



orange

Issue Fourteen

STRATEGY • CONTENT • AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

orang

Email Strategy That Soars

It's easy for content marketers to fixate on the shiny and new. A social network newcomer sees a spike in popularity, and we rush to develop a strategy for it. A new automation tool or CRM product comes out, and we scramble to see where it fits in our marketing tech stack.

These are healthy impulses—as long as they match our goals. But we can't get so hypnotized by shiny new things that we neglect a tried-and-true tool: email. Email is king at distribution. It still delivers more than four times the median ROI of social, direct mail and paid search. That's the kind of impact we all like to see. Email engages because audience members have to opt in. They raise their hands and say, "Yes, I want to hear from you." That's priceless.

If you think email is a tired tactic, that's only because it feels like it's been around forever. And it has, in content marketing years.

However, just because email is decades old, literally, doesn't mean your email strategy should be the same as it was decades ago. Give your email an edge with segmentation and personalization. You can read about these, plus other email strategies, in "Inbox Intel" on page 20. You'll learn why smart segmentation can help you reach the right people, and, in turn, defy inbox overload.

One of those smart audience segments to consider is Generation Z (see "A Marketer's Guide to Gen Z" on page 28). There's been a lot of talk about millennials as digital natives. Less so about Gen Z, a group that has never known life without a digital connection or a smartphone in hand. Good news: They welcome personalization and targeting, as long as the content payoff is authentic.

Authenticity matters for the craft beer business, too. Small beer brands reach their enthusiastic fans through storytelling and behind-the-scenes access, plus a hefty swig of personality (see "Beer, Here" on page 36). They know that connecting with beer geeks means going deeper than animal mascots and Super Bowl ads.

So crack open a cold one, dive into **orange** and get ready to read about content marketing that really works.



James Meyers
Founder, President and CEO
Imagination
jmeyers@imaginepub.com
@jmeyers



Features

20 Inbox Intel

Doing email marketing is one thing. Doing it well is a whole other story. Improve your email outreach results with these 6 ways to ace content marketing's most personal channel.

28 A Marketer's Guide to Gen Z

They've never known a world without smartphones. They love Snapchat, still like Facebook and don't mind brands invading their feeds—as long as they keep it real. Content marketers, meet your next generation of consumers and clients.

36 Beer, Here

Sharing heady stories with a like-minded audience, craft breweries hop on the content marketing barstool. Keeping it real and smart makes all the difference: "The beer geeks, they get in pretty deep."

44 Hub Rules

8 guidelines for content hubs that nail UX and visuals. Because design makes or breaks a C hub.

52 orange Q&A

HumanGood Chief Strategy Officer Dan Hutson on the bold role of content in reimagining how we think about senior living in the United States. His is a critical quest: The number of Americans age 65 and over is projected to more than double by the year 2060.

Departments

1 Jim's Letter

Stop chasing that shiny new toy, and shift your email marketing strategy into overdrive.

4 Social Seen

We channel industry insiders' thoughts on the value of #personalization, everyone's fave buzzword right now.

6 The Lede

A look at top brands' live video ventures, the enduring power of print and how to "futureproof" your association.

12 Content Lab

Financial services wants it smart. And it wants it fast. Calvin Content is on the case.

16 Big Data

Follow the right path and you'll hit infographic gold.

18 Been There, Done That

Yes, we love the funnel. But is it enough? Meet marketing's latest model: the always-on engagement engine.

60 Hit or Miss

#RealBeauty gets real, and an insurance company courts new dads while a bourbon brand stays sexist, and Wendy's hits puberty.

66 The List

If you're still wondering about the who, why and how of influencer marketing, you're not alone. Check out our roundup of resources.

68 Get Smart

We review recent industry reads with an eye on what's worth your time—and what isn't.

70 My Favorite Mistake

Two lifelong fans of good (and bad) TV take a second shot at digital empire building.

72 Who's Inside

People and brands name-checked in this issue of orange.



Get interactive with this issue of orange with our new Imagination+ app. Here's how it works:

- Download the free Imagination+ app from iTunes or Google Play.
- When you see this icon (left) in orange magazine, open the app on your phone and shoot the print page.
- The i+ app will automatically link to the promised article, video, infographic or more!

It's that simple. Your reward? Bonus content marketing smarts, courtesy of imagineNation content hub, our thought leadership content playground.

imagination. Chicago: 600 W. Fulton St., 6th Floor, Chicago, Ill. 60661 • 312.887.1000 • Washington, D.C.: 1146 19th St. NW, Suite 850, Washington, D.C., 20036 • 202.899.4765 • www.imaginepub.com • **Founder, President and CEO** James E. Meyers, jmeyers@imaginepub.com • **Editor-in-Chief** Kim Caviness, kcaviness@imaginepub.com • **Creative Director** Doug Kelly, dkelly@imaginepub.com • **Art Director** Carolyn Duff • **VP, Content** Cyndee Miller • **Associate Content Manager** Ashley Greene Bernick • **Senior Editor** Rebecca Rolles • **Managing Editor** Carly Hurwitz • **Copy Editors** Becky Maughan, Kristen Menke • **Fact Checkers** Megan Dawson, Tessa D'Agosta • **Project Manager** Breanne Moreno • **Contributors** Chris Blose, Mark Borowsky, Kim Caviness, Todd Cywinski, Libby Ellis, Courtney Fishman, Carly Hurwitz, Tegan Jones, Nick O'Mara, Chris Matt, Cyndee Miller, Rebecca Rolles, Matthew Sargent, James Shadid • orange magazine is a product of Imagination. • Copyright 2017 Imagination Publishing, LLC. All rights reserved. Cover Photo: Dan Gold.

Interested in learning more about how Imagination can help you achieve your content marketing objectives? Email **Erin Slater**, SVP, business development eslater@imaginepub.com

#Personalization

Industry insiders get personal about this super-hot marketing tactic

By Courtney Fishman

Custom soda cans, curated playlists—brands are using data to get the DL on how personal consumers want them to be. We rounded up what marketers are saying on LinkedIn, Twitter and Medium about one of our industry’s buzziest trends.



“#PERSONALIZATION: NOT ONLY A BUZZWORD, BUT A CUSTOMER EXPECTATION AND BUSINESS MODEL.”

Mary Kay Evans, CMO, Verizon Digital Media Services



“The mash-up of personalization and ‘alternative facts’ is a dark side of the force that I hadn’t considered until recently.”

Johan Ugander, assistant professor of management science & engineering, Stanford University



“When it comes to #personalization, good intentions won’t get it done.”

Mark Johnson, CEO and CMO, Loyalty360



“Not only must retailers take a bet on what will sell, but they have to connect with consumers who are tech-savvy, have information and choice at their fingertips (literally) and want a highly personalized experience that helps them shop and then delivers the goods in a timely fashion (or faster!).”

Esther Christoffersen, retail lead, cloud and enterprise marketing, Microsoft



“PERSONALIZATION IS DIFFERENT FOR EVERY PERSON. IT SOUNDS SIMPLE, BUT IN THE MARKETING WORLD, IT BEARS REPEATING.”

Kiran Dhillon, VP, product marketing, Cxense



“Trying to do #personalization without #data is as bad as not having ice cream with your cone.”

Mark Boothe, head of Adobe marketing cloud social media, Adobe



“PERSONAL IS THE NEW HOLY GRAIL.”

Aditya Gupta, VP and head, e-business, OCBC Bank



“Personalization isn’t the goal, conversion is.”

Antonio Figueiredo, global director, emerging industries and technologies, Salesforce



“#Personalization and humanization are both foundational elements of modern #marketing success.”

Jay Baer, consultant and *New York Times* best-selling author



“Today, consumers expect personalized, contextualized interactions at the right time, place and moment, from every device.”

Jamie Anderson, SVP, CMO, SAP Hybris

And ... We're Live

Real-time drama on **Facebook Live**, **Instagram Stories** and, of course, **Twitter**, has some social media users turning up their noses at canned corporate content campaigns. No more smoke and mirrors—people want the real deal. And they want it right now.

Acknowledging the death of the perfectly curated feed, Instagram debuted “live stories” in November 2016, letting users share live videos for up to an hour. Then the content would disappear. Until last June. Now, once users finish broadcasting a live vid, they can share it to their story for 24 hours (or toss it).

Fashionably Live

Fashion marketers glommed onto the feature and continue the live content blitz. Makeup artist Pat McGrath regularly uses it to hype new products. And Brit retailer Topshop used its feed to tease its live stream during London Fashion Week in September.

Kohl's used a similar countdown content strategy for its New York Fashion Week show with reality-star-turned-designer Lauren Conrad's line on **Periscope**. Taking the concept a step further, the retailer figured out a way to monetize the live stream. Using the new Kohl's mobile-optimized site, viewers could shop the fashion as it hit the runway in real time, according to a report in Retail Dive.

Yet despite all the tricked-out tech, even the

slickest of brands are keeping it real.

“What the audience wants isn't super produced,” Instagram head of fashion partnerships Eva Chen told *WWD*. “We find that people like that raw, ‘I am sitting right there’ feeling.”

Facebook's massive investment in live video hints the pref for authenticity may have long-term legs. Last year, the social media giant partnered with nearly 140 media companies and celebrities to create videos for its live-streaming service. Together, the annual contracts totaled more than \$50 million, with BuzzFeed's \$3 million deal topping the list, according to *The Wall Street Journal*. Celebrity partners include comedian Kevin Hart, chef Gordon Ramsay and NFL quarterback Russell Wilson.

It's not just Facebook paying publishers and personalities to play in the space. Companies are jumping into the action, too. And for some early adopters, the ROI is real. In March, Tiffany & Co.'s streamed event with actresses Zosia Mamet and Zoe Kravitz, along with musician St. Vincent, racked up 4.7 million views in real time. The jewelry company also created 17 on-demand clips during the event and uploaded three recaps the next day—hitting 23.9 million impressions.

“Generating nearly 24 million impressions means 24 million ways to connect with millennials,” David Deal, a digital marketing consul-

tant, told *Adweek*. “Tiffany has established a foothold that will allow the brand to do social media retargeting or display campaigns.”

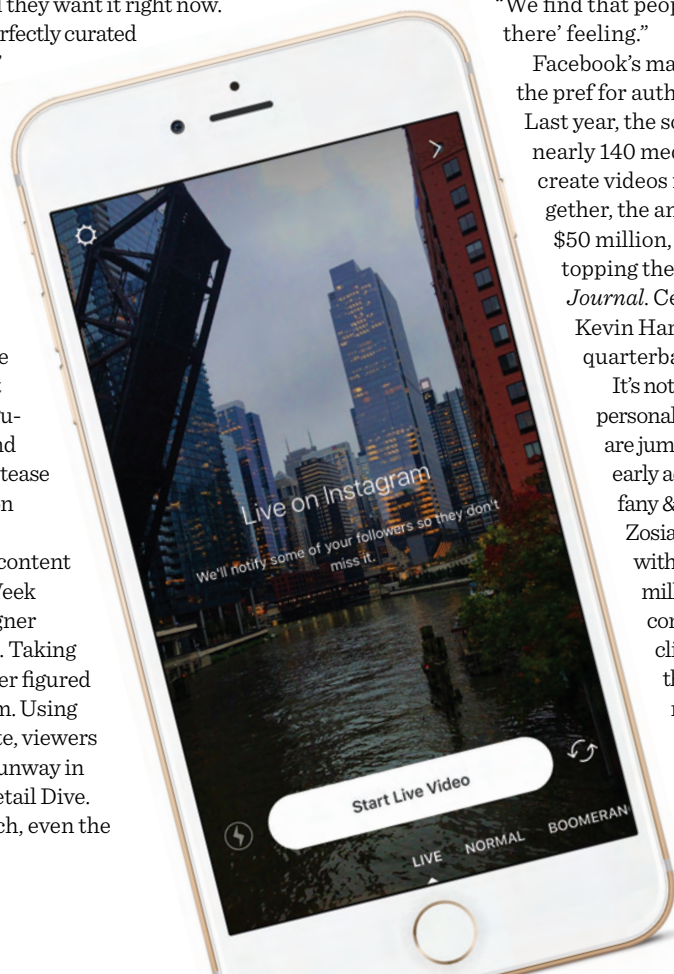
Let's Get Engaged

It's not just about attracting eyeballs. Live video also promises to improve the quality of consumer engagements. Back in March 2016, Facebook said initial data showed the average user watched live video three times longer than video that's no longer live and that they were 10 times more likely to comment on a live video. And yet the megachannel hasn't felt compelled to offer any updated numbers since then.

