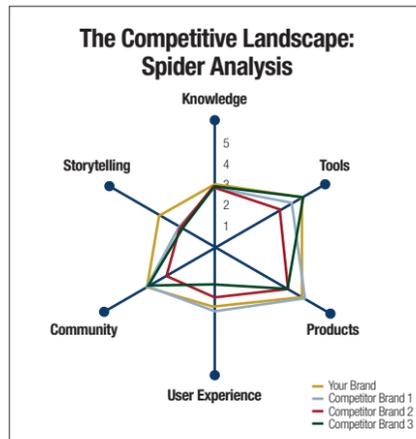
Whether you're a financial services brand, a retail brand or a manufacturing brand, one way to stand apart from the crowd is a content marketing program with storytelling at the helm. That approach will help you:

- **Navigate challenges as your brand grows and evolves**
- **Identify opportunities, goals and objectives**
- **Foster a more meaningful connection with your core audience**

This isn't as simple as it may sound. You might want to think about working with an experienced content marketing partner that can provide a solid strategic vision, implement the program flawlessly and with creativity, and provide meaningful, actionable insights into which elements are working best and which ones might need to be tweaked.

Here are five steps to consider as you begin your content marketing journey.





STEP 1: ASSESS THE SITUATION

Start by taking a step back and looking within to identify your strengths and evaluate your weaknesses. In particular, look for areas where you can distinguish yourself from your competition. For example, your competitors might be equally successful at:

- **Creating a strong user experience**
- **Engaging with online communities**
- **Providing tools for customers**
- **Marketing products**
- **Providing subject-matter knowledge and expertise**

However, you might realize your biggest advantage—and your greatest opportunity—lies in storytelling. From there, you can begin putting the pieces together for a multiphase roadmap that will help light a clear path toward your goals and objectives.

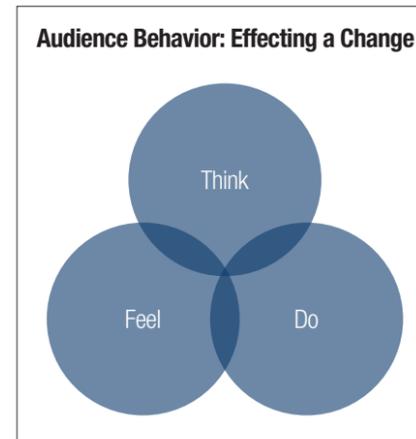


STEP 2: DEFINE YOUR TONE

You control the reins on the relationship between your content marketing program and your audience. Set audience expectations early on, so they know what to expect from your brand.

You'll want to create positive and engaging narratives that not only support your brand but also provide value to your audience so they'll come back for more.

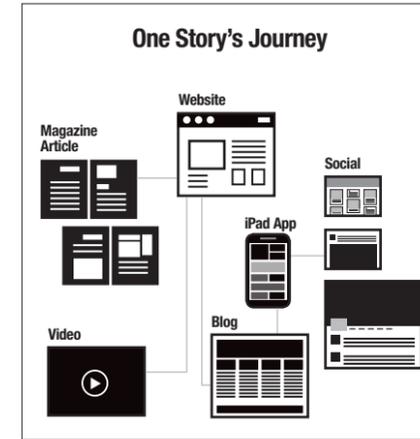
Shift the focus away from B2C and B2B constructs that can breed an unnatural language. After all, your audience members are people. Instead, think about storytelling that harnesses the power of human-to-human connection.



STEP 3: SHIFT THE FOCUS FROM "WHAT" TO "WHY"

Most brands focus on the "what" because it's easy—what you want your audience to buy, what you want your audience to do. But people do business with brands they can relate to and trust. So your content needs to focus on communicating the "why"—the reason customers should pick your company and not your competitors.

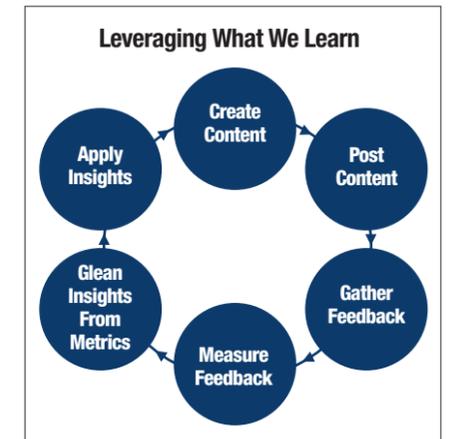
If you want to differentiate your brand from the pack, think about the key elements that drive everything you do. How can you use these elements to forge a bond between your audience and your brand? How can your stories shift how your audience responds to you? How can they change not only how people think about your brand, but also how they feel and what they do?



STEP 4: GO WHERE YOUR AUDIENCE IS

Your content marketing efforts have to remain relevant—striking the right balance between being informed by the past, reflecting the present and keeping a close eye on the future.

How can you create a multichannel and multimedia brand experience that allows you to talk to your audience, where they are and when they're there? With a solid understanding of your core audience and an agile approach to content creation, you can strategically align your content with differing audience preferences across channels. That will ensure that your content goes the extra mile and works harder for you.



STEP 5: STAY VIGILANT

Once you've established a robust content ecosystem, you need to continue to feed and nurture it by keeping an eye on key performance indicators (KPIs).

- **How do you measure success at each touch point given the actions you want your audience to take at each stage of the customer journey?**
- **How do those success measures ladder up to larger goals and business objectives?**
- **In a digital world where everything is always in a state of flux, how does what works and what doesn't evolve over time?**

With metrics and analysis that provide a clear vision of how multiple KPIs contribute to a larger return on investment, you'll be able to strategically optimize your content marketing program in real time. ■

Vicky Oyomba is a senior strategy director, social media at Imagination.



What's Your Experience Level?

Use content to create amazing customer experiences and improve brand perceptions.

BY JULIE ORTEGA

The words “experiential marketing” often bring to mind flashy campaigns like Coca-Cola’s Happiness Machines and Red Bull’s flying competitions. And while those are exciting, you don’t need a ton of fanfare to leave an impression. Customer experiences happen every time someone interacts with your brand, which includes your content.

Some companies underestimate the connection between customer experience and content, discounting content as simply a way to communicate information about products or services. But content is an important part of customer experience—and sometimes the first interaction a person has with your brand—so it needs to be good.



Anna Dziubinska

You have the opportunity to be creative and think of clever ways to deliver the same message on various channels or to multiple audiences.

Be Consistent

“Make sure the brand is part of the story,” says Jonah Berger, marketing professor at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania and best-selling author of *Contagious: Why Things Catch On*. “Too often companies create great content, but it has nothing to do with them or what they offer. Make sure people can’t forget who the content is from.”

Delivering a positive experience, and ultimately building a positive brand perception, through content starts with setting a goal that strategically aligns with your brand. No matter how much personality you bring to your content, it means nothing if that personality doesn’t gel with your overall message or culture.

“I think marketers can go astray and incur real risk if they are so catering to the customer that they lose sight of their brand,” says Lisa Macpherson, former chief marketing officer at Hallmark. “I’m thinking of that Twitter account called ‘Brands Saying Bae.’ It’s all about people calling out examples of a brand using voice

or language that, in its attempt to cater to millennials, loses sight of who the brand is.”

Next, define the experience you want customers to have and why you want them to have it. Do you want people to read a story and learn something? Interact with a quiz and have fun? Watch a video and get emotional? And what do you want them to do after the experience?

Keep your goals top-of-mind when creating content across all channels so that customers get a consistent experience no matter what medium or line of business they’re interacting with. Content can be anything from blog posts to videos to social media posts—and it’s probably going to be a mix. That means you have the opportunity to be creative and think of clever ways to deliver the same message in various channels or to multiple audiences.

Ensuring that everyone has the same experience, no matter where they encounter your brand, will help solidify the perception you’re trying to form and go beyond brand awareness to brand recognition.

Consistency becomes even more important if you look at sales. According to research from Accenture, 80 percent of high-growth companies provide a consistent customer experience across all channels, compared to only 59 percent of low-growth companies.

Think Like a Customer

Before creating new content, think about who will be consuming it. Content is not one-size-fits-all, and to reach your goals, you need to tailor it to your audience (or to each of your audiences, if you have multiple).

“Not tailoring content is a great way to get people to ignore it,” Berger says. “Just like television shows cater to an audience, good content should do the same. Think about your audience, their wants and needs, and build content that speaks to that.”

Fortunately, as a marketer, you have access to in-depth consumer data that you can use to get to know your customers and strategically tailor your content. “One of the greatest, most exciting things about the availability of such rich data about consumers is the ability to tailor your message,” Macpherson says. “It’s hugely powerful.”

Here are some of the content variables to consider when you think about audience:

1) Consumption: Put your content where your customers will find it. Does your target demographic prefer to watch videos, look at infographics or read articles? Do they like to get information online or in print?

2) Buyer Journey: Determine at what point during the sales cycle your content can do the most good for your customers, whether that’s during the research process, the decision-making phase or at some other key point. To drive a positive experience, your content needs to be useful.

3) Message: Knowing the context of your buyer will help ensure that the message you send fits with both their needs and their interests.

Tell a Story They Want to Hear

Storytelling is paramount in content marketing, particularly if you’re seeking to drive the customer experience. But we’re not talking about your company’s history or the story of your product’s development. In fact, customers are more likely to embrace your content if you leave your product out of it.

Instead, focus on people and tell a story that captures consumers’ emotions. Marriott’s #LoveTravels campaign is a great example. #LoveTravels has its own microsite, lovetravelswithme.com, that tells the stories of people or



Financial Firms’ Sweet Spot: Experience

Strong client relationships are built on non-product touch points.

BY CHRIS MATT

Have you ever stopped by a local lemonade stand? Every summer, dotted among the garage sales and block parties, kids are offering a welcome respite from the heat and humidity—at an old-school price loose change alone can cover.

Sure, certain stands pour a colder cup. Others sweeter. Still, perhaps the best part of the experience, and the most memorable, is talking with the kids about the time spent on their “store.” It’s how excited they are to tell you how they made their product with their sister, mom or dad. It’s the story behind the stand. That’s content in its simplest form.

What can financial services marketers learn from our youngest entrepreneurs? Simply, focus on the experience, not the product.

Twice annually, the CEB Consumer Financial Monitor measures worldwide consumer sentiment related to all things financial services. In January 2015, the firm found something noteworthy about high-net-worth clients. These individuals had “robust satisfaction” with financial products and were comfortable with their financial situations. However, financial firms received little credit. Distrust led to dissatisfaction.

“Too many companies believe they can rely on their portfolio of products and episodic touches with their clients to maintain relationships. We’ve learned that’s insufficient to win,” says Peter Aykens, managing director at CEB, in an article on the CEB Co Investor Relations website. “Rather, financial institutions must move beyond the rhetoric of advice to actually delivering it. They need to offer high-net-worth clients an advisory experience that demonstrates ongoing value and care in order to capture the full value of relationships at this level.”

The key phrase there: an advisory experience that demonstrates ongoing value and care. Take advantage of every opportunity to have a conversation without a product mention. No pricing comparisons. No sales pitch. Content can help. Content grounded in client needs, pain points and lessons learned.

Remember, it’s not the lemonade. It’s the story behind the stand.

Chris Matt is vice president of client strategy at Imagination. For more content marketing best practices for the financial services industry, visit imaginepub.com/financial-services.

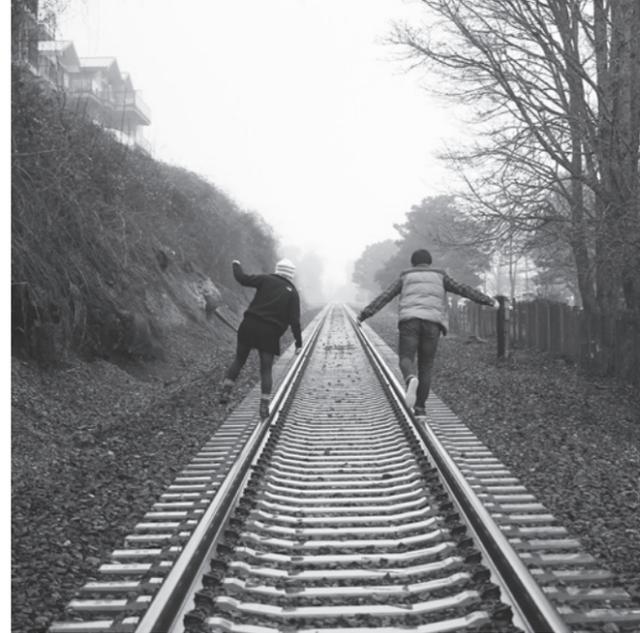
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“One of the greatest, most exciting things about the availability of such rich data about consumers is the ability to tailor your message.”

“How will this product or service make my life better?”
“How will it simplify my life?” and
“How will it allow me to participate in one of my passions?”



Jonathan Pendleton

The ROI of Customer Experience—Is That a Thing?

Measuring experience isn't just a numbers game.

BY KEON CUMMINGS

Every minute, Facebook users share nearly 2.5 million pieces of content, Twitter users tweet nearly 300,000 times and Instagram users post nearly 220,000 photos. Every share, tweet and post means something ... right?

There's an increasing demand for metrics and ROI about everything, including customer experience. But despite all of the data we can access, and there's a ton, getting a true read on how well your customer experience strategy is working isn't easy.

Measuring the experience users have with your content requires combining sentiment and engagement to determine proof of impact. An article about small business banking that was shared 100 times on Facebook shows proof of engagement, but it's only successful if you're able to clearly measure the impact of your message.

Perhaps the easiest way to measure whether or not your content resonated is to dig through comments for indications of the sentiment created. And although it's less fun to read negative comments, they're just as important as the positive ones. In order to distribute quality content, you need to know what doesn't work to focus on what does.

The key, however, is that as we start to focus on measuring experience over clicks, we need to create metrics that measure the impact of connections that we make, not just their numbers.

Keon Cummings is a Web and social media analyst at Imagination.

couples and how they travel with love and passion.

By focusing on real travel stories, Marriott stays true to its brand without shoving the fact that it's a hotel chain down our throats. There's only one call-to-action (a “book now” button), and it's separated from the stories. Marriott trusts that it doesn't need to push you toward a purchase, because the experience you'll have on lovetravelwithme.com will stick with you. It can stand on its own.

Berger explains the effect of storytelling similarly: “Content can act as a Trojan horse. It lets customers experience the brand without seeming like it's marketing. It's whispering the brand rather than yelling.”

Be Trustworthy and Relevant

Another key part of fostering a positive customer experience is having your content be trustworthy and genuine. The first step toward building trust is to craft content with a voice that sounds like a person talking rather than a company talking. More than that, the person should clearly fit within the company's message and culture. For instance: Is your brand casual? Formal? Authoritative? The personal voice should be too.

And don't forget that a conversation is a two-way street. Rather than talk at consumers, your content should act as a conversation—and that conversation has to add value to their experience.

Berger stresses that the top two ways branded content can hurt the customer experience are by being inauthentic and by focusing too much on the company and not on the audience.

“Content messages today must offer genuine value to their recipient as part of the experience,” Macpherson says, adding that the content should answer consumer questions such as “How will this product or service make my life better?” “How will it simplify my life?” and “How will it allow me to participate in one of my passions?”

So, what are some ways to be trustworthy and relevant? Demand Gen Report's 2014 B2B Buyer Behavior Survey shows that buyers respond well to brand-agnostic educational content, such as white papers and infographics. This type of content demonstrates that you put consumers' needs ahead of your product. Buyers in the survey also said quality is much more important than quantity.

But What If We're B2B?

Creating content and an experience for a business audience versus a consumer one requires a different approach, right? Wrong. Even when your content is

Skyler Smith



Kevin Curtis

#NewFeatures! #BigSale! #WhoCares?

Stop selling on social and start conversations to create superfans.

BY JORDAN BERGER

People crave personal connections—and the intimacy of social media is an ideal platform to turn them from consumers to brand advocates. It seems obvious, but many brands still head to social platforms touting product features and benefits and then don't understand why their efforts aren't going viral.

Spoiler alert: A sales-focused approach to social media ends with boring content, a disengaged audience and wasted money. If instead you build a social strategy that fosters connection and positive experiences, you can engage followers, boost their love for your brand—and increase sales.

Let's get to the root of why real people, not followers, buy things. The decision-making process is 70 percent emotional and 30 percent rational, according to Brand Keys' 2013 Customer Loyalty Engagement Index. So, what does that mean for social? People are not on social media looking for product information. For most people, social is an emotional experience, not a rational one. So posts that feel like ads disconnect people from your brand. On the other hand, content that provides emotional value and sparks conversation strengthens the bond.

What is a true story about your brand? How does whatever product, experience or service you are selling add real value to people's lives? Answer these questions and you'll be able to build a social strategy that does more than create customers, it will engage and inspire real people to connect.

Jordan Berger is an editor at Imagination.

aimed at another business, a person at that business interacts with it, and a person ultimately makes the buying decision.

Rather than thinking in terms of B2B and B2C, think in terms of human-to-human (or H2H, if you will). No matter whom you're targeting, it's stories that speak to people, not data or product information. This tenet doesn't change based on your identification as a B2B or a B2C organization.

"[Whether your content is B2B or B2C], a lot of the principles remain the same," Macpherson says. "Be true to your brand. Be of value to the recipient."

Mix Mediums for Success

Creating a positive customer experience doesn't depend on using one content medium over another. You have the potential to succeed using videos, infographics, social campaigns or other media. When you know how your consumers interact with content, the message is what matters, not the medium.

Each piece of content does not live in a vacuum, and you should think of every article, video or social media post as just one piece of your content puzzle, all of which combine to form the customer experience. As you craft your content, keep in mind what the customer will be seeing along the experiential journey to make sure everything works in concert.

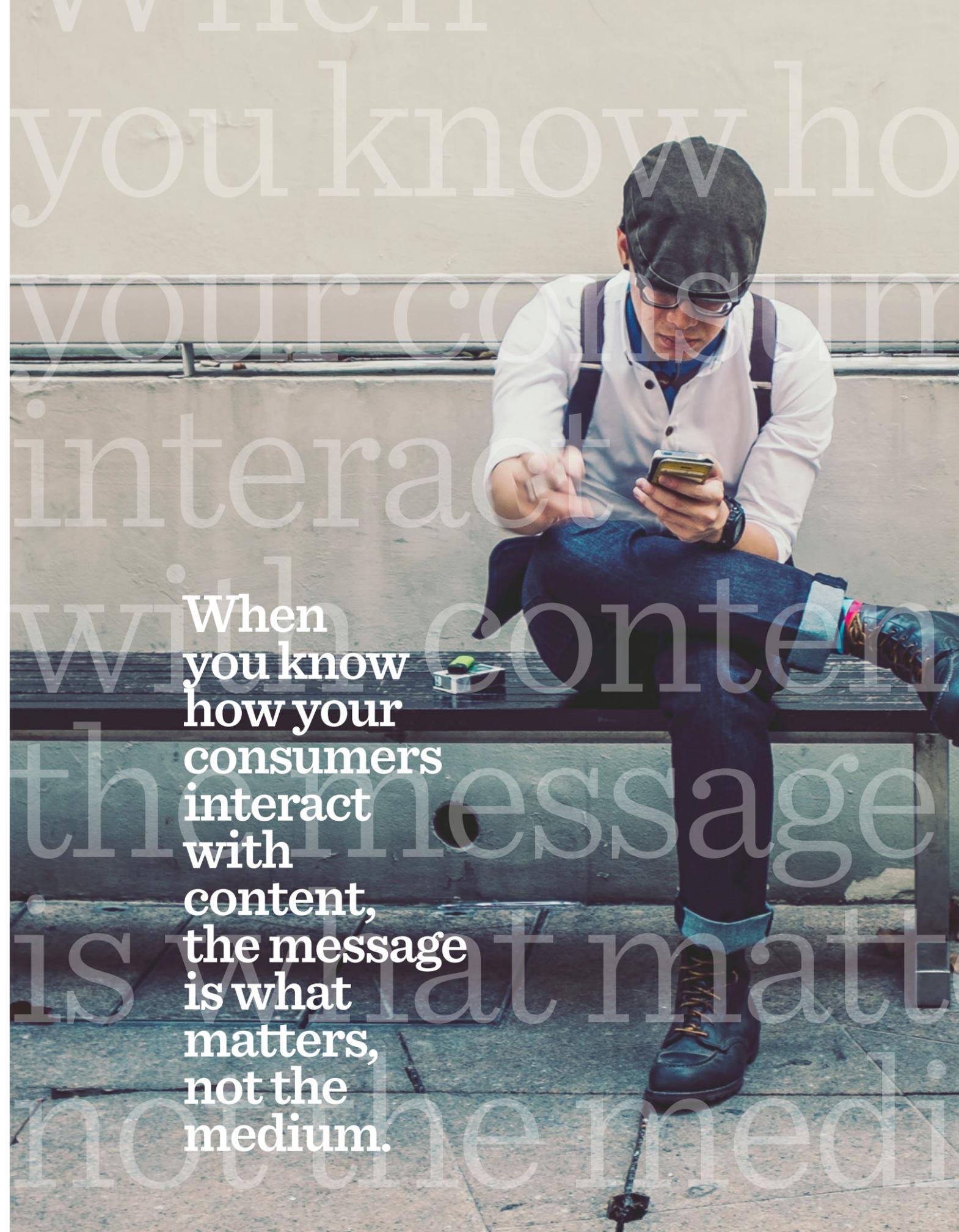
"I think the challenge and the opportunity for marketers is to use a portfolio of channels each in their unique way and for the best reason, but still have them ladder up and aggregate to an organizing brand message and purpose," Macpherson says. "Each piece may do that a little bit differently, but at the end of the day, they still have to add up to something the consumer can understand."