Snapchat is putting its own tech twist on the reality trend. Late last year, the company debuted Spectacles, \$130 video-enabled glasses that let wearers record 10-second clips. The idea is that video captured “in the moment” is more authentic and thereby more meaningful—or at least that's what Snap is betting.

A few leading-edge marketers are incorporating footage from the goggles in their content marketing. U.K. grocery chain Sainsbury's shot an ad through the glasses to appear on Snapchat. And Hyatt equipped eight employees at locations around the world with Spectacles to capture their personal experiences. The company then edited the clips together for a video shared on its **YouTube**, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter channels.

Yet for all the buzz, Spectacles may be a fleeting fancy. According to TechCrunch, the company sold only approximately 41,500 pairs in Q2—a 35 percent dive from the previous quarter.



Thinkstock/RebeccaGodfrey

Hanny Nabaho

The Editorial Eye

Not all news is created equal.

In the past year, Apple and Facebook took hits for promoting false or inflammatory content—and both media giants have responded by recruiting high-profile editors from the journalism world.

In May, Apple hired Lauren Kern, former executive editor of *New York* mag, as its first editor-in-chief to oversee Apple News, an app that curates and promotes news content. A few months later, Facebook onboarded ex-*New York Times* editor Elizabeth Spayd to help the company manage fake news, free speech issues and “controversial” content.

“We need to give people more context to make more informed decisions about what to read, believe and share,” Adam Mosseri, Facebook's head of News Feed, told *Variety*.

“Generating nearly
24 MILLION IMPRESSIONS
means
24 MILLION WAYS TO CONNECT WITH MILLENNIALS.”

—David Deal

Paper Chase

With mass digitization came mass content. And truth be told, not all of it's super compelling—which is starting to once again make print look pretty darn appealing to brands. Done right, print gives brands a license to physically connect with readers over a longer period—especially if the content is seen as something that can only be experienced IRL.

Celebrity Publishers

Gwyneth Paltrow's Goop is a card-carrying member of the digital zeitgeist. But that apparently wasn't enough—she's pulling an Oprah, launching a magazine version of her lifestyle/wellness brand in partnership with Condé Nast and *Vogue* editor-in-chief Anna Wintour.

"Collaborating ... on this multiplatform content partnership, anchored by Goop's emergence into a physical entity, was an opportunity for us to push our boundaries visually and deliver Goop's point of view to consumers in new, dynamic ways," the actress said in a statement.

A slick 96-page quarterly, *goop* goes for \$14.99, and the first cover star is Paltrow herself, soaking in a bathtub of mud. Reaction was ... well, we couldn't possibly sum it up any better than *The Telegraph*: "While unconfirmed, experts believe the image may have conjured a world record for the largest collective eyeroll since records began."

Not to be outdone, fellow celeb Taylor Swift is also entering the print fray, releasing not just one, but two magazines packaged with her latest CD, *Reputation*, at Target locations in November.

Target wasted zero time heralding the coup on its blog: "We've Got Never-Before-Seen Content, Only at Target."

"Curated" by Taylor, the Target post goes on to gush, the "unique, collectible magazines" will feature 72 pages of personal poetry and photos, as well as artwork by Swift, handwritten lyric sheets, video shoot outtakes and a poster.

Beyond the Stars

Even for mere mortals, print pieces can become collectibles in a way that digital content cannot. The first issue of *Print*, a new biannual fashion pub targeting avant-garde influencers, came packaged in a box with posters, prints and badges. "We wanted to create something timeless that people could come back to and rediscover," magazine co-founder Christopher

Simmonds told *The New York Times*.

Not content to simply disrupt digital content, the geniuses over at Quartz are issuing their first print book showcasing the role of 10 objects that power the global economy. The pitch: "Equal parts art and journalism, *Objects* is itself a beautiful object filled with immersive and interactive stories."

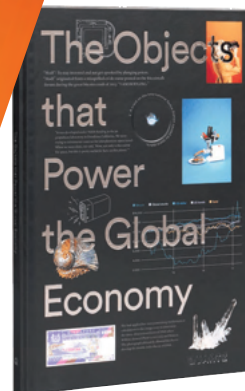
And yet another brand with deep online cred is expanding into print. Hodinkee, the self-described "pre-eminent resource for modern and vintage wristwatch enthusiasts" will release a high-end title that looks beyond watches. The mag will forgo newsstands and be sold through the website and hospitality partners including Soho House. In a blog post, the site's managing editor says the mag was "a long time coming" and will allow the title to "tell stories that might not fit right here on the good old dot com for one reason or another."

The 160-page premiere issue will sell for \$27. Skeptics take note: The limited edition with a "special matte black cover, no images and tonal logos" was sold out before the mag launched in late September.

"Print Never Died"

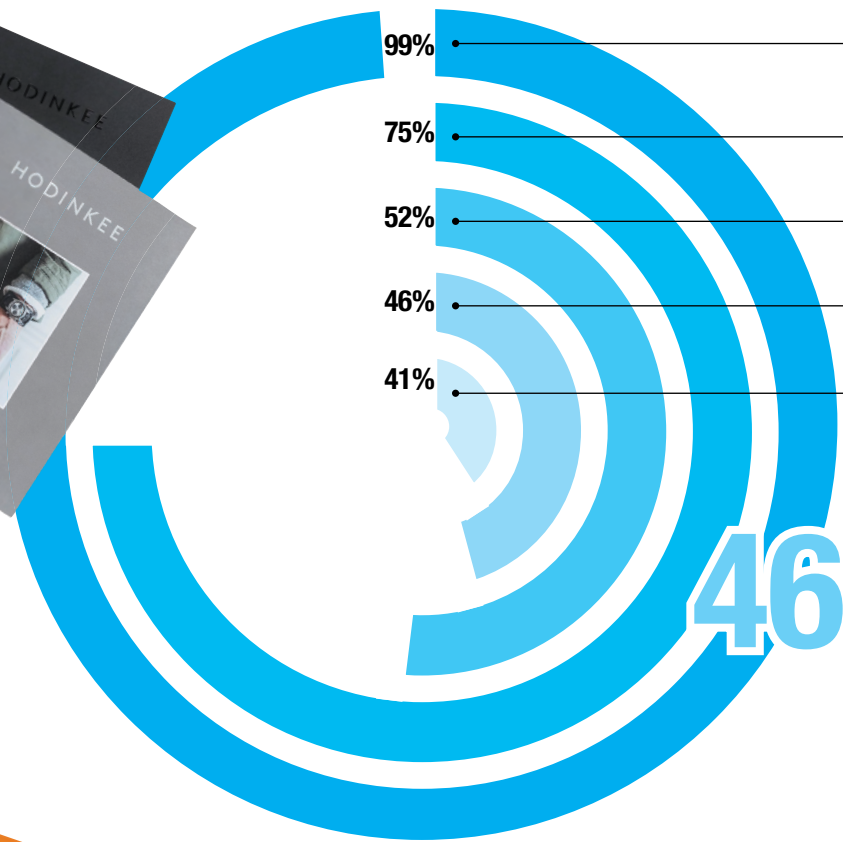
None of this means print should be a part of every brand's strategy. Only one-third of marketers currently publish print content. But those who do consider it the most important channel after email and LinkedIn (for B2B) and Facebook (for B2C), according to 2017 Content Marketing Institute (CMI) research.

"Print never died; the business model did," Joe Pulizzi, CMI founder, told CMO.com. "Advertisers don't want to pay for it, but consumers still engage in print content. With digital communications becoming so competitive and cluttered, there is a chance to break through."



Down to Business

47% of B2B buyers say they rely on content to research and make purchasing decisions. But their content consumption habits are evolving. Here's what they're after:



want content with insight from industry thought leaders and analysts

are placing a higher emphasis on the trustworthiness of the source of information

prefer mobile-optimized content they can access on tablets and smartphones

want shorter-format content

prefer interactive/visual content accessible on demand

One red flag?

say they're overwhelmed by the amount of content available

Source: 2017 Content Preferences Survey Report

Ready, Set, Grow?



"WITH PLENTY OF HEADSET OPTIONS ALREADY IN THE MARKET AND EVEN MORE COMING SOON, HARDWARE ISN'T THE ISSUE. THE BIGGER CHALLENGE IS THE SLOW GROWTH IN CONTENT THAT APPEALS TO A MASS AUDIENCE, COMBINED WITH THE CONFUSION ASSOCIATED WITH A LACK OF CROSS-PLATFORM SUPPORT."

—Jitesh Ubrani, senior research analyst, IDC, on the virtual reality market

Game Changer

Sure, Tourism Ireland already has plenty to promote: the Cliffs of Moher, the Guinness HQ, Trinity College. But now it's latching onto HBO behemoth *Game of Thrones*. As one of the real-world settings for the show, the country offers a unique draw for the show's superfans. To celebrate *GoT*'s seventh season, the tourism department rolled out a 250-foot tapestry telling the story of the first six seasons. Tourism Ireland shared segments of the tapestry on its social channels throughout the season's run and posted a full interactive version of it on Ireland.com.





KFC

KFC's Colonel Sanders has long been the face of the fast-food chain. But last year, he also became its muscle-bound body. To promote its \$20 Fill Up meal package over Mother's Day weekend, KFC published a relatively risqué romance novella with Colonel Harland Sanders as the lead love interest. *Tender Wings of Desire*, penned by a former Bustle.com feature writer, aimed to increase sales on the restaurant's busiest day of the year. "Mothers can finally get what they want this year—a family meal they don't have to cook, and some alone time with a captivating novella," KFC said in a statement. The chain isn't revealing any sales numbers, but the response on Amazon was mostly positive, with one reviewer proclaiming it "deliciously crisp writing."

Gucci

The ultra-luxe fashion brand recently published a series of original fairy tales complete with custom illustrations to market its Le Marché des Merveilles line of jewels and charms. Three stories tell the adventures of the woodland creatures who work in The Wonder Factory, where they give life to the glittering felines featured on the necklaces and rings. The fashion house then used that content to promote the tales—and the merch—on its social channels. One microvideo on Insta alone received 194,000 views and 270 comments.

Castorama

The French home improvement company brought its product to life a bit more literally with interactive wallpaper for children's bedrooms. Magic Wallpaper features 10 characters—including the robot, the princess who did not like dresses, the rhino jogger and the marine cat—that kids can scan with a tablet or smartphone to download one of 55 bedtime stories.

Same Old Story

Even the biggest fans of storytelling in marketing are starting to realize they need some new plotlines. Storytelling can create strong emotional engagement with customers—as long as the narrative is compelling. Jill Cress, chief marketing officer at National Geographic Partners, told an audience at Adobe's 2017 summit. Looking to up the power of its already wildly popular Instagram posts, the company has turned its account over to 100 of the world's best photographers. "It's all about pushing the boundaries of visual storytelling," Cress said. "You need an unrivaled sense of purpose." Nat Geo isn't the only one opening a new chapter on storytelling.

Take a Journey



"WHEN YOU BRING IN DATA SCIENTISTS AND JOURNALISTS AND STORYTELLERS AND CREATIVE PEOPLE WITH MEDIA PLANNERS AND PEOPLE WHO LOOK AT CONSUMER INSIGHTS, IT CREATES [SOMETHING] DIFFERENT FROM A VERY SILOED WORLD. WE NEED TO BE MORE AGILE, MORE LEAN, MOVE FASTER—THAT IS SUPER FUTURE-PROOFED. ... CLIENTS NOW DON'T WANT TO SPLIT THE WORLD WITH CREATIVITY ON ONE SIDE AND MEDIA ON THE OTHER SIDE BECAUSE NOW CONSUMER JOURNEYS ARE CONTENT JOURNEYS."