Although all of your content strategy is happening behind the scenes, your customers are paying attention to the results. Demand Gen Report's 2014 B2B Buyer Behavior Survey shows that buyers notice how well your content blends. Sixty-one percent of respondents said that compared to other vendors, the vendor they chose delivered a better mix of content appropriate for each stage of the buying process.

Ultimately, brand perception is all about customer experience. And while you can't control every aspect of that experience, you can control the content you produce. By sticking to on-brand goals to create people-centric stories with a consistent message, you can make sure your content helps drive a standout customer experience. ■

Julie Ortega is an editor at Imagination.

RC Cipriano



When you know how your consumers interact with content, the message is what matters, not the medium.

In a world seemingly fascinated by clickbait and obsessed with data-driven metrics, marketers are rediscovering that print delivers undeniable value.

BY KELLY CALDWELL

PRINT

POWER





Turns out all the talk about print being an obsolete medium that would soon have no place on the spectrum of marketing tactics was just that—talk.

Marketers across multiple industries have placed a huge vote of confidence in print by launching new magazines during the past two years. This year alone we've seen the launch of *PORTER*, Net-A-Porter's fashion magazine that competes in quality against the likes of *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*; *Momentum*, Uber's B2B publication for drivers; and *Oak Street*, a photo-driven style magazine from menswear brand Frank & Oak.

"We couldn't ignore a medium that was still important," Tess Macleod-Smith, vice president of publishing and media at Net-A-Porter Group, told CNN Money. "Women who love fashion, who spend money on fashion, cited print as being the key influencer in purchasing decisions."

And therein lies perhaps the biggest reason for the resurgence of print: It resonates with readers. Magazines are tangible signs that publishers think their audiences and the content being delivered to them are important and worthy of the investment needed to create a publication.



"EVERYBODY IN THE INDUSTRY IS TALKING ABOUT HOW THE PENDULUM IS NOW SWINGING BACK."

Content With Staying Power

Some see the growth in print's popularity as a response to the trend toward shorter, more clickable types of content, commonly referred to as clickbait. This type of content, while entertaining, can have a temporary, even flimsy feel

to it. That's the exact opposite of the experience World Wildlife Fund (WWF), a nonprofit environmental advocacy organization, wanted to create when it launched *World Wildlife*, its quarterly publication.

Alongside clickbait "there's this concurrent trend toward deeper, longer journalism and reporting, and WWF didn't have an outlet for that," says Alex MacLennan, editorial director at WWF. He says *World Wildlife* was created, in part, to provide just such an outlet so the organization could address complex, difficult and sometimes confusing subjects.

"We wanted the magazine to feel permanent and real," MacLennan says. "We wanted it to be beautiful enough and iconic enough that hopefully our readers have it on their bookshelves, and after each issue, they start to assemble a mosaic of incredible textures and colors. It's not disposable."

This notion of "disposable" content comes up frequently in the conversation about print.

"If you are disposable, you have no role in print," proclaims Samir Husni, University of Mississippi professor and director of the journalism school's Magazine Innovation Center.

When Husni says "disposable," he's referring to a certain flimsiness of branded communication that is anchored less in journalism and value to readers and tied more to marketers' insistence that there be a product connection or a clickable call-to-action at the beginning, middle and end of every article.

"It's not only me," says Husni, who is often referred to as "Mr. Magazine." "Everybody in the industry is talking about how the pendulum is now swinging back. All you have to do is look at every major media company in this country and see how they are returning to print and adding that collectability factor to print."

Husni's research shows 81 magazines launched in July 2015, compared with 77 magazines launched during the same month the previous year. Of the titles launched in July 2015, 11 were promised frequency publications—meaning that they weren't one-offs. The remaining 70 were special issues that occupied numerous publishing realms, from content marketing to trade magazines to special editions of commercial publications.

"Of course, no one is talking about 'print is dead' anymore. We've buried that guy who was called Print is Dead; he is now six feet under," Husni says. Today, he explains, the conversation revolves around the necessity and power of print to differentiate in a digital age.

The Measurement Problem

That's not to say print doesn't have its challenges, particularly as data and metrics play an increasingly important role in marketers' decision making. Accenture's 2014 CMO Insights Survey indicates that 42 percent of CMOs believe analytics will become a core competence of marketing in the next five years.

With digital there are tangible measurements such as click-through rates, page views, leads and



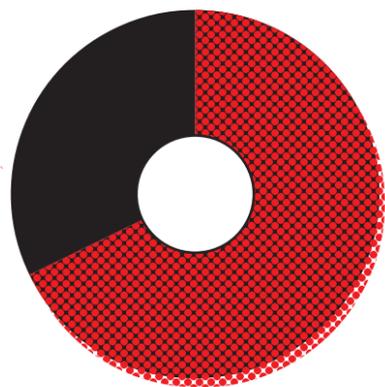
Husni on the Future of Print

"We wanted to know whether 'Mr. Magazine' thought print would continue to be a valuable marketing medium in the years ahead.

"Only two people can tell you the future: God and a fool," says Samir Husni, University of Mississippi professor and director of the journalism school's Magazine Innovation Center. "I know for sure I'm not God, so this may come from the fool. Anything is possible. But I cannot imagine that as long as we have human beings, we are not going to have print."

"Demonstrate value" is the mantra for all chief marketing officers regardless of which channels they use. Given the cost of print—nearly 43 percent of respondents cited high print and mailing costs as the reason they weren't using publications—the challenge going forward will be to quantify its value both to readers and to the brands behind the publications. BY CARLY HURWITZ AND MADISON BROEKER

Who is using print?



67.9%

of respondents use print publications in their marketing efforts

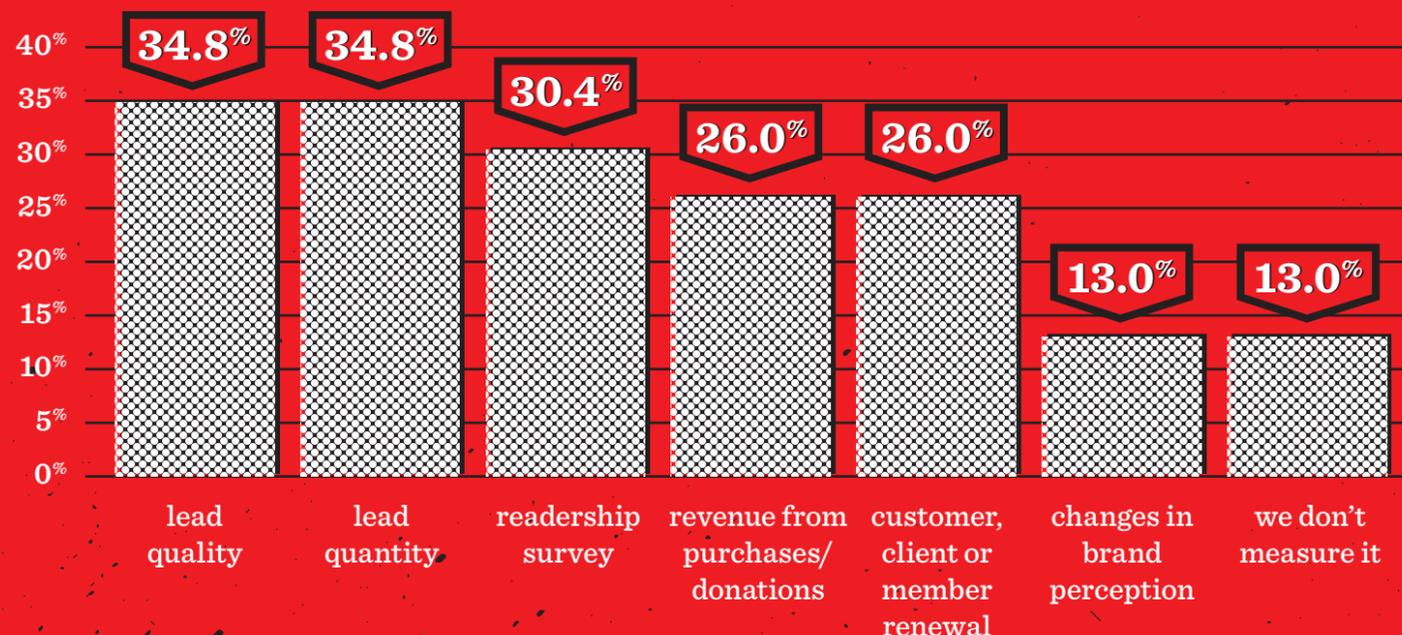
There were **190 new publications** launched in 2014, according to MediaFinder.com. A standout from the group was Airbnb's *Pineapple* magazine. It's a successful mix of storytelling and brilliant design that aligns with Airbnb's brand identity.

What is your stated objective for your print publication?



"For long-form content, print is a superior method of engagement," says Andrew Schultz, chief operating officer at Imagination, who has more than 33 years of experience in publishing including print, digital and custom content. **"Print can be an effective medium in the media mix based on its tangibility and long shelf life in support of an integrated marketing effort."**

How are you measuring progress toward those objectives?



The survey found quantity and quality of leads were key metrics for more than a third of marketers using print publications, followed closely by readership surveys. Readership surveys in particular provide an opportunity to dig deep into how readers feel about specific editorial topics, how they use the publication, with whom they share print content, how long they retain it, and what actions they took as a result of reading it.

What will next year's print budget look like?



More than three-fourths of the respondents were at least somewhat satisfied with the results they see from their print publications, but marketers are going to want quantifiable results before committing more money to print.

*28 marketers were surveyed during a weeklong window

conversions. With the last two in particular, it's fairly easy for marketers to be able to calculate their return on investment (ROI). Although print has some quantifiable benchmarks such as ad sales and subscriptions, other means of measuring a publication's success like readership surveys are more nebulous than some marketers might prefer.

Husni, however, is skeptical of putting too much stock in quantifiable metrics.

"There's this myth that we can measure digital ROI, but guess what? I have a DVR. I don't see a single ad on television now. I have Adblocks on my browser and don't see ads" in digital content, he says. "If I buy a print magazine, I know that the advertising in the printed product is part of the experience. It's not separate. It's not intrusive."

So what's the ROI of print? It's a fair question, and one that marketers struggle to answer. The 2015 B2B Content Marketing Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends—North America report, from the Content Marketing Institute, in collaboration with MarketingProfs and the Business Marketing Association, showed that only 21 percent of marketers say they're successful at tracking their content's ROI—and that's across the board, not just print.

For some marketers, the answer to the ROI question isn't framed in terms of dollars and cents—at least not directly. Instead, they look for measures of a growing relationship with their audiences.

Print is Premium

Beyond serving as a vehicle for serious storytelling, MacLennan sees *World Wildlife* as a more effective way to reach the right readers.

"We want to be able to talk to our audience and get them more involved with us and more engaged in our work," he says. "And we didn't want to leave it up to people to turn on their computers or tablets and navigate their browsers to us."

"IF I BUY A PRINT MAGAZINE, I KNOW THAT THE ADVERTISING IN THE PRINTED PRODUCT IS PART OF THE EXPERIENCE. IT'S NOT SEPARATE. IT'S NOT INTRUSIVE."



iStock



HOW WWF MEASURES PRINT'S VALUE

When the World Wildlife Fund team launched *World Wildlife*, they knew two things for certain: They were taking a collective leap of faith by shifting their resources into a print magazine and they would need to demonstrate the magazine's value.

"We made a very counterintuitive decision by diving into print in 2013," says Alex MacLennan, editorial director. "WWF is very metrics-focused. There's always a clear set of deliverables to be tracked against. But we didn't do that right away [on this magazine]."

So WWF created its budgets for the magazine based on projected costs set against projected donations or new members, but didn't set specific targets that would risk setting the magazine up for failure and distracting from its real purpose.

"A time will come for those targets," MacLennan says. "We wanted a real baseline, because we didn't have a model to follow. Nature Conservancy's magazine goes out to 650,000 people and has very clear targets, but it needs to deliver in a different way than ours does. Ours is quarterly and has a smaller distribution."

So WWF gave the magazine two years. "We were looking at: Are we getting inquiries or donations from donors who saw a story on a topic and want to know more? Do our board members love it? Are heads of international groups saying, 'I didn't know you worked with people in agriculture so much—here are some ideas'?"

And so far, they are.

"It's been really heartening. We're at two years and now we need to decide whether or not we want to attach those [target] metrics. So far it's been much more qualitative," he says.

—Kelly Caldwell

We needed to be able to send it to them, to take it a step further with this beautiful, immersive experience that arrives at your home, which you can engage with at your leisure and come back to."

World Wildlife is a "stewardship, engagement and education magazine," MacLennan says. "Eighty percent of the magazine is the most engaging story about nature and the world that you can create, and 20 percent is about how WWF and our partners are making it better. We think that balance gives us more credibility and frees us up to tell better stories."

World Wildlife also provides value to other parts of the WWF organization. A large portion of *World Wildlife's* budget is spent on photography "that we would own and which we could manage for our own goals," MacLennan says. The photography from the magazine is used enterprise-wide, and is becoming a hallmark of the brand. Similarly, the content is used by WWF's Web team to create social media posts, as well as by the program staff, who repurpose it to help create brochures on topics like how fishing communities can, and should not, use mosquito nets.

"It's a channel of assets that are print and digital," MacLennan says. "The biggest mark of success for us is that it's not just a magazine. It's a tool that's allowing us to tell better stories in every way, for the benefit of the organization."

So it's no longer a question of print vs. digital, but how best to provide content in a manner that creates demonstrable value for both the audience and the brand. And for a growing number of marketers, the answer is print. ■

Kelly Caldwell is an editor at Imagination.

Are Your Member Magazines Stuck in a Rut? New approaches can breathe fresh life into a tired print program.

BY JAIME ANDRIOPOULOS

Publications have always been an integral part of associations' member benefits arsenals. But how do you move beyond the tried-and-true monthly magazine model and continue to provide value to members? Here's how two associations did just that:

1) Tell the stories behind your research numbers.

Every association does research and presents it in the same old way—boring! The National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation (NRAEF) built a narrative around their workforce survey through the creation of a special report magazine. They complemented that report with a series of infographics, content hub, and paid media campaign that altogether gave life and color to data that proved restaurants are an industry of opportunity.

2) Provide smart solutions and actionable advice with a resource guide.

To increase member acquisition/retention and reduce annual costs, the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB) replaced their monthly magazine with the Small Business Playbook, a 48-page annual resource guide for small business owners. This more evergreen guide covers everything from the association's political victories and advocacy efforts to practical advice for small business owners—all in a digestible, visually appealing format.

Jaime Andriopoulos is a senior strategy director at Imagination. For more content marketing insights for associations and nonprofits, go to imaginepub.com/associations-and-nonprofits.

**GET
SMALL
WITH
BIG
DATA**

**By understanding
the nuances of
audience segments,
B2B marketers can
target content more
effectively.**

BY MARGARET POE
AND ASHLEY GREENE

On the Web, space is cheap and information is free, which means buyers are more informed than ever before, and sales teams are effectively dethroned as the sole keepers of product and service information. B2B decision-makers watch videos and read articles, product reviews, case studies and customer testimonials before ever contacting a salesperson. In fact, The Corporate Executive Board Company estimates the average B2B buyer is almost 60 percent through the sales journey before reaching out to a potential supplier.

Your biggest opportunity to get in front of buyers then is during the research process through relevant, stimulating content that answers critical questions. According to the Content Marketing Institute (CMI), nearly nine in 10 B2B marketers use content marketing. But only 38 percent believe they use it effectively. This disconnect is likely a result of marketers not knowing their audience or not defining their content marketing goals.

Content marketing has the ability to position your brand as a thought leader that understands the complex challenges of businesses, as well as the *solution* to these challenges. Content marketing can be one of your sharpest tools in the lead gen shed. So, to the more than three-fifths of marketers who aren't confident in their content, the question is: What are you waiting for? The key to effective content is closer than you think. Enter big data.

The term gets thrown around a lot, and with good reason: When used properly, it can provide incredible insights into customers' and prospects' identities, challenges, priorities, budgets and more, ultimately

allowing you to segment your audiences, develop personas and target content effectively.

Marketers are tapping into data more than ever. According to The Economist Intelligence Unit, nearly one-third of CMOs and senior marketing executives say they're looking for talent in data analysis, while nearly half of marketing decision-makers who say they already use data effectively want to hire even more data specialists. And Gartner predicts that by 2017, the CMO is expected to spend more on IT than the CIO.

While a team of data analysts and a robust software suite will get you far, they aren't necessary to start creating and distributing content more effectively. The best thing about big data is that you already have a lot of it. And it's easy to use, if you start small.

Are You Speaking Their Language?

Data has particularly big implications for today's hyper-segmented marketplace. For example, marketers at enterprise companies (those with 1,000+ employees) target an average of six audiences, each with unique content needs, according to the CMI. And that's just the average—as a B2B marketer you may target multiple industries, from B2Bs and B2Cs to nonprofits. And within each vertical, you may be trying to reach a hierarchy of readers, from the C-suite to end users.

A one-size-fits-all approach to content is only going to lead to a waste of time and resources. You need a clear picture of who each of these content consumers is and what is going to grab his or her attention. And there's no better way to do that than by mining all the relevant information you can get your hands on.

Let's say you're a global B2B that sells hardware and software to organizations across a range of industries, and you're embarking on a fresh content marketing strategy. Before you create a single piece of content, your first step is gaining as much information as possible about your customers and high-value prospects in order to develop personas. Third-party research on the industries you target can tell you the pain points, goals, expectations and concerns of many of your audience segments. Mastering the nuances of each

**NEARLY NINE IN 10
B2B MARKETERS
USE CONTENT
MARKETING. BUT
ONLY 38 PERCENT
BELIEVE THEY USE IT
EFFECTIVELY.**

lets you develop personas with unique priorities. This granular level of information will empower you to tell emotive, relevant stories through your content, which is hard to come by in the B2B world.

Once you have enough information to shape your personas, more third-party research or a survey of your customers can help you understand each audience segment's content preferences, from the content types (text, infographics, videos, podcasts and more) to the topics they want information on. Do middle managers want long-form text or videos? Do end users want tactical advice or industry news and trends? With this information, you can create a content roadmap that's backed by data and drives results with each segment.