—Dominique Delport, global managing director of Havas Group, to The Drum



Download *Futureproof: The 4 M's That Redefine Your Association's Future*
See page 2 for app info

All-Access Pass



"NOT ONLY DO BRANDS NEED TO CREATE AUTHENTIC, COMPELLING VIDEOS THAT SPEAK TO THEIR TARGETS, THEY ALSO NEED TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT HOW THEIR AUDIENCES WILL BE CONSUMING THAT CONTENT. PLATFORM IS IMPORTANT, DEVICE IS IMPORTANT AND SO ARE THE SENSES. CAPTIONS COULD BE KEY."

—Starr Million Baker, CEO and co-founder of PR firm Ink, in a Forbes Agency Council post

Pinterest Turn of Events

>200 million

Number of monthly Pinterest users, a nearly 40 percent YOY jump

50%

YOY growth in the platform's male audience

50%

Portion of Pinterest users from outside the U.S.

Source: Pinterest 2017

Are You Futureproofed?



It's make-or-break time for many associations. The big issues? They come down to the four M's: offer more **membership** value, curb **myopia**, attract **millennials** and Gen Z members, and rethink **messaging**. In his new *Futureproof* guide, James Meyers, Imagination's founder, president and CEO, details how associations can survive—and thrive—in the always-on digital age. We'd venture to say it should be required reading for all association insiders. Download it at imaginepub.com/futureproof.



Top Slot

Content marketing ranked as the **top global marketing priority** in a 2017 survey of brand marketers, agencies and publishers by NewBase. Rounding out the list? **ROI and accountability** (44 percent) and **accurate audience measurement** (41 percent).

Time for a Content Diet?

The content formats of choice for digital marketers at Fortune 500 companies are:

1. Blog 69%
2. Social media 62%
3. Video 45%
4. How-to guides 34%
5. Infographics 30%

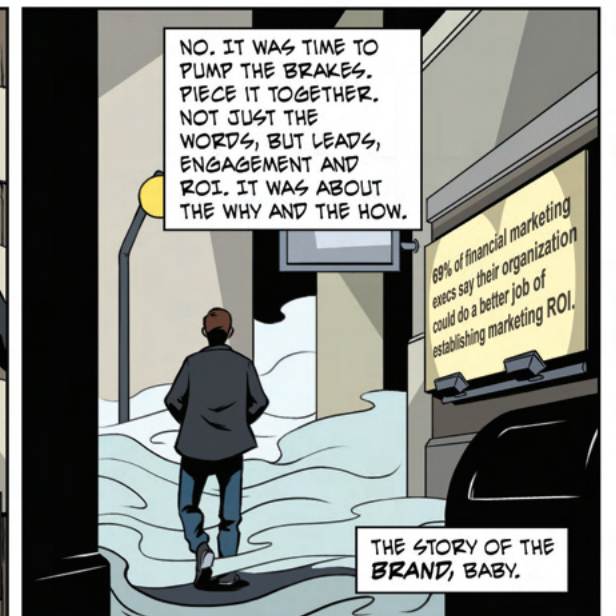
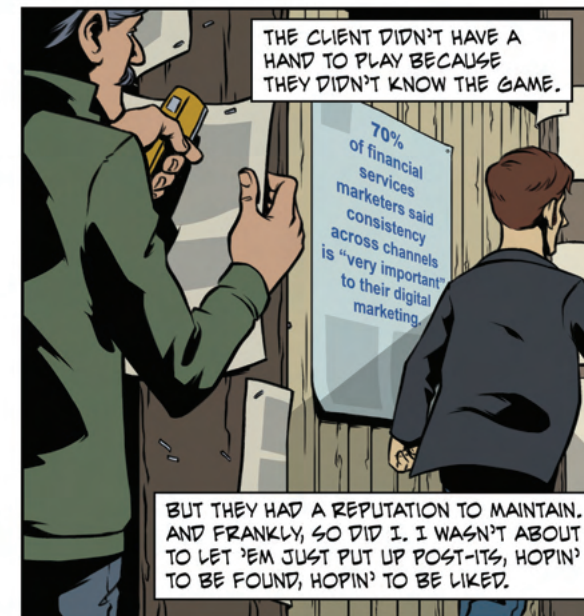
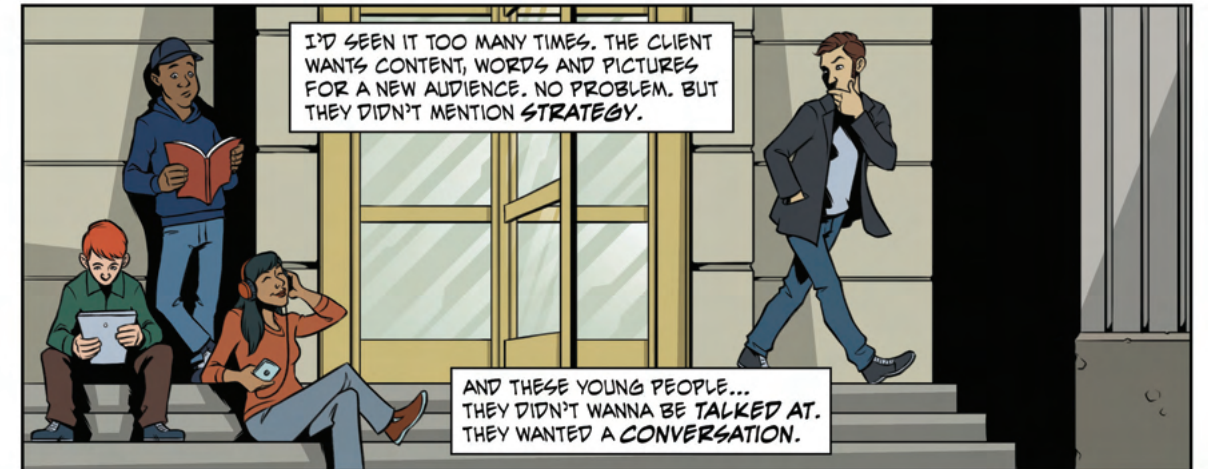
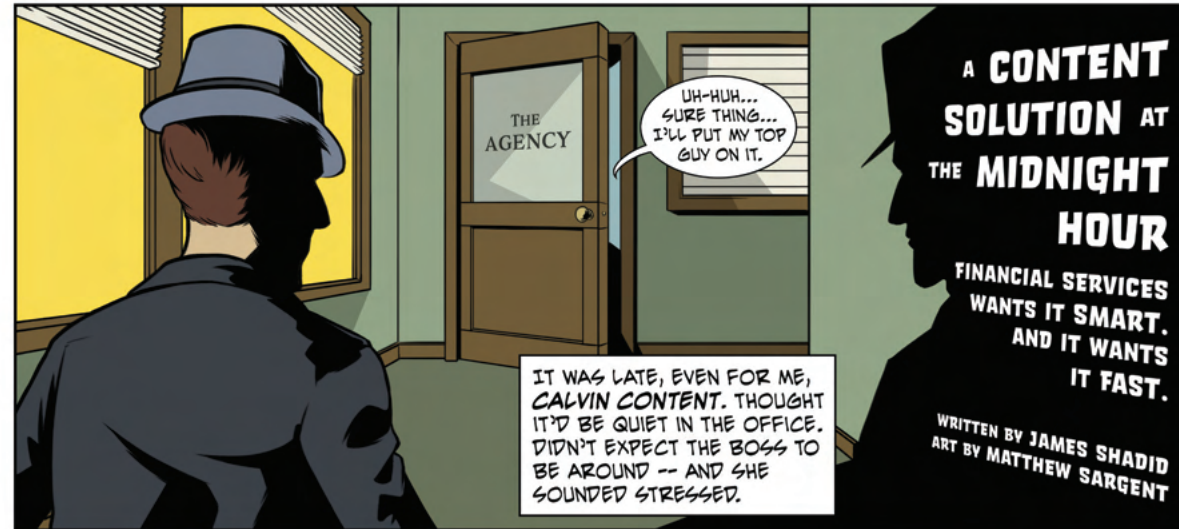
Yet 71 percent reported less than half of their content is consumed.

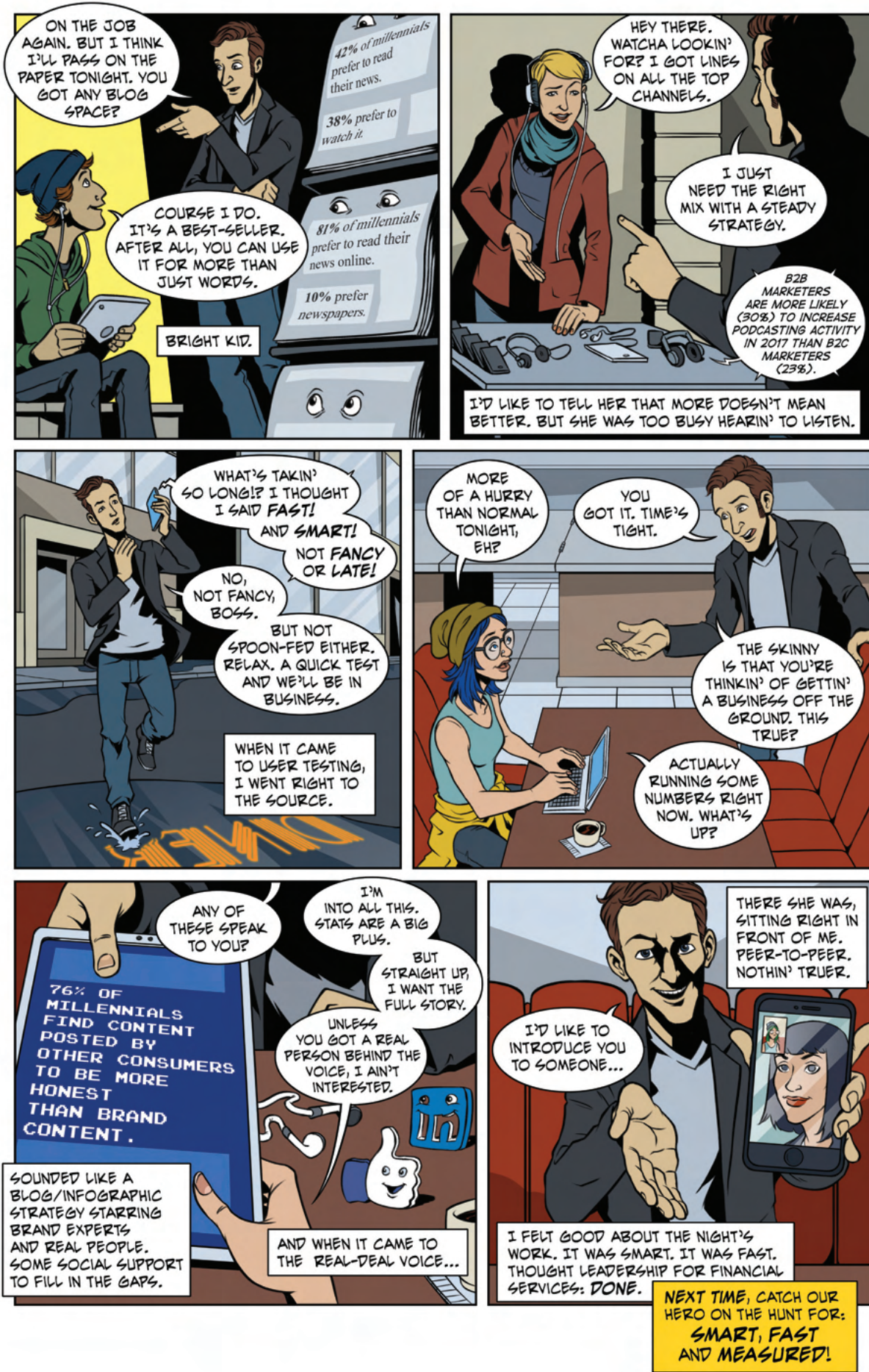
Sources: The Future of SEO & Content Marketing, BrightEdge, 2017; Pinterest 2017



Contributing editors: Tegan Jones, Cyndee Miller

The first in our comic series starring Calvin Content!





"The Rules of Engagement for Financial Services Brands in 2017," Jaywing, 2017 | "The Millennial Economy," Economic Innovation Group and EY, 2016 | "2017 Digital Trends in Financial Services and Insurance," Econsultancy and Adobe, 2017 | "2016 State of Financial Marketing," The Financial Brand, Deluxe and Digital Banking Report, 2016 | "The Putnam Social Advisor Survey 2016," Putnam Investments, 2016 | "Social Networks Are Central to Affluent Millennials' Financial Decisions," LinkedIn/HootSuite, 2015 | "The Modern News Consumer: News Attitudes and Practices in the Digital Era," Amy Mitchell, Jeffrey Gottfried, Michael Barthel and Elisa Shearer, Pew Research Center, 2016 | "2017 Social Media Marketing Industry Report," Michael A. Stelzner, Social Media Examiner, 2017 | "Consumer Trust Report," Deloitte and Censuwide, 2016 | "17 Fascinating Stats About Visual Content Marketing in 2017," Kula Partners, 2017

Take 2 with imagination.

it takes imagination™
podcast

Each month, we talk shop with top content marketers and offer insider smarts and creative inspiration—over a beer.

LAUNCHING THIS MONTH!

Episode 1:
What's a Content Hub Anyway (And Do You Need One?)

Episode 2:
Secrets of Creative Content Leadership

imaginepub.com/podcastTI



associationNation™
podcast

Our monthly podcast takes a deep dive into the content strategy and thought leadership topics that matter most to associations.

MOST RECENT EPISODES

Episode 7:
How to Make Advocacy Matter to Members

Episode 8:
How Content Changes When the Public Is Your Audience

imaginepub.com/podcastAN



Available on iTunes, Google Play and your favorite podcast apps



imagination.
Content for Thought Leaders

VISUAL EARNING

Follow the right path, and you'll hit infographic gold

Illustration by Nick O'Mara Text by Ashley Greene Bernick

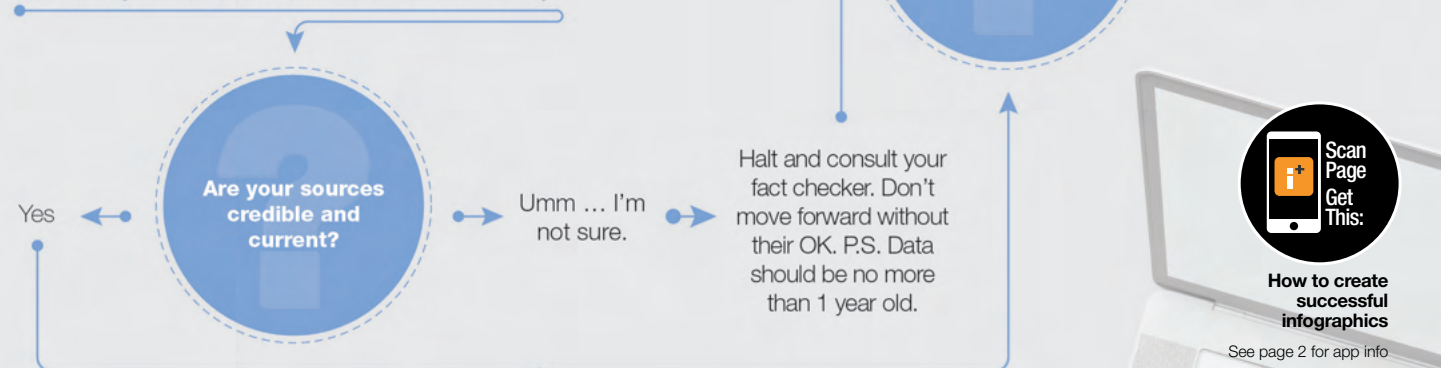
STEP 1 FIND YOUR INFOGRAPHIC'S STORY

Develop an idea that speaks to your audience's needs.



STEP 2 WRANGLE YOUR DATA

The more you have, the easier it'll be to tell a story.

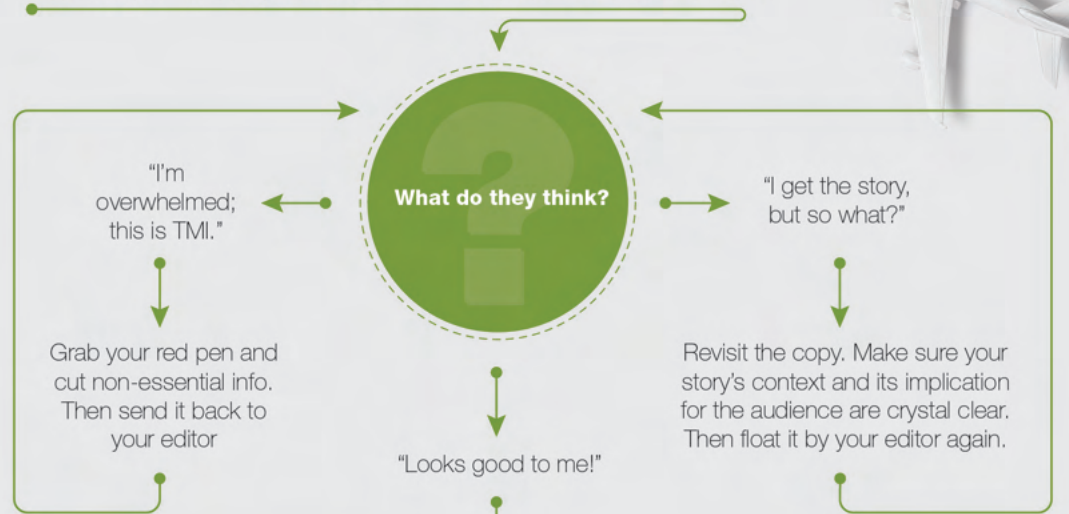


How to create successful infographics

See page 2 for app info

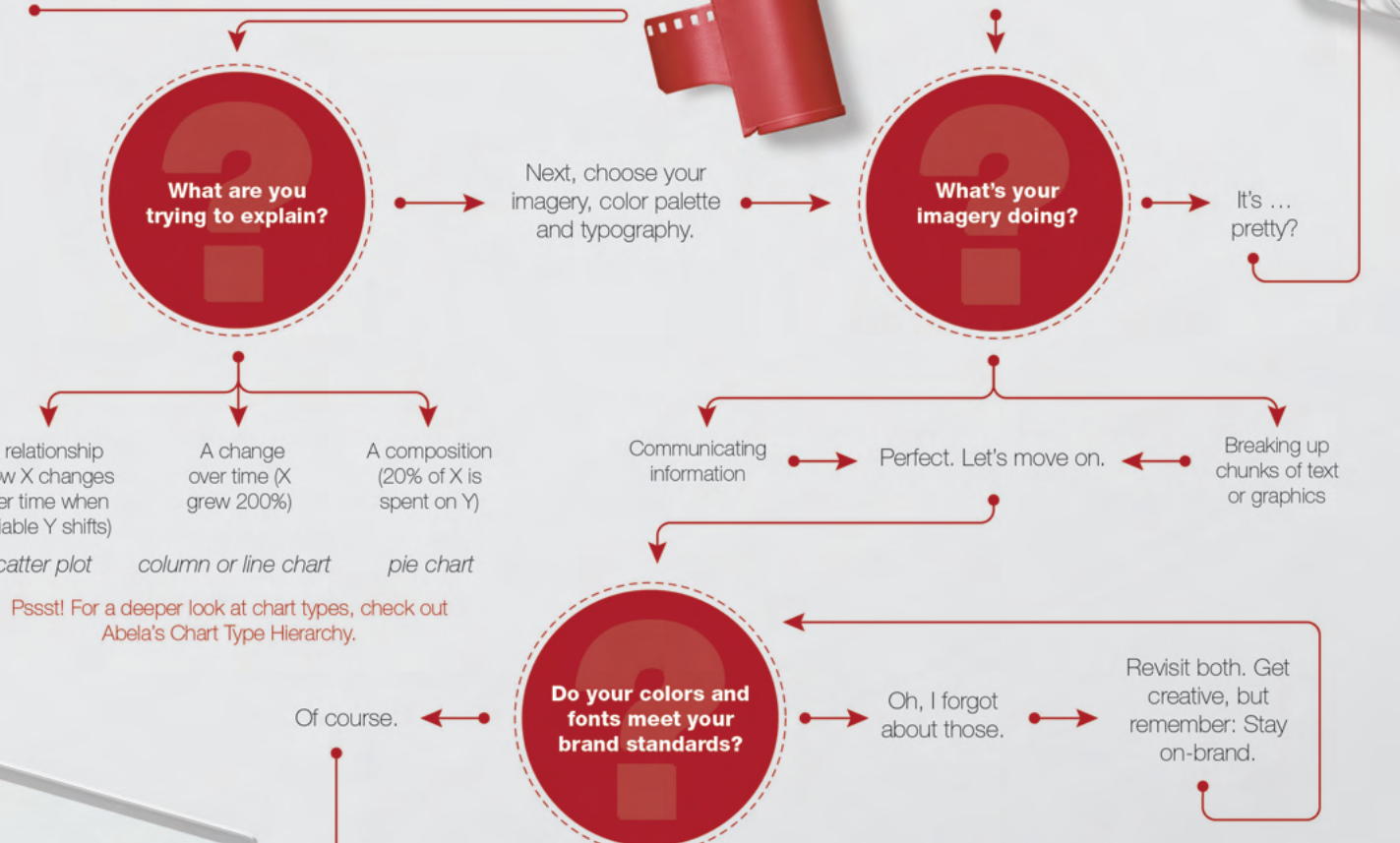
STEP 3 DO THE WRITE THING

Flesh out your infographic's copy, and then show it to a trusted editor.



STEP 4 CHOOSE YOUR DESIGN

Create your wireframe, placing the most important sections or data points first. Then decide how you'll illustrate the stats.



Congrats! You're well on your way to creating a killer infographic. Off you go: It's get-it-done time.

What the Funnel?

These 24/7 times call for a new marketing model

By Kim Caviness



The funnel has long served as our content marketing GPS. It guides how agencies and brands create, distribute and measure results-driven program strategies. But is the venerable marketing model invented in 1898 still relevant in our always-on, omni-channel world? Does its systematic tracking of consumer journeys through the classic four stages of AIDA—awareness, interest, desire and action—accurately reflect how we make purchasing decisions today?

Not really. That's why in the last 10 years, brands and agencies have regularly updated the funnel with new stages like consideration, influence and post-purchase evangelism. Super-catchy, right?

These tweaks did the trick for a while. But last year, academics at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism, Media, Integrated Marketing Communications in Evanston, Illinois, put forth a bold new framework with fascinating implications for content marketers.

Funnel, meet the consumer engagement engine.

The engine is meant to explain the way consumers engage with brands today, explains Tom Collin-



ger, executive director, Medill IMC Spiegel Digital and Database Research Center.

"Engagement in today's digital communications ecosystem doesn't work like a funnel," explains Collinger. Rather, it's "a dynamic engine where brands and consumers are synergistically interacting with each other in new ways that can have a powerful impact on customer value."

The engine shows five gears that move independently but are ultimately interlocked. They're called brand dialogue behaviors, purchase behaviors, customer motivations, brand consumption and brand actions—and they're always happening and influencing our decisions.

The smallest gear, brand actions, is the main thing brands made and marketers measured in the good ole days: marketing and advertising programs. But, now, the largest, brand dialogue behaviors, reigns in our digital age. This gear depicts the influential role

others' opinions have on our purchasing decisions.

"Most vitally, these are informed by customer experiences with the brand—good, bad or in between," says Collinger.

The engine offers intriguing applications for how we create, distribute and measure content marketing today.

"It radically challenges an enterprise and a brand to understand their new role in the marketing ecosystem, while all of these conversations are going on without them," says Collinger.