Keeping Your Eye on the Prize

When you know who your audience is and what they want, you need to define your goals. If it's lead generation, set up benchmarks that bring you closer to your goal, like social engagement, email sign-ups, marketing-qualified leads and, eventually, conversions.

As you create and distribute content, keep asking yourself: What is working and why? And more important,

GET PERSONAL

SO YOU WANNA BUILD A B2B CONTENT MARKETING PROGRAM? START BY GETTING UP CLOSE WITH YOUR AUDIENCE. BY CECILIA WONG

Compared to the warm, fuzzy, emotionally charged world of B2C, B2B gets a rep for being cold and faceless. There are no buying decisions made without months of careful research, spreadsheets of budget calculation and demonstrable ROI.

But the truth is, behind every business decision is a person. And if you're looking to join the 86 percent of B2B marketers who already use content marketing to help educate prospects on their brand or solutions, this insight serves as the strongest undercurrent to any new program. For a content program to yield real business value, you have to start by figuring out what makes your audience tick.

So what audience insights matter, and what exactly do you do with them? Start with data that helps you build three primary personas. Three is a magic number because it's big enough to cover your bases from the perspective of business needs but still manageable when it comes to developing and tracking content. Then divide these personas by their proximity to the decision-making process:

- **Decision-makers** who make the final buying decision
- **Advisers** to the decision-makers, tasked with researching information and making recommendations
- **Implementation agents**, the on-the-ground workforce that executes on a company's strategy

Next, mine data that sheds light on their professional motivators. For example, say you're an industrial electric power tools company trying to reach a vice president (i.e., an adviser) at a construction company. If that adviser's motivator is finding insights into peer behavior to make strong recommendations to her CEO, pertinent data from your company would be year-over-year growth of top-selling products to identify growing trends.

Finally, round out your personas with data on content consumption preferences. Among the most helpful data you can gather: how much information is consumed via desktop devices versus mobile, what times these personas ingest content (i.e., during commute, work hours, evenings or weekends), and how they get information (i.e., articles, blog posts, videos, newsletters, social media, etc.).

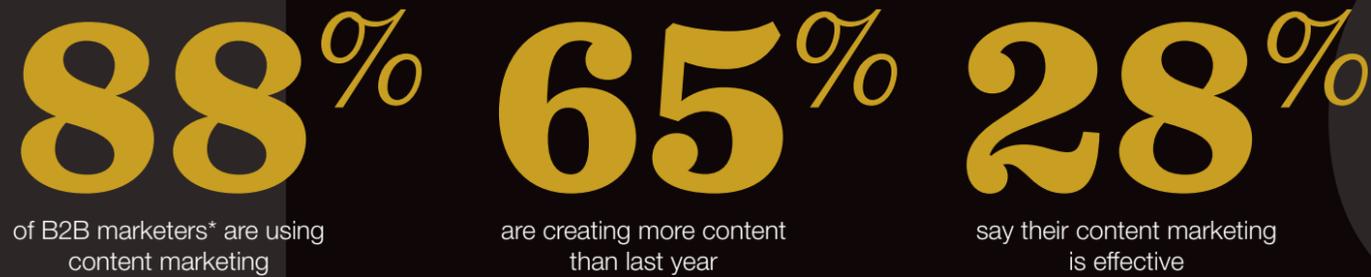
Knowing who you're targeting and what they care about allows you to build a content marketing program that satisfies their needs, elevates your credibility as a reliable source of information and, ultimately, develops a relationship built on trust.

Cecilia Wong is a senior strategy director at Imagination. For insights on B2B content marketing best practices, go to imaginepub.com/B2B.

MARKETING'S BIG INVESTMENT IN BIG DATA

B2B marketers are tapping into transformative tools to better target their customers Infographic By Nick O'Mara

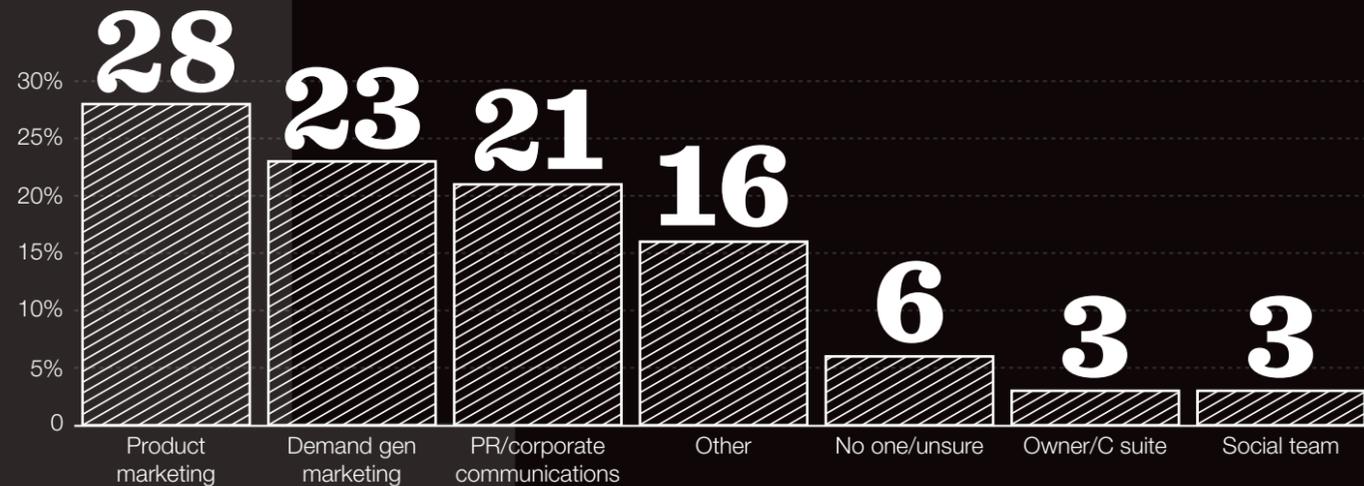
CALLING ALL CONTENT



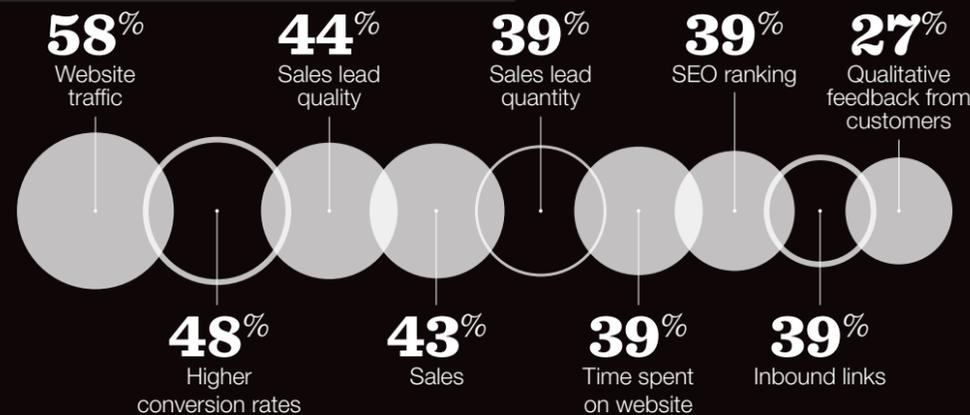
*North American B2B marketers whose companies have at least 1,000 employees

Who's in Charge?

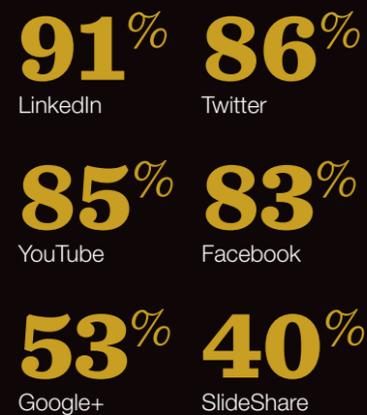
Department held accountable for content marketing:



Top Metrics for Success:



Most-used Platforms



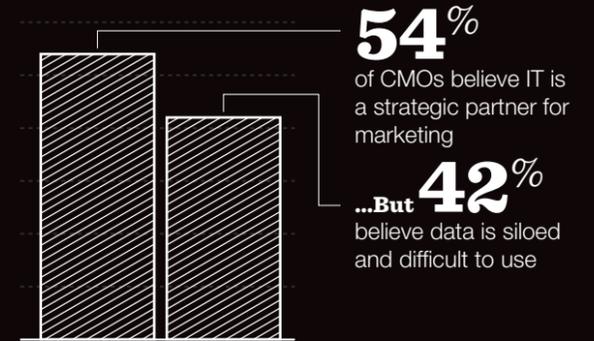
BIG DATA, BIG BUY-IN

\$41.5 billion

Value of global big data technology and services market by 2018

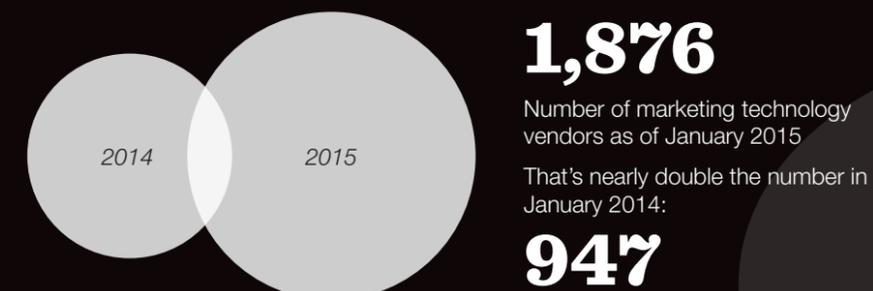
And it's prompting a sea of change in marketing:

By 2017, the CMO will spend more on IT than the CIO



BIG DATA TOOLBOX

Marketing automation is still relatively new, but it's going through a major growth spurt.



Nearly **11X** more B2B organizations were using marketing automation in 2014 than 2011

\$22.6 billion

Global spend on marketing software in 2015

\$32.3 billion

Global spend by 2018

Top Tools

What marketing automation tools are B2B companies using?