"It's no longer enough to do a content strategy that is a one-way push. It now requires a content strategy that includes a responsive, reactive, strategic approach that engages in time and in language that is consistent with what the market is saying. And, it demands a listening strategy in real time.

"Any one of those gears that changes changes everything," Collinger adds. "It's a dynamic where it's always in motion. So if I change my motivation, everything changes. If I change my purchase consumption experi-

ence, everything changes."

This, in turn, impacts how we measure content marketing programs.

Of course, "measurement still matters," he says. But it's time to develop new ways of quantifying results.

"For example," Collinger adds, say a consumer has "bought, consumed and used the product, then goes out and advocates spontaneously. Is that of greater value than a 'like'?"

"The answer is intuitively yes. Now, let's value it and measure it accordingly."

We accept your challenge, Professor Collinger and Medill Spiegel Research Center!

The consumer engagement engine is plugged in and revved up.

Content marketers, it's on us to figure out how to sync it to the funnel and put their combined power-packing one-two punch to work.

For the research driving the consumer engagement engine, download the report at medill.northwestern.edu.

The consumer engagement engine, a new model developed by the Medill IMC Spiegel Digital and Database Research Center, is ready to take on the funnel.



Tom Collinger, executive director, Medill IMC Spiegel Digital and Database Research Center



Inbox Intel

6 ways to turbocharge email marketing, content marketing's most personal channel

BY CHRIS MATT



One second.

Literally, the blink of an eye.

In that instant, the hard work your marketing team put into the development of an email newsletter can disappear. A quick finger-swipe, and into the mobile archives it goes. Maybe the subject line was too broad for this personal, hyper-targeted channel. Perhaps the design and content didn't cut through the clutter. Whatever the reason, it's an opportunity lost.

Because email marketing works. The channel delivers a median ROI of 122 percent—more than four times higher than the other marketing formats considered, including social media, direct mail and paid search, according to a June 2016 survey of U.S. marketers conducted by the Data & Marketing Association and Demand Metric.

Which is why B2B pros bank on it—just one more reason why the “too many emails, too little time” inbox environment is only getting more crowded.

In 2017, 93 percent of B2B marketers planned to use email to distribute content, and 91 percent said email is critical to their marketing operation, according to the Content Marketing Institute's annual report on B2B content marketing trends.

In the next year, almost 6 in 10 B2B marketers plan to increase their email marketing budgets, according to Emma's 2017 *Email Marketing Industry Report*.

The same report showed that 47 percent of all marketers feel email generates the most ROI.

So, how can you make your email marketing program stand out? Simply “doing” email marketing is one thing. Doing it well is another story. Here are six ways to fulfill your organization's business and marketing objectives while standing out in a jam-packed yet highly worthwhile space showing no signs of thinning out.

Great content can overcome email fatigue. Relevance always wins.

—Elaine Armbruster, director of email marketing and marketing automation, The Ohio State University



The Secret to Email Success

Don't silo your email strategy.

Your email marketing is only as good as your department's integrated approach. Producing email as a one-off not only sells your audience short, it undercuts your brand and creates a disconnect in the marketplace. Organizations are working to ensure email is strategized, created, measured and socialized as one piece of a broader digital ecosystem. It's not easy. But it's important.

"I think email is best used in conjunction with other vehicles," says Christine Nessen, senior director, contract marketing at Office Depot. "Email is critical but has to live as part of an overall journey or experience that we're building."

Some internal environments reinforce this integration and collaboration. Their social media calendars, content hub ideation and email marketing plans come together as a single go-to-market strategy grounded in the same objective.

"Our whole marketing department is designed to be collaborative," says Elaine Armbruster, The Ohio State University's director of email marketing and marketing automation. "We have no walls here, so we all see each other and talk to each other all day. So I'm constantly talking to the social team, the content team, the copywriters and the developers to make sure we're all aligned."

Organizations big and small—but especially large, matrixed companies—need formalized structure to achieve truly integrated marketing.

"There's a process that we've just instituted that's a seasonal planning process," Nessen says. "We have cross-functional working sessions—marketing, merchandising and sales."

Focus on your integration and process strategies, email marketers, for your best shot at the right results.

Japheth Mast

One Build

You can't have an email party without a guest list. You already have an email database—members, customers, opt-ins, purchased lists—but how can you capture new ones?

Implement email-capture opportunities on your content hub. Don't drive people to content pages on your hub through social media, search or pay-per-click advertising unless those pages have a subscribe widget—potentially in multiple formats and multiple places on the page. Consider gating premium content as another list-building tactic. Through these widgets, you're asking the audience to say yes to your brand's communications. That permission-based approach can generate strong email engagement.

"I think email is extremely important," says Christine Nessen, senior director, contract marketing at Office Depot, who focuses on the organization's B2B marketing efforts, including its small business audience. "Unlike other channels, like native advertising or search advertising, email requires the customer to opt in and raise their hand and say, 'I want to receive these.'"

For the *Harvard Business Review* (HBR), there's no shortage of email marketing. HBR promotes and sells subscriptions, as well as access to webinars and research. It also has 10 content-driven newsletters that differ by topic and strategy. Some of the 10 are topic-based—Technology & Innovation or Strategy & Execution, for instance—while others are time-based—The Daily Alert and the Weekly Hotlist. The common thread among all 10 is the focus on content.

Recently, the HBR marketing team switched its email-engagement strategy for new online registrants from a product-focused experience to one that starts with content. The drip sequence still highlights the benefits of registration, but it's no longer focused primarily on promotion of subscriptions or e-commerce.

"It's been amazing for us to see the impact on engagement; it's been huge," says Emily Neville-O'Neill, HBR's senior product manager. "We have seen some initial declines in our sales of subscriptions and products, but based on the data we have, we think that by increasing engagement, we'll recoup those over time."

A similar story surfaces at Office Depot, where content marketing now dominates in email programs previously focused on a hard sell. Office Depot taps into seasonal opportunities and thematically ties content into broader marketing and sales initiatives. A healthy workspaces theme doesn't just promote the latest in ergonomic chairs, but tells stories around productivity enhancements. The email focuses on needs and pain points first, with product promotion as a secondary call to action.

"What we're finding [from research] is the customer wants an experience," Nessen says, noting that higher email engagement and

increased deliverability have been a result of this shift. "Not just in their store and with their rep, but also in the channels they interact with, namely email."

Three Plan & Execute

A content-fueled email strategy is only as successful as the creativity and execution of the content itself. Deploying emails on a set cadence—daily, weekly, monthly—within the strategy means those creating the content and those sending it out need to work in lockstep. It's not just making sure the content gets done in time for deployment. It's making sure the focus on delivering email regularly doesn't erode content quality.

"Quality of content is of the utmost importance for our members to trust NFIB (National Federation of Independent Business), that we know what we're talking about and that we're out there working hard for them on these issues," says Kate Chandler, NFIB's digital content director. "If the quality isn't there, they're going to completely dismiss us as a thought leader and trusted resource."

Elaine Armbruster, director of email marketing and marketing automation at The Ohio State University, pushes internal partners and content creators to think about telling stories rather than filling a spot on an editorial calendar.

"Really encouraging people to think about content as marketing rather than just as a story I put in my newsletter," Armbruster says. "What makes a great Ohio State story?" Armbruster also feels that great content can overcome email fatigue. Relevance always wins.

Ju Ying

Two Develop & Document

The shift to more content-driven newsletters is an evolution within marketing departments. That shift brings tough decisions around how a content newsletter jives with a more traditional, direct-marketing approach. What lists overlap? How often should you send and on what day of the week?

Your documented email strategy should answer these questions.



Learn more expert email marketing insights in our "Email Workhorse" podcast!

See page 2 for app info

“From my perspective, it’s more about content fatigue than email fatigue,” she says. “I really believe you could send someone three emails a day, and if they were all completely relevant, it’s fine. I really think it comes down to relevancy rather than frequency.”

Four Segment

The life cycle of a customer or member should also drive your email strategy. A bank will send one sort of email to mass-market clients and a different high-net-worth message as their financial journey progresses. Similarly, roles and responsibilities change over time for association members, so don’t assume today’s content will be right tomorrow.

A focus on segmentation can ensure the right message is delivered at the right time to the right individual. At Ohio State, segmentation follows the natural audience progression from student to alumni to donor over time. Each of those audiences—plus the general public interested in the university’s research and thought leadership—are distinct targets for the email marketing group. And Ohio State is not alone. According to Emma’s 2017 *Email Marketing Industry Report*:

- **64 percent** of university marketers say email marketing generates the most ROI
- **73 percent** plan to increase email marketing budgets in the next year

Segmentation is important to avoid overlap, redundancy and marketing inefficiency. But it’s not easy. Armbruster says one contact could receive email from multiple groups in a close enough cadence to cause user frustration. This is a somewhat inevitable scenario she and others are tackling through smart segmentation.

“We’re trying to make sure we’re thinking about it from the user’s perspective,” Armbruster says. “What other emails are going out? How can we coordinate? Testing definitely plays a part in that, but a lot of it is us working with different colleges and units to coordinate that messaging.”

Beyond distinct audiences, segmentation allows for reigniting a disengaged set of contacts. If a segment of the database hasn’t opened an email or clicked through in six months, it’s time to check whether the email address is correct and whether that person still wants to hear from you. If you don’t take this step, this disengaged segment will bring down overall engagement metrics and hurt your email success story internally.

Although these re-engagement tactics inform decisions to remove people from the database, multiple departments vying for the same user may have other ideas.

“A lot of times what people hear is, ‘You’re reducing my database size, and I’m not going to reach as many people,’” Armbruster says. “We definitely tread lightly, and we’re being pretty conservative with where we start removing people from our big lists.”

“Unlike other channels, like native advertising or search advertising, email requires the customer to opt in and raise their hand and say, ‘I want to receive these.’”

—Christine Nessen, senior director, contract marketing, Office Depot

Samuel Zeller

Five Personalize

If there’s one buzzword surrounding email marketing today—and all of content marketing, really (see “Social Seen,” page 4)—it’s personalization. For most brands, personalization is still an aspiration rather than a reality. That’s because it’s hard. It’s hard to make the case for budget that fulfills a personalization strategy and hard to create quality content when personalization calls for a higher volume of it.

Done right, though, personal is powerful.

“If we see people are coming to the site and are consuming a lot of content around tax reform or they’re really interested in health care, we want to make sure they’re getting served up email and site content on those topics,” NFIB’s Chandler says.

NFIB research showed that its members were thirsty for local stories with local impact. It responded with a state-specific newsletter strategy for 210,000 small-business owners in 26 states. The personalized program has outperformed the national content and is helping NFIB achieve its top goal of member retention.

Average open rates for the state-based content are about 26 percent, or roughly a 63 percent increase. Another plus: Members who engage with email are more likely to renew their membership.

Ohio State also realizes the potential for personalization as it looks across the spectrum of audiences, from current students to established donors.

“Even if you are in the alumni audience, it doesn’t mean everybody in that audience likes one thing,” Armbruster says. “How do



Matthew MacQuarrie

Email Marketing’s Blacklist

Don’t be a stranger. If you invite all your Facebook followers to an event only 25 percent actually care about, you may as well be a stranger. Demonstrate that you’ve met your subscribers before with tailored content and smart targeting.

Don’t under-deliver on design. Yes, your email needs to be visually engaging to cut through the clutter. More important, it must be as amazing on a computer as a smartphone. Trends show people will open on mobile but read on desktop. Design accordingly.

Don’t bore. How many emails do you get each day? How many snoozers do you open, let alone read? Use the tone and voice users expect from the brand as a whole. Make sure you stand out in a crowded inbox with clever, fun copywriting.

Don’t look past CTAs. Clicking a call-to-action button is the sole goal of many emails. Words matter: Read more. Watch now. Listen here. Don’t assume one approach resonates with everyone. Test, learn and adjust on this critical piece of email real estate.

Don’t forget about your sales team. For B2B, financial services or any brand with sales reps in the field, a marketing-led drip campaign can have triggers where a rep reaches out to a percentage of subscribers who have strongly engaged with the content. The human touch can carry on the conversation that marketing started.

we target you based on your behaviors on the website or on your past donation history or something you clicked on from an email?”

Six Test, Measure & Learn

With a sound strategy in place, a focus on quality content and an eye on personalization, you can begin testing and optimizing to measure overall program impact. Experimenting with subject lines, the sender name and email design can yield significant results. For example, it can be surprising how capitalizing just the first word in a subject line versus every word actually changes user behavior and engagement.

“I’m all about testing because I know that what happens for one audience may not work for another,” Armbruster says.

Talking about email as a closed-loop system—where insights and measurement drive content strategy—makes for easier discussions as you socialize internally.

“Retail is easy. It’s: ‘Send an email and how many sales did you get?’” Armbruster says. “In this setting, it’s: ‘Send an email and hope people engage with it. Did they read it? Did they click it? What kind of thoughts did they have?’”

“It’s hard to know if you’re making an impact sometimes. You have to shift the way you’re thinking about what email means to people and what your purpose is.” ■

They don't know a world without smartphones. They love Snapchat (just ask). And they want brands to walk the walk. Content marketers, meet your next generation of consumers and clients.

BY CARLY HURWITZ

PHOTOS BY SHAUN RUDDY

**A
MARKETER'S
GUIDE TO**

GEN Z



Generation Z—born between 1995 and 2012—is your youngest group of brand consumers, customers and employees. Remember when you got your first BlackBerry? Yeah, Gen Zers weren't even alive. Raised on touch screens and nonstop connectivity, they're diverse, social-savvy and open to brands that get them.

Imagination sat down with five Gen Zers in our Chicago HQ to get their take on how content marketers should—and definitely should not—try to connect with them. We asked about branding, the media and how they consume content. Our findings? They don't all hate Facebook. They're willing to read long-form content. They demand to be addressed on their terms. And they've got a lot to say.

Meet Our Gen Z 5



Braylan Saunders-Effort, 20, communications student at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. Dances on his school's folk-Indian dance team. Connects with friends on Facebook Messenger and Snap Map.



Ioana Chindris, 20, pre-med student at Northwestern University. Born in Chicago and grew up in Romania. Thinks Instagram Stories rolling out after Snapchat's My Story was a total copycat move.



DaeJae Williams, 21, sound engineering student at Tribeca Flashpoint College in Chicago. Gets her daily dose of inspiration from TED Talks. Thinks parents should stay off Facebook.



Uriel Preciado, 20, sound engineering student at Tribeca Flashpoint College. Self-proclaimed sneaker head. News feed looks like this: Complex News, Sole Collector and Kicks on Fire.



Ellen Turner, 22, junior video project manager at Imagination. Reads *The Atlantic* every single day. Creator of fake vlogs on Snapchat.



“As far as *The New York Times*, it's a bunch of old-generation people. We look at them as like, ‘Well, you're judging us too much because you don't know us. You don't know our story or why we do what we do.’”
—DaeJae Williams, student, 21

THEY LOVE AUTHENTICITY

What brands do you like? Do you trust brand messaging, and is it welcome in your feeds?

DJW: “I like Vans because I'm into music, and they work with a lot of artists. So they literally email you like, ‘Oh, you can do this. RSVP and you can do it for free.’ I just went to the Jamila Woods video release party, and if it wasn't for Vans, then I wouldn't have known about it.”

ET: “I'm going to trust [brands] a little bit more if they're showing people being who they actually are. We're all trying to be the best people that we can be, so looking at people who are the best people that they already are is really inspiring, and I'm more likely to trust that brand.”

UP: “I love Kanye West. Even though he does a lot of out-there stuff, his mentality has really helped shape my self-confidence. So when Kanye does something with Adidas, I'll trust Adidas fully.”

ET: There's not a face to Uber that anybody trusts. Uber's on the back of my Metra pass, and I just think it's stupid. It's like, ‘Uber and Metra are getting you to where you need to be,’ and I'm just like, ‘No, you're not.’”

Do you think brands have a role to play in society beyond selling products and services?

IC: “It would be nice if they would encourage different social change, different good things in the community, improvement of self or things like that. It would definitely encourage me to buy from that brand if I see, for example, Adidas helping clean out the ocean.”

ET: “I think it all depends on the messaging. If you're a brand with enough money to do something and you



What mistakes are you making in your Gen X marketing?
See page 2 for app info

Gen Z's Rules for Retail

New research from Accenture's *Gen Z and Millennials Leaving Older Shoppers and Many Retailers in Their Digital Dust*, reveals this generation's digital shopping habits and how retailers need to adapt to their post-millennial, digital boundary-pushing. Here are the study's biggest hits for retailers determined to reach Gen Z.



1. Focus on social media and stay nimble.

Gen Zers are quick to move to the newest channel and are open to new concepts: 70 percent are either willing or can't wait to try making purchases on social media.



2. Stores are here to stay.

The majority of Gen Zers prefer visiting stores to make purchases, and most make visiting a store a multimedia/multichannel event. They engage with sales associates and comparison-shop on mobile devices in the store. Forty percent solicit opinions from friends and family before making a purchase.



3. The faster the better.

Fifty-eight percent of Gen Z shoppers say they'd pay more than \$5 for one-hour delivery. Coupling experience with speedy fulfillment will go a long way toward meeting this generation's expectations.



4. Don't let feedback fall by the wayside.

Forty percent of Gen Zers provide retailers feedback often or very often, compared to about 35 percent of millennials. The most popular method Gen Zers use: writing reviews on retailer websites.

Source: *Gen Z and Millennials Leaving Older Shoppers and Many Retailers in Their Digital Dust*, Accenture, 2017

actually want to make a change, then you should. Say you're a brand who's going to allocate part of your revenue to clean up the environment. People are going to scrutinize [you] if you're not looking at the parts of your company where you could actually be sustainable already."

UP: "I mean, a lot of brands do things without the public knowing. I know Bill Gates has billions. And you don't always hear about what he does, but he and his wife have a website for free college textbooks. Sometimes you don't always hear about what these brands are doing."

When brands ask for information about you, do you play the game or stay away?

BSE: "I'd prefer [brands] collecting as much information about me as they can because then they better target ads for me. Collecting information about me never bothered me because it's more personalized. Unless I'm doing something incredibly sketch, incredibly wrong, I have nothing to worry about."

UP: "I imagine this world where a brand knows you so well that they send you a text of a new product, and if you want it, you just say, 'Yes.' And that's that."

THEY'RE SICK OF THE MEDIA SLAMMING THEM

Where do you go for news and entertainment? What outlets do you avoid?

UP: "I get my news from the YouTube channel The Young Turks or Complex sometimes. A lot of older, traditional brands are trying to appeal to us, but they're using old tactics that are more for the older generations than for us. They're trying to marginalize us, and they just make it seem like we don't know what we're doing. If you really look at it, we're the most progressive generation of all time. We're out here trying to make the world a better place, but they're more worried about what shoes and what

kind of cats we like. The reason I trust Complex is because you can see the humanity in it. They do things in a fun way. Whereas *The New Yorker* sometimes does it, but it just doesn't feel authentic."

ET: "I agree with what Uriel said about certain types of traditional media like *The New Yorker*, *Time* and CNN. I feel like they're trying to come after Generation Z and entice them into being more involved in news, but they are only doing that half of the time. The other half of the time they're kind of slamming the younger generation and blaming them for things that are going on. I went to journalism school, and in journalism school, they teach you to remain unbiased 100 percent, and I do not think [the traditional news media] is unbiased today."

DJW: "I could piggyback off of what Uriel said about Complex. I feel like they know that we're young. They know what we like, how we like it and what we don't like. The people who are behind it are probably our age if not a little bit older. As far as *The New York Times*, it's a bunch of old-generation people. We look at them as like, 'Well, you're judging us too much because you don't know us. You don't know our story or why we do what we do.'"

THEY THINK SOCIAL IS THE CENTER OF THE WORLD

What social channels are you on and why?

DJW: "I love Snapchatting everything. And I get a lot of positive feedback. A lot of people are afraid to be outgoing and afraid to go to different places. Not all, but for some people who can express themselves through Snapchat, it's a way of getting people to see their inside world and what it's like for them."

ET: "Social media really freaks me out a lot of the time, just because there's so much pressure to have [a presence] that's successful. And I feel like if I ever wanted to have an Instagram, it would have to be built as a brand, in a way. Snapchat is the only form of social media that I use because celebrities can use it,

"Collecting information about me never bothered me because it's more personalized. Unless I'm doing something incredibly sketch, incredibly wrong, I have nothing to worry about."

—Braylan Saunders-Effort, student, 20

Top 20 Brands Our Gen Z 5 Name-Checked Most?

- The New York Times*
- Complex
- The Atlantic*
- The New Yorker*
- TIME
- CNN
- Snapchat
- Facebook
- Instagram
- YouTube
- TED Talks
- Adidas
- Vans
- Uber
- Yeezy
- Apple
- Sole Collector
- GoPro
- Google
- Amazon

Paul Skorupskas, Yonghyun Lee, Luca Campioni, Glenn Carstens-Peters

How to Talk to Gen Z

The first mobile-native generation uses the internet for more than just research. They're connecting, creating and getting inspired. They're innovators and influencers who have personal brands. Here's what they told us that'll help you create content that speaks Gen Z.

Remember the 3 Be's

Be innovative. Be connected. Be champions of a meaningful cause—and let Gen Z know about it.

Experiment

Approach Gen Z respectfully on the channels and in the formats you believe will work best and then test and learn. The goal is earned relevance.

Don't Generalize

Gen Zers share similarities, especially in how and where they view content, but—just as with any demographic—it's dangerous to make sweeping generalizations about them. People are people. Make sure your content marketing connects to the humanity and nuances of the Gen Z niche groups that matter to your marketing.

brands use it, and it feels less curated than Instagram. Snapchat is wherever you are throughout your day. It's like an insight into a life.”

IC: “I personally like Snapchat, especially after the latest updates where you get to see the stories from different areas where you are. I travel between two countries—Romania and the United States—and it's really cool to see the different events that are going on around the cities that I'm around. I can show up and participate in those things and just have that opportunity to see them through an easier thing instead of searching on the internet. At the same time, you get to talk to people. This is a more private way to communicate with people and have that kind of personal space.”

BSE: “Facebook is where I get most of my news. I enjoy getting the headlines from there and then researching more. I enjoy Facebook, and content-wise, it's grown so much since its creation. And I love the added reactions and all the different ways you can post and all the customization.”

DJW: “When Facebook first came out, it was great because we were young and we got to explore and express ourselves, but as time went on, they opened the platform up for people who were a generation or even generations older than us. It caused a lot of conflicts because it's a lot of things that we don't want

“We're out here trying to make the world a better place, but they're more worried about what shoes and what kind of cats we like.”
—Uriel Preciado, student, 20

our parents to see. That was our place of privacy and now, if you have them on the same page as you, then you have to watch what you do.”

THEY'RE COOL WITH YOU BEING IN THEIR FEED

Do you recognize sponsored content? Is it reputable or a turnoff?

UP: “Brands have to make their money somehow. I mean, some ads are annoying, but what Adidas is do-

ing to entice us to trust in their brand is—I don't know if you've seen their latest commercial, ‘Original Is Never Finished’? Even though it's out-there, it's super colorful and super creative. It's using a lot of artists that we listen to. I know Nicki Minaj is in it, Young Thug. I don't listen to those artists, but a vast majority does, which entices people to trust in Adidas.

IC: “On Snapchat, the advertisements are very short. It's literally a couple of seconds between whatever stories you're watching, but those couple of seconds are very colorful, very active. And so they do grab your attention more, and that actually gets me to pay more attention to who's advertising.”

THEY'RE WILLING TO CHECK OUT LONG-FORM— BUT IT HAS TO ROCK

Some marketers believe shorter content is the best way to reach younger consumers. Is this true of how you consume media?

IC: “I do feel like we are a lot more used to having things quickly. Having smartphones now, you can search something immediately. Articles tend to be a lot shorter and they try to just have one specific point to get at your attention. Shorter things tend to connect, at least personally to me more, even talking about the advertisements that we see on social media.”