Sources: Content Marketing Institute, International Data Corporation, Gartner, Accenture, ChiefMartec.com, Captterra



A ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL APPROACH TO CONTENT IS ONLY GOING TO LEAD TO A WASTE OF TIME AND RESOURCES.

what is bringing me closer to achieving my goal? Fold that knowledge into future content development.

Let's take a look at what that looks like when you dig into three major sources of content marketing data.

Your website: This may seem like an obvious place to start, but according to the CMI, only a little more than half of marketers use overall website traffic to measure content marketing success, and just 39 percent review time spent on site.

Low- or no-cost tools can give you incredible insights beyond high-level traffic indicators. Learn specifics on who is visiting—from their geographic location to the specific online campaign or referring site that brought them to your site. You can pair that information with visitor engagement metrics to ultimately make highly informed decisions, whether it's the placement of a specific content piece on a page or the word choice in your call-to-action buttons.

Your social channels: Social media use in B2B marketing is soaring. The CMI reports 94 percent of B2B marketers use LinkedIn to distribute content, 88 percent use Twitter and 84 percent use Facebook, all increases from last year. With numbers that high, competition on social is fierce. Whatever you put out there has to stand out from the noise of every other post, tweet and share.

Joel Harrison, editor in chief of *B2B Marketing*, explains that one way to master content marketing via social is to ensure marketers aren't the only ones putting out content; businesses need to leverage the power of their internal experts.

"If it's just the marketing team using [social media], then it'll never achieve its true potential," Harrison says. "It has to be permeated across the whole organization."

How Content Fits Into the Sales Cycle

Inspired by an example in *The Big Data-Driven Business*, by Russell Glass and Sean Callahan, we take a look at content's role throughout the sales cycle.

seconds:

Time you have to capture a website visitor's attention before he/she leaves your site

- **How do you keep them?** Write headlines and decks they just have to click
- **Content?** Trends, big-picture industry issues, product-agnostic

minutes:

Time to read a 400-word blog post or watch a short video

- **How do you keep them?** Create engaging posts or videos
- **Content?** Insights, slightly more tactical approach to industry challenges, mostly product-agnostic

minutes:

Time to read a longer article or watch a more in-depth video

- **How do you keep them?** Provide deeper insights about their industry
- **Content?** Tactical approach to industry challenges, occasionally mentioning product

minutes:

Time to read a white paper

- **How do you keep them?** Provide a roadmap for how to solve a problem
- **Content?** Case studies and solutions explaining how the product solves industry challenges

Your business leaders need a voice and something to say. And using data, you can help them shape both. Again, start small: Look for trends in the structure of posts that generate buzz, keep an eye on hashtag performance and note which calls to action actually drive action.

Cross-department collaboration: Sean Callahan, senior manager of content marketing at LinkedIn and co-author of *The Big Data-Driven Business*, says marketing can look beyond the walls of its own department to find data that informs its content.

Traditionally, sales and account teams control customer relationship management (CRM) technology, a gold mine of information on purchase history and interactions with the business. When marketing automation and CRM are linked, both departments benefit. For content marketers, specifically, knowing the conversations your business is having with customers and prospects tells you what questions they want answered and much more.

Take it a step further and use the data from your accounts receivable department to better sculpt your personas. By pairing that information with how your audience segments react to your content, you can see where you're succeeding, as well as unveil new opportunities to provide prospects with information they're not getting anywhere else.

Callahan admits syncing information from multiple departments is no easy task. Particularly in larger organizations where data lives in silos, a demonstration of the ROI derived from intra-department data sharing—that is, creating content that drives sales—is a necessary step to gaining buy-in.

Put It to the Test

Starting small and digging deeply, whether on your website, social channels or internal platforms, can lead to vast amounts of information on your audience segments, but you can't stop there. Putting that knowledge into action requires testing. There's a place for creative intuition à la Don Draper, but in today's metrics-driven environment, your intuition has to make room for cold, hard facts.

Testing lets you craft and share the most effective message possible. You may prefer one headline to another, but does it drive more engagement? You may test two headlines—or 50—to see which brings you closer to accomplishing your goal. Which call to action in your LinkedIn posts draws the most traffic to your site, and eventually to email newsletter sign-ups? Which draws the least? When you've established what aspects of your content and its presentation drive the best results, you can ensure you're catching the right person's attention, every time. ■

Margaret Poe is an associate editor at Imagination. Ashley Greene is an editor at Imagination.



Class Is Now in Session

Students of content marketing can gain valuable insights that will ensure their efforts make the grade.

BY ANDREW SCHULTZ



When it comes to content, there are four types of marketers: those who ignore it, those who use it merely for promotional purposes, those who run their content programs internally and those who use an outside partner. There are lessons to be learned from each of these approaches.

We can dispense with the ignorant fairly quickly. These businesspeople are completely disconnected from the benefits of content marketing and the direction of their peers. A recent report based on research by IBM and the CMO Club found marketers expect to increase their budgets during the next three years, with content grabbing the lion's share at 13 percent. Ignorance may be bliss, but it could also shorten careers.

And while the other three approaches all may be in sync with marketing trends, they represent very different paths and each is worthy of further study.

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Content as Commodity

Marketers who use content as promotion are the most infuriating. They have a rudimentary idea that content has some intrinsic value, but to them content is generic and disconnected from brand strategy. They're looking to minimize their expenses. They buy licensed and syndicated content by the pound just so they can load a bunch of stuff on their sites. Cross another item off the to-do list.

Unfortunately, the deployment of commoditized content highlights the fact that the Internet is designed not to pay attention to the use of such material. The Internet rewards originality and uniqueness, not repetition. That's why an entire profession exists for search engine optimization and another, equipped with wholly new technologies, exists to provide measurement, strategy and analytics on the effectiveness of content in driving traffic and generating response. The less original, fresh material you have on your website, the more likely you'll be unsuccessful in achieving your objectives because of the rules of engagement. Search algorithms are biased toward what's new so it'll be that much harder for people to find your content.

Beyond search and measurability gaps, there's also a reputation impact. Customers know when they're being served up pabulum and patter and they head for the exits—a phenomenon that's also measurable. If you offer a cheap experience, you're actually hurting your relationship with your customers.

Lesson learned: Content marketing can be a source of competitive advantage. If you've got the good stuff—fresh content that your customers deem valuable—you're more likely to increase your share of attention and, ultimately, your share of the market, leaving the cheapskates to scratch their collective heads in confusion.



The DIYers

Let us now turn our attention to those marketers who prefer internal teams to implement their content programs. These professionals have the theology right and understand that surrounding a relationship with inherently useful information, not sales pitches, can prove beneficial. There are notable examples: Red Bull, Coca-Cola and American Express. These and other brands provide a rich array of valuable content, all of it sponsored by the brand but not starring it.

In this model, successful brands bring talent in-house and integrate content into the marketing mix, following the laws of journalism and publishing. For efficiency's sake, some brands may look to outsource at least some of the content generation function and with good reason. Hiring a full team of in-house talent to execute content marketing is not usually a core competency of most firms. And it can be expensive.

Still, a do-it-yourself approach can and does work, and some argue that a brand should want to oversee its own content marketing program to the fullest extent possible. And, in an ideal world, this makes sense. But there are risks and they can be grouped into three categories: the Journalism Problem, the Context Enigma and the Commitment Challenge.

The Journalism Problem: This concerns whether the governance of the content marketing program will be in the hands of professionals operating on the principle that what they produce must be inherently about and for the audience and not exclusively about and for the benefit of the brand. Even if they don't mean to, some brands continually risk devolving into sales promotion rather than disseminating content that people will value. Without a journalistic sensibility in control of the content program, the temptation to talk about me the brand instead of about you the audience is great. Or to put it more bluntly, senior management struggles with understanding why they should invest in marketing that does not directly tout the brand while also having an immediate impact on the bottom line.

The Context Enigma: One arguably could solve the Journalism Problem by hiring professional journalists, inside or out, and letting them do their thing. But this exposes the company to the Context Enigma. Who in the organization is guiding the content creation process to ensure that what is being created is in alignment, in context, with the overall brand strategy? What about sparking the essential emotional connections, the storytelling quality you require for your audience? Content without a link to context is like furniture with no house to put it in. The people with journalistic sensibilities in-house must be empowered to the nuanced task of linking to the commerce imperatives of the brand through juxtaposition rather than advertising and promotion. And without this governance, a firm again risks buying stuff by the pound.

The Commitment Challenge: This occurs when the brand knows it doesn't have all the resources or the journalistic ability to create an effective, ongoing content program. They go to the marketplace for help, but the way they do it highlights the risk of investing in content creation as a half-measure. What are they really buying? Even if the content is good, is it consistently good? Are you able to get that consistency from one source and from lots of contributors? Does it come optimized for search? Perhaps most important, is it in alignment with the tone, voice and personality of your brand? To answer these questions requires somebody to invest considerable time and energy, but who in your organization has time to play the role of editor-in-chief, curating and validating all that content?

Those questions all deal with content creation. A final question relates to the commitment of a brand to find someone, either internally or externally, to manage the measurement and distribution of the content.

Lesson learned: Many brands simply don't have the resources to make the necessary investment for a successful content program. Without the needed skills and expertise to edit, curate, refine and manage content, the content program will be suboptimal at best and at worst a waste of time and money.

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The Bespoke Agency

Content marketing is challenging and complex and, for many brands, something that should not be attempted alone. For the same reason companies engage outside agencies for public relations, advertising, strategy and other consulting engagements, organizations look to agencies for content marketing help.

Content marketing sprung from the seeds of what was once a sizable and flourishing custom publishing industry, nurtured in the crucible of technological change and the advent of social media. It was the publishers who got there first, bringing with them their journalistic chops, their understanding of the needs and interests of readers and their knowledge and depth of resources required to execute and deliver content programs.

The pop-up and startup firms that build apps or specialize in analytics or workflow systems all came after. If the primary focus of your business model is technology or a market transaction, then you're not putting the interests of the audience first.