DJW: “I think it depends because I like to research certain things to teach myself stuff that I don't know, and I feel like with the longer content, you may pick up things that you wouldn't normally.”

BSE: “I guess I do find myself reading longer articles. If I start reading and I notice it's not coming to an end, I'll scroll down to see how long it is, and I might stop reading if it's too long and I'm not that interested. It's the same with videos. I'll look at how long the video is, and I might just cut it short halfway through.” ■



BEER, HERE

With heady stories to tell, craft breweries hop on the content marketing barstool

BY CHRIS BLOSE



ention “marketing” and “beer” to the average beer drinker, and the first thing to come to mind is probably Super Bowl commercials. Clydesdales. Talking dogs and frogs. Maybe the occasional big-budget historical epic.

Small, independent craft brewers don’t have Super Bowl commercial cash. But then again, their most loyal customers aren’t average beer drinkers.

“The beer geeks, they get in pretty deep,” says Karen Hamilton, director of communications for California-based brewer Lagunitas Brewing Co., a company that straddles the line between craft and corporate (more on that later). “They want to know ingredients. They want to know the ABV, the IBU, the style, the process—all of those things.”

ABV is alcohol by volume, in case you’re stumped by the acronym stew. IBU is international bitterness units. Add them to the long list of in-the-know aspects of craft brewing, from hops schedules to barrel types, for a heady brew of information that appeals to a hardcore audience.

That hardcore audience—along with more casual drinkers who develop a taste for something that has more of an actual taste—represents a growing market, too. The Brewers Association estimates the craft beer market was worth \$23.5 billion as of 2016. That’s a market made up of 5,000-plus small to medium breweries,

none of which are backed by Anheuser-Busch levels of money.

Do they need it, though? “The smart breweries, the ones we like to partner with, really embrace storytelling,” says Alan Moreno, co-founder of Plank Road Tap Room in Elgin, Illinois, with wife (and—full disclosure—Imagination project manager) Breanne Moreno. “They put themselves and their thoughts out there on Instagram. They even provide a peek into their personal lives once in a while.”

In other words, craft brewers are getting on board with what content marketing does well: authentic storytelling. Behind-the-scenes information, rich with details. Sharing the personalities behind the products an audience knows and loves to sip.

“There’s an ‘I liked the band before it was popular’ factor at work,” Moreno says. The key, then, is to give the beer geeks something to like.

blogs, high production value, insider perspective and strong stories made it possible to build a known name. “We were surprised by the low-production nature of industry coverage,” Kiser says. “It became easy to stand out by crafting high-quality content using professional writers, photographers and designers.”

It helps that the staffers, just like Kiser, are among the beer-geek audience.

They’re also not just producing editorial. The site may have begun as a passion project, but in addition to being a respected outlet, Good Beer Hunting has a consulting arm. Kiser and team provide branding strategy, design and other services to clients like small brewers and taprooms.

“They come to us for business, and they say, ‘You seem to get it,’” Kiser says.

Successful brewers operate with goals similar to Good Beer Hunting’s. By sharing

By sharing stories and content that show a like-minded audience just how much they “get it,” brewers and other businesses become thought leaders you’d want to share a beer with.

Beer Geeks Unite

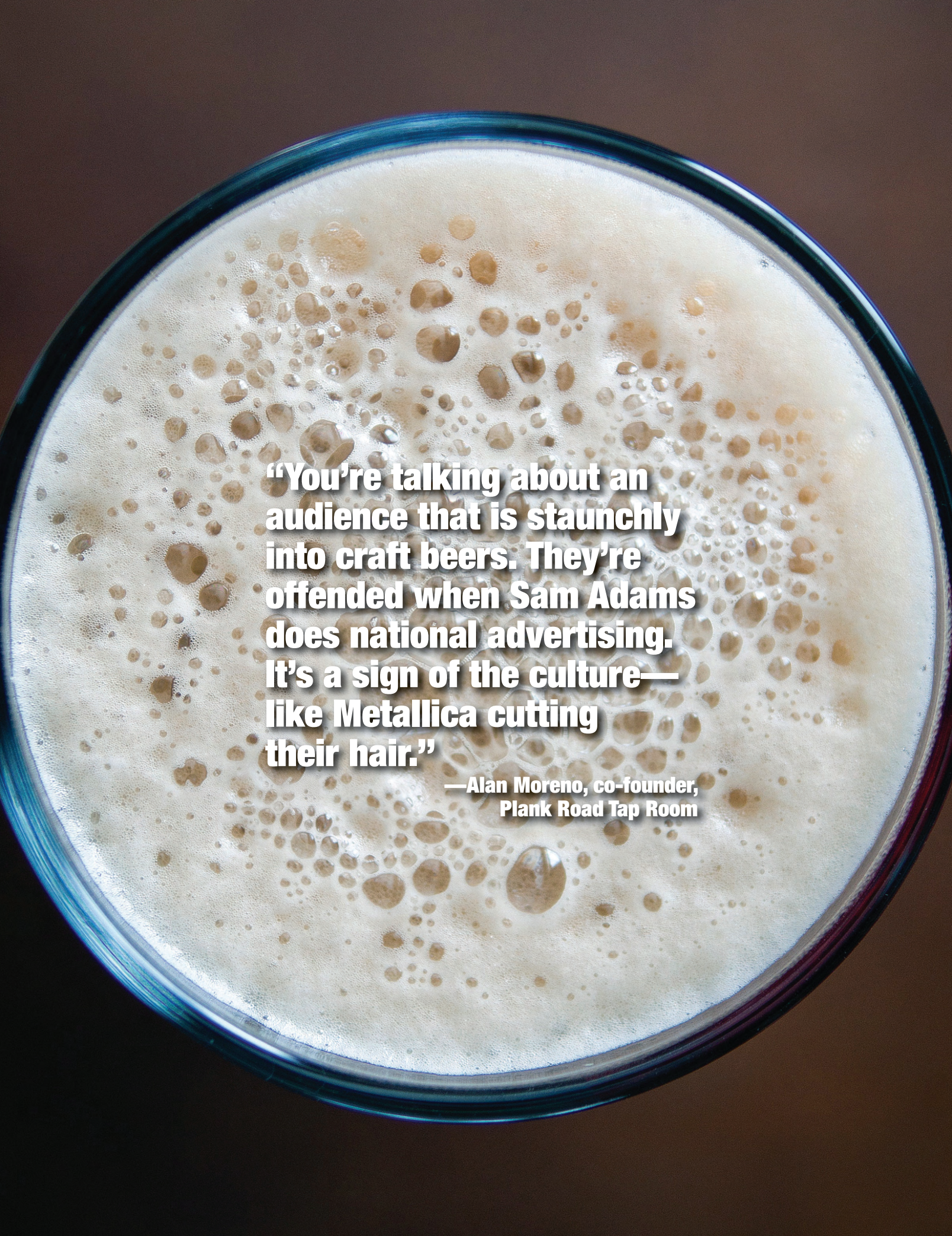
In 2008, Michael Kiser started the “Good Beer Hunting” blog as a passion project. Beer was the first thing on his mind, not business. He had experience as a design strategist at an innovation agency working for Miller, and he sought to bring insider coverage of the industry, from craft to corporate.

More than a decade and countless pints later, beer is still on Kiser’s mind, but Good Beer Hunting is now a full-blown editorial operation. Its staff of around 25—writers, photographers, designers and videographers—creates content that has earned awards from the Webbies and *Saveur*, among others.

The evolution was natural. In a world full of beer



Adam Wilson



“You’re talking about an audience that is staunchly into craft beers. They’re offended when Sam Adams does national advertising. It’s a sign of the culture—like Metallica cutting their hair.”

—Alan Moreno, co-founder, Plank Road Tap Room

stories and content that show a like-minded audience just how much they “get it,” brewers and other businesses become thought leaders you’d want to share a beer with.

“They are fans, too,” Kiser notes. “Many were home brewers. They never left behind that beer fandom and that desire for quality. And that becomes a communicable passion for their consumers.”

How craft brewers spread that disease is where things get interesting.

For example, a typical story series from Maine mainstay Allagash Brewing Co. may feature an in-depth explanation of the intricacies of white beer, followed by an extensive look at founder Rob Tod’s history with that variety of beer, which happens to be a major staple for the company. These stories offer a peek behind the curtain and a level of context and detail that appeals to a hardcore audience.

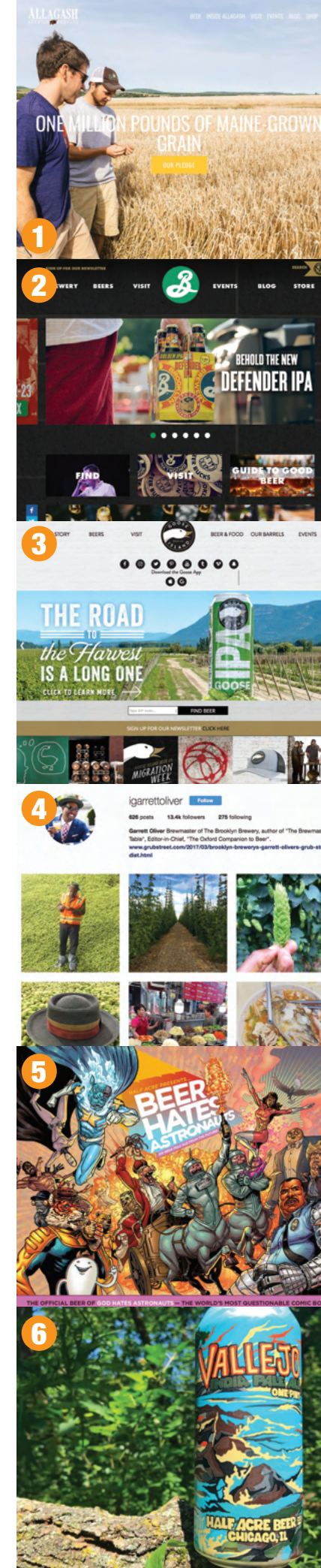
This scenario plays out again and again across social accounts and blogs nationwide. Colorado’s New Belgium Brewery Co., which has breweries in Colorado and Tennessee, experiments with social story modes (Periscope, Snapchat, Instagram Stories) to offer inside insight about new and special releases—typically from the POV of the people making the beer. Chicago’s Goose Island Beer Co. offers playful Instagram photos that sometimes look straight out of a science experiment—hello, *brettanomyces bruxellensis* (yeast). The culture matters.

Call it storytelling by beer geeks, for beer geeks. And it works for the people who sell and serve the beer, too. Plank Road Tap Room produces a video series called “Shift Beers” with a twist on the behind-the-scenes concept.

“What do the people who serve you beer talk about when they finally get you to leave?” says Moreno. “What’s it like to talk over that first beer after you mop the floors?”

The production quality has steadily improved since Plank Road launched “Shift Beers,” sometimes with the helpful feedback of audience members, but the concept

Frank Luca



6 Buzzworthy Examples

The examples below come courtesy of craft breweries, but they’ll go down easy for other small brands looking to step up their content marketing game.

Don’t Skip Strategy

1 Allagash prioritizes local agriculture and Maine culture. 2 Brooklyn Brewery puts a heavy emphasis on artistry but not gimmickry. 3 Goose Island is all about perfecting the classics. Most important, all of these messages come through loud and clear in each brand’s communications.

“You have to start with your goals,” Kiser says. “The ones who use content well are tying it all back to the overriding brand strategy.”

Lead With Personality

4 Brooklyn Brewery brewmaster Garrett Oliver is front and center in much of the brand’s content for a reason: He’s a beer philosopher, dapper dresser and renowned authority in the field. He helps define the entire aesthetic and approach of the brewery, but he also gives fans a point of connection. As Moreno puts it, “Following him on Instagram is like following the most interesting man in the world.” (Beer people tend to think in beer analogies.)

Know When to Partner

5 Half Acre’s Beer Hates Astronauts brew comes from an organic partnership. Its in-house artist is friends with Ryan Browne, creator of the bizarre and beloved comic book series “God Hates Astronauts.” So Browne provided the art and aesthetic for the IPA, with a label that includes anthropomorphic superhero animals that are best viewed rather than described.