Content marketing agencies do put audiences first—that's their reason for being. Engaging professional content marketers may be the best practice because it covers every critical element of the process. That means the highest quality content with the most measurable, ongoing impact.

Brands engaging agencies also have control over how much time and energy to expend in the process, from complete delegation to close collaboration. Over time, the line between brand and agency blurs, even disappears. The firms find they are sitting together, side-by-side, working to solve the challenges of satisfying customer needs.

Lesson learned: A content marketing agency gives brands the comprehensive skills and expertise needed to implement a successful content program without having to sacrifice brand context, cede control or dilute internal resources.

The Future

Knowledge and technology disrupt markets. Publishers used to control the distribution of knowledge through books and magazines; now the Internet provides access to information and the ability to post content without regard to what some professional editor and publisher may arbitrate. Banks and governments used to control money, but now there is Bitcoin. Broadcasters, the film industry and the music business have been forced to adapt to new technologies and cede control of access to their creations to consumers who demand them anytime, anywhere and often for free.

Content marketing also is a disruptive force. It breaks the old pattern of media as a marketing tool, used to send select messages to mass audiences. Now brands must provide audiences information of value in order to secure a relationship. It's the price of admission. Brands must earn and sustain trust by being about something other than their features and benefits. They have to exist in a context. Content provides context.

But, even in disrupted markets, quality and service not only still matter, they are the coin of the realm. Consider how Netflix and HBO garner subscribers, success and profit with a relentless focus on creativity and customer experience. Licensors, syndicators and packagers of content seek to be the new market makers, but they cannot provide the level of quality, service and value of the dedicated expert. They can provide convenience and perhaps a lower price, but at the impact of a diminution of the very thing content marketing is supposed to provide—long-term, measurable and deep relationships with customers. ■

Andrew Schultz is chief operating officer at Imagination.

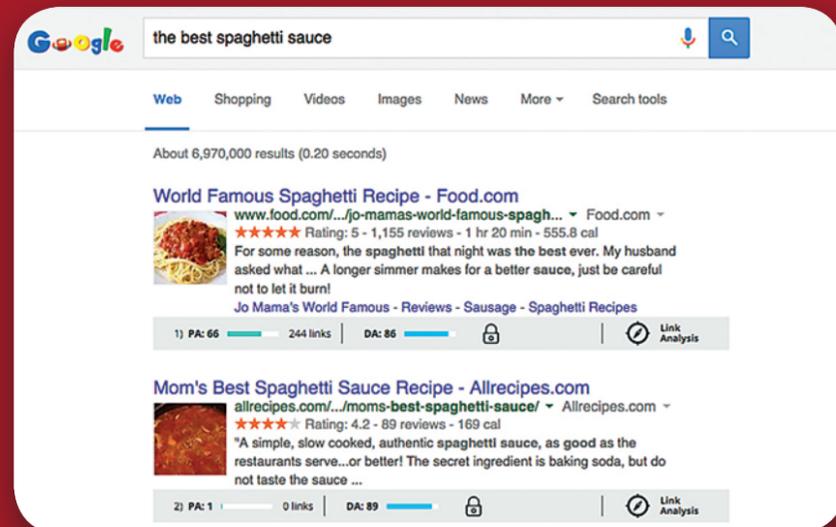


**WHAT'S IN A NAME?
SOMETIMES, NOT AS
MUCH AS YOU'D THINK.**

STRENGTHENING DOMAIN AUTHORITY
IS THE FIRST STEP TOWARD IMPROVING
YOUR SEARCH RESULTS.

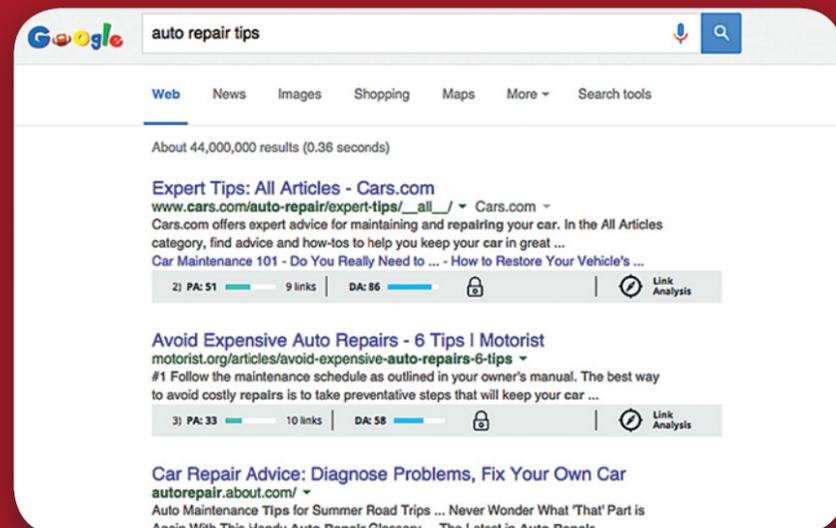
BY RYAN JOHNSON

Figure 1



All of the top results have very high domain authority. However, domain authority does not solely determine order.

Figure 2



It's possible for a Web page with a lower domain authority to be listed above higher-ranked sites if it is a perfect match for a search term.

Imagine a major American brand. Not just a large company, but a brand everyone in the country would recognize. Now imagine that company failing to rank on the first page of Google search results for most of its major services.

Sound unlikely? It's actually a true story, and it happens more often than you'd think. This company was getting trounced in Google rankings by brands that were performing behind it in the marketplace.

The reason is that Google doesn't care how well you do "out there"—how many service calls you make or how many widgets you sell. Google cares only about domain authority.

What Is Domain Authority?

Domain authority is a score every website has been assigned that reflects the site's level of trustworthiness, with a maximum score of 100. This score was formulated by inbound marketing and analytics firm Moz and is the closest approximation you will get to how your website is judged by Google's secret algorithm.

A lot of factors go into domain authority, including the quality and number of links back to your website, quality of your website (including load times and technical problems), proper search engine optimization (SEO), freshness of content and how people interact with your site (items like clicks, time on site and bounce rate).

How Does Domain Authority Affect Rankings?

When you do a search, Google uses a combination of keyword optimization and domain authority in an attempt to offer you the best results for your page. When two websites compete head-to-head for the same search keyword, the one with higher domain authority

will typically show up higher on a search engine results page (SERP).

Figure 1 shows search results for "the best spaghetti sauce":

You'll notice a couple of things:

1) All of the top results have very high domain authority. It is going to be hard for most upstart websites to compete with juggernauts like Food.com and Allrecipes.com.

2) Domain authority does not solely determine order. If domain authority were the only factor in rankings, every search would be dominated by sites with domain authority scores of 100, like Pinterest, YouTube and Wikipedia. Google also tries to take searcher intent into account. In this case, Google is assuming I am searching for the best spaghetti sauce recipe and has arranged the top three results accordingly.

Exceptions to the Rule

It's possible for a Web page with a lower domain authority to be listed above higher-ranked sites if it is a perfect match for a search term. In Figure 2, you'll see that a website with a moderate domain authority of 58 was among the top results on page one of search results by virtue of exact keyword matches of "auto," "repair" and "tips" in the page title.

Local search also throws some rules of domain authority out the window. If I search for "auto repair tips," the standard rules apply because Google assumes I am looking for any website that offers advice to help me fix my own car. Therefore, results will be ordered by domain authority tinted by keyword relevance.

But when I change the search to "auto repair," Google now assumes I want to find someone to fix my car (Figure 3). Location now takes precedence over domain author-

Domain authority is a score every website has been assigned that reflects the site's level of trustworthiness, with a maximum score of 100.

Improving domain authority is perhaps the hardest part of SEO because there are so many factors that make up the score.

ity, and the results displayed favor websites that have been optimized for my location. The SERP starts with the Google pack, which showcases local options. The best way to get your business into this pack is to optimize your website for your location, create a Google+ local business page and add local schema markups to your site.

That is not to say, however, that local search excludes domain authority entirely. Yelp will appear on page one for virtually every local search because it not only has high domain authority, but it is also a good source of information on virtually every type of local business you might need.

Knowing Your Domain Authority

As important as your website's score is, you would think Google would want you to be able to know it easily. However, it keeps that information close to the vest. Therefore, Moz has made a plugin—the MozBar—for Chrome and Firefox browsers that allows you to see the domain authority (again, an approximation of Google's rankings) for any website.

You can see this in action in the accompanying images to this piece. The MozBar not only shows the domain authority for each website in your search results, it also shows you the authority of the actual page that is showing up in search results and the number of links coming back to the page and website.

Improving Your Domain Authority

Improving domain authority is perhaps the hardest part of SEO because there are so many factors that make up the score. That said, there are steps you can take to maximize your shot at improved domain authority:

1) Have good content. The most important factor

of all. Google likes websites that are providing fresh and engaging content. Once you get people to your site, make sure they like what they see.

2) Fix any errors on your site. Get rid of duplicate meta content, fix server errors and upgrade slow-loading pages.

3) Get links back to your site. Think about how much time you spend on a piece of content. You should spend an equal amount of time thinking about ways to distribute that content. Seek out links from websites with higher domain authority than yours. A link from a higher authority site is equivalent to that site vouching for your site and sharing some of its authority with you. Also, use social media to get your content in front of the right audiences.

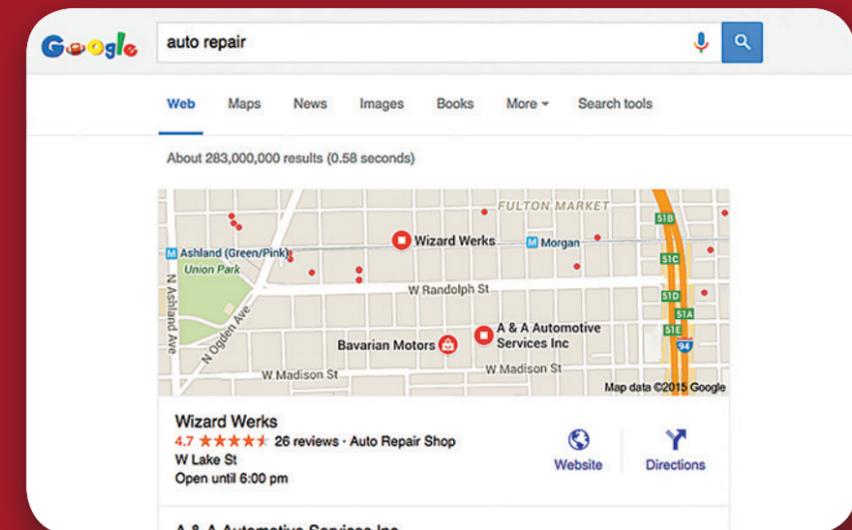
4) Optimize your content for search. Do research and find keywords that will help bring visits to your website. The more people who discover your content, the better your chances of gaining links and improving your authority.

5) Improve engagement. When people come to your website from search and then leave right away, this tells Google that your site is not an authoritative source of information. Pay attention to engagement analytics like time on site, bounce rate and pages per visit. Add links to other content pages on your site, add more videos and images, and improve the readability of your content to improve these engagement stats.

There are no quick and easy fixes to building domain authority. But now that you know the major components, you'll likely have a leg up on a lot of your competitors. ■

Ryan Johnson is director of content optimization at Imagination. For more of Ryan's thoughts on improving search results, go to imaginepub.com/blog.

Figure 3



Location now takes precedence over domain authority, and the results displayed favor websites that have been optimized for location.



BY LIBBY LOWE

THE SHAMING UP

TWO BRANDS COLLIDING: SOME OF THE BEST AND WORST CONTENT PARTNERSHIPS.

Thinkstock

Two heads are better than one. Sometimes. When brands team up, there's a lot of opportunity to reach new audiences with innovative, mutually beneficial content that delivers value to customers. There's also the chance that a partnership that looks good on paper will fail to deliver.

Those campaigns that hit deliver genuinely interesting, useful content to a specific audience. Those that miss either feel like cobbled-together product placement (think about all those chefs raving about the Lexus they drive to Whole Foods Market on Bravo's *Top Chef*) or don't seem to have a connection to sales goals. Here are a few partnerships that work—and a few that miss the mark.

Hits

Jeep and Discovery Channel

Oh, Canada: Where people might actually use their Jeeps for more than trips to the mall. *Life Is Calling* is an eight-episode Discovery Channel program featuring Roberto and Bella Gibbons, "The Expeditioners," traversing the wilderness in a Jeep Cherokee and Jeep Renegade. This clearly targeted campaign, reaching a viewership in need of all-wheel drive during serious winters and for easy access to legit, unpaved wilderness, is a solid way to promote the brand on a platform that its intended market watches—and to get back to Jeep's roots: adventure.



Chase Sapphire Preferred and *Afar* magazine

The credit card for globe-trotters and the travel magazine for experience seekers make a natural pair. When Sapphire Preferred customers log in to book travel, they get access to destination-based content from *Afar*. These guys have the right idea: Give seriously useful information to the right audience—frequent travelers looking for more than a great deal. When customers book travel on the site and visit *Afar* to get more information, both brands win.



Misses

State Farm and BuzzFeed

Topics like "12 DIY Hacks to Create Your Dream Apartment" (mason jar planter, anyone?) and "Where Should You Move When You Graduate?" aren't exactly relevant to State Farm. Sure, BuzzFeed reaches lots of people who need renters insurance to protect all of those handcrafted planters. But aside from a tacked-on reminder that "like a good neighbor, State Farm is there," nothing in the content screams "State Farm."



Wayfair and Sherwin-Williams

For people in decorating mode, a partnership between an online decor retailer and a paint giant makes sense. And this partnership isn't a miss in terms of the content itself—or the number of visitors to Wayfair's site. But according to AdAge, one of the partnership's goals is to boost sales, yet only 1% of Wayfair visitors actually make a purchase. Knowing that, this partnership could benefit from more muscle. Window-shopping is great, but the next step is to take a deep dive into how content can help fill shopping carts.



#REFLASH

Hit



Dove

To combat lady-shaming and self-judgment on Oscar night (and all nights, really), beauty brand Dove teamed up with Twitter and launched #SpeakBeautiful to encourage people to say nice things about the women of the red carpet—and themselves. Some have noted the potential hypocrisy of a brand that makes its fortune by selling beauty products challenging beauty standards. But from a marketing standpoint, this # is a win.

Miss



Karbonn

When the Indian mobile phone company Karbonn launched #WhatWomenLove, the idea was for men to chime in about what makes ladies tick (mani/pedi dates, flowers, chocolates, oh my!). Women took over the tag, and it quickly took a feminist turn (think equal pay and being treated like humans). Lesson? If you want to know what women love, ask them. ■

Libby Lowe is a content director at Imagination.

“I’ve heard standing on your head works...but that might look a bit weird.”

1) Matthew Wright, Senior Content Director

“Coffee and earbuds. And then more coffee and more volume.”

2) Chris Matt, Vice President of Client Strategy

“When I find myself at a creative standstill, I take the time to go home to Door County, Wisconsin. I like to go to Whitefish Dunes State Park where I can kayak or go for long walks on the beach. I allow the quiet and the calm to hit ‘restart’ on my brain.”

4) Erin Slater, Senior Vice President, Business Development

“I find that exercising gets the creative mind flowing, especially rock climbing. Brooklyn Boulders is my go-to West Loop spot!”

5) Jordan Wagner, Editor

“I take a taxi somewhere and listen to the cab driver’s story. Hopefully it’s something new, unique and full of lots of fiction. Like, ‘I drive a taxi but I’m actually a billionaire and do this for fun.’”

6) Lars Berg, Web Developer

“When I’m stuck I do one of two things: I work out or completely other than what I’m trying to figure out always

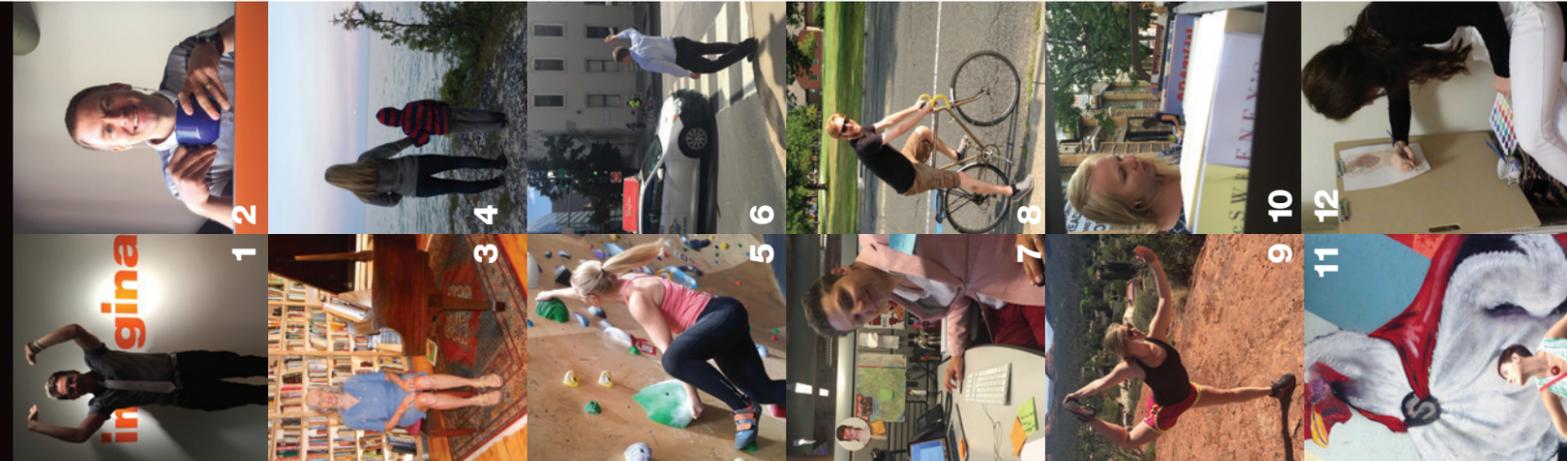
3) Rebecca Rolfes, Executive Vice President

I play the piano. Having my mind go someplace completely other than what I’m trying to figure out always results in finding the answer waiting when I get back.”

RUT BUSTERS

CREATIVITY IS WHAT TAKES THE MERELY GOOD AND MAKES IT GREAT, THE SPARKLE THAT TRANSFORMS THE MUNDANE INTO THE SPECTACULAR. UNFORTUNATELY, CREATIVITY DOESN'T COME WITH A SWITCH ALLOWING ONE TO TURN IT ON OR OFF AT WILL, AND EVEN THE MOST CREATIVE INDIVIDUALS CAN FIND THEMSELVES SEARCHING FOR NEW IDEAS, NEW APPROACHES AND NEW PERSPECTIVE. AT SUCH TIMES, PEOPLE USE MYRIAD WAYS TO CLEAR AWAY THE MENTAL BLOCKAGES. SO WE ASKED IMAGINEERS:

WHEN YOU FIND YOURSELF AT A CREATIVE STANDSTILL, WHAT DO YOU DO FOR INSPIRATION?



“I keep notes all around with ideas, interesting links or partial blog posts written on them. When I need inspiration, I go back and start reading through those notes and links to find new ideas.”

7) Ryan Johnson, Director of Content Optimization

“I hop on my bike and pedal somewhere new to let my mind wander and see the world at a new angle.”

8) Jeremy Gantz, Content Director

“A serious hot yoga class will clear my mind and after I feel like a strong goddess warrior! That always leads to an inspiring moment.”

9) Carly Hurwitz, New Business Associate

“I like to browse a good bookstore or simply wander aimlessly around the city. Inspiration will eventually strike!”

10) Margaret Poe, Associate Editor

“I love going to the Pilsen neighborhood to check out the murals along 16th Street and all of the street art hidden in the nearby alleys. I see something new every time and it’s inspiring to see which pieces move other people to stop and take photos.”

11) Libby Lowe, Content Director

“I like to paint. Paint what I see. Paint what I think.”

12) Jordan Berger, Editor