“The beer itself is popular so it’s hard to decipher what success is from the comic connection and what is just the beer tasting awesome,” marketing manager Meredith Anderson says. “But we certainly reach a different audience because of that connection.”

When in Doubt, Think Simple

6 For Half Acre, that often means showing beer in a rough or natural setting in photographs to match the nature of the beer. Brewpubs, on the other hand, often skew their imagery toward pairings of food and beer.

In any case, one thing even a cursory glance at the Instagram accounts of multiple brewers reveals is this: Beer in a glass works. The people doing the marketing may get tired of it, but it does the job. “We do a lot of creative things, but we have learned that people actually do want to see the basic beer-in-a-glass shot,” Anderson says. “It’s not a lack of creativity. It’s helpful—and it gets people excited.”

“We are untraditional. We’ve always been. It’s brought us to the point we are now, so why would we change that?”

**—Karen Hamilton,
director of communications,
Lagunitas Brewing Co.**

In its video series “Shift Beers,” Plank Road Tap Room’s hosts Alan Moreno & Jeremy Teel (Tap Room Manager) invite brewers who serve up insider intel to beer believers.



and conversation remain the same. Moreno and a Plank Road cicerone—think sommelier for beer—host brewery owners and brewers, who in turn pour out insider insight over their beverages of choice.

It’s not about reviews. It’s definitely not about advertising. But when a guest like Ryan Clooney, a well-respected brewmaster from Crystal Lake Brewing who’s what content marketers call an *influencer*, shows up, the view count goes up. That episode—which hit Facebook in August—earned 6,500-plus views, and customers sometimes mention it when they visit the taproom.

“It has been such good marketing for us, and we never even thought of it that way,” Moreno says.

Know Your Flavor

Getting businesses to think of it that way may be the next step in evolving content marketing for the industry, Kiser says. There’s a tendency that will feel all too familiar to marketers: rushing to tactics while skipping over business objectives.

“I see this all the time, people not necessarily tying the content they’re producing back to the overriding brand strategy,” Kiser says. “Or they think their social strategy is it, but that’s false. Social strategy is a tool to serve brand strategy. You have to start with your goals.”

A production brewery—one focused on brewing but not direct consumer sales—

may look around the Instagram landscape, see the shiny, slick taproom photos that permeate the industry and decide to replicate that tactic. This fails because the audience for a production brewery cares about the details of the brewing process. If there’s a taproom out front, it’s just window dressing.

Kiser—and in fact every person interviewed for this story—again points to Allagash as a brand that gets it right.

“They put amazing detail around their product stories, their techniques and the brewing process,” he says. “They use beautiful photos, and it all connects to the mission of local agriculture and the Maine lifestyle that connect with their Maine brewery.”

Those two elements indeed stand out across Allagash’s content. Stories on the brewery’s blog cover everything from the sourcing of local ingredients such as Maine wheat to recipes for Maine lobster mac and cheese to pair with your beer. In summer 2017, the Allagash team ate and drank their way across Maine in a picture-perfect social campaign. It’s easy to discern what Allagash is all about.

Likewise, Chicago brewery Half Acre Beer Co. aims for an aesthetic that is natural and spontaneous to match the unfiltered, raw nature of its product, says Meredith Anderson, marketing manager. The taprooms are all about carved wood and natural light. The photography throughout the brand’s social accounts is

full of plants and natural scenery, plus vivid colors that match the company’s packaging.

“We value the photo very highly,” Anderson says, “so we don’t ever want to post anything just to post it if the quality isn’t representative.”

The representative nature filters down to the individual beer level, too. Each beer has its own personality, and Anderson lets that personality dictate how its story will be told. For the brewery’s Deep Space Double IPA, for example, the team wanted something appropriately spacey.

“My favorite thing is when an idea just works out,” she says. “We did this time-lapse video where I dyed 75 ice cubes different colors and then had them melt over the beer bottle. It looked galactic—space and time—and when they melted, they revealed the space beer.”

The company has an in-house artist for labels and other work, too, and artistry is a key selling point for Half Acre. For Lagunitas, the same goes for music, which is ingrained in the company culture. Founded in the California town that gave the brewery its name in the early 1990s, the brand has grown to other locations in California, plus Chicago and Seattle. Heineken bought half of the company in 2015 and the other half in 2017.

This makes Lagunitas a major craft beer success story, although many in the business don’t define success that way. Laguni-

tas technically is no longer a craft beer, both by industry definitions and by the reckoning of vociferous internet commenters.

“You’re talking about an audience that is staunchly into craft beers,” notes Moreno. “They’re offended when Sam Adams does national advertising. It’s a sign of the culture—like Metallica cutting their hair.”

For good or ill, perception has shifted for Lagunitas. The company’s response? Stay true to who it’s always been, says Hamilton. Her brother, founder Tony Magee, is a longtime musician and has always made music part of Lagunitas. The company puts on 15 or more concerts every summer at the LaguMiniAmphitheaterette at its home base, which is now in Petaluma, California.

These live events extend outward to a “More Songs Fueled by Lagunitas” music player on the brand’s website. And to fun, interactive games such as trading pins from concerts, bands or other music-themed pins—by mail—as prompted on Instagram. The company also eschews tried-and-true mass marketing methods such as email in favor of both in-person events and one-on-one interactions. “We are untraditional,” Hamilton says. “We’ve always been. It’s brought us to the point we are now, so why would we change that?”

The Mug Is Half Full

Content marketing pros may recoil at the notion that a major brand, owned by

Heineken, doesn’t do email. But it’s an important lesson in culture and identity. Even if Lagunitas is big now, relatively speaking, the company prefers to stay small, creative and highly personal in its communications.

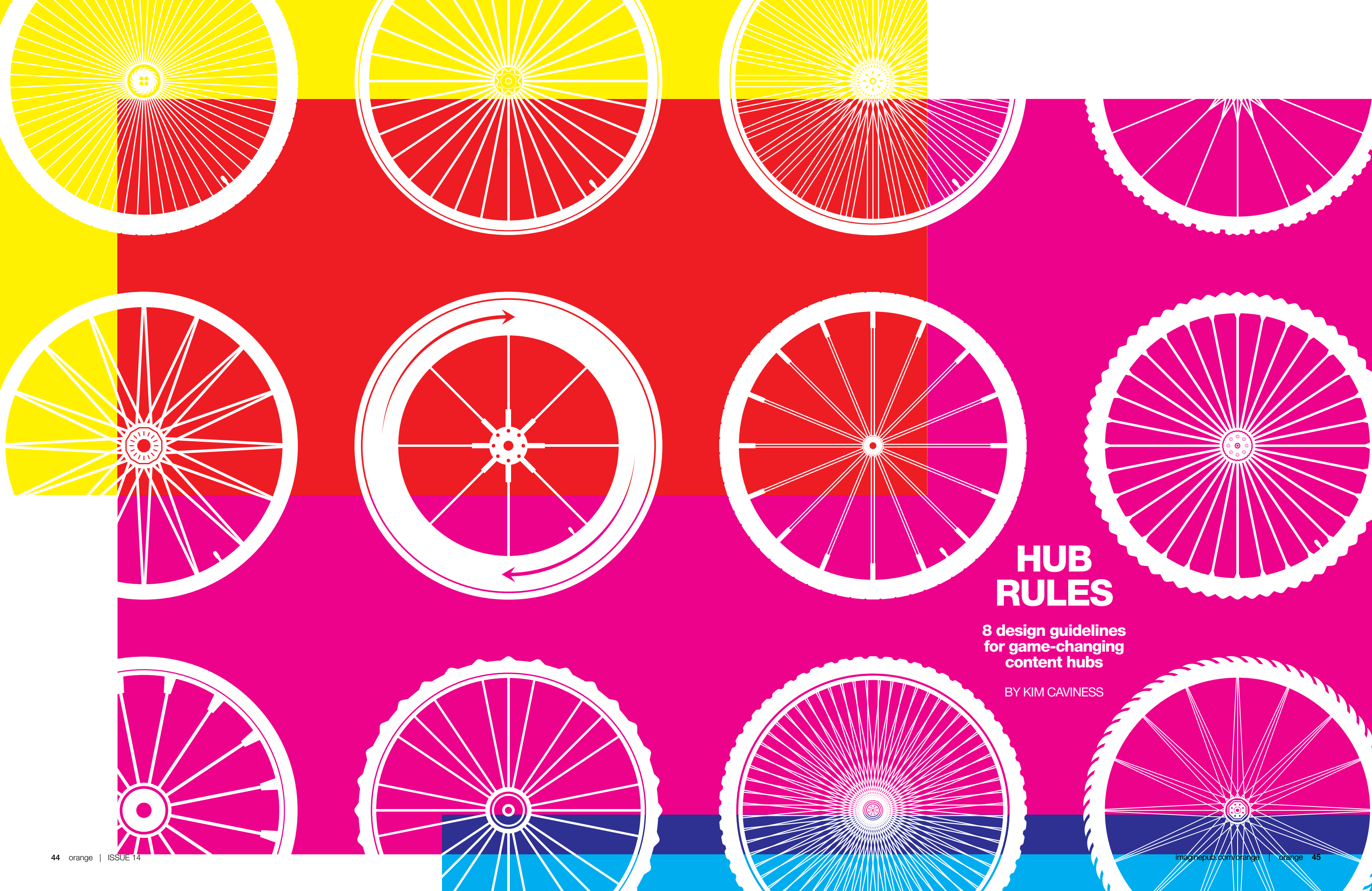
Sometimes mass communication tools and the measurements that go with them don’t suffice for tracking meaningful engagement among niche audiences.

For that matter, Kiser and the Good Beer Hunting team don’t really track analytics. “Analytics don’t measure how important or memorable a story was to the person who read it,” Kiser says. He’ll take the individual brewer who reads his stuff and then comes to him for his expertise over an impressive click tally any day.

That’s not to say brewers and taprooms don’t track, adapt and evolve, though. Moreno started out publishing the “Shift Beers” series on YouTube, then heeded advice to try Facebook Live instead. As a result, the series saw 20 times the traffic right away and an increase in the number of comments and shares.

The resulting numbers would look small to a big brand. But the enthusiasm the show generates is exactly what a small company needs. And it comes down to a philosophy that applies not only to Moreno’s business but to other brewers and businesses, too.

“We want to be damn near everything to a very small group of people,” Moreno says. ■



HUB RULES

8 design guidelines
for game-changing
content hubs

BY KIM CAVINESS

Beware the temptation to copy your favorite content hub or replicate another content-rich area of your website.

It's really that simple. Design makes or breaks a content hub.

Design is why one hub succeeds and another fails—even if both have the exact same words and pictures.

(Hold on—some of you may be asking, “What’s a content hub again?” Great question! In the last issue of **orange**, we reported that B2B brands are increasingly tapping this interactive format to showcase thought leadership. And in that piece, we worked up this definition: *A C hub is a one-stop-shop digital experience built to house and leverage all the content—no matter the format, channel or platform—created by a brand to showcase expertise and inspire its audience to act on its business goals in measurable ways.* For more, scan the icon below for our full C hub guide.)

Of course, the quality of the actual editorial in the hub is arguably more important. They are called *content* hubs, not design hubs, for a reason. But in today’s content marketing marketplace, great content is the price of admission—and expected. Table stakes.

Design guides hubs because it’s the first thing users experience. If you get it wrong, they won’t stick around long enough to engage with all that rich content.

Don’t let bad design happen to your hub.

To that end, I sat down with Imagination Senior Interactive Designer Melissa Burke, who has designed many a hub, including our own, imagineNation. Our quest: Identify the guidelines of game-changingly great content hub design. Here are our eight essential C hub design rules.

Design for Your Brand Story

A website offers brand information, but a content hub tells your brand’s story. Beware the temptation to copy your favorite content hub or replicate another content-rich area of your website.

“Don’t template,” warns Burke. “You might think, ‘OK, they both have content, and they’re going to have eyebrows and they have deks and heds. And they sort of have the same elements.’ But they almost never come together the same, since they depend on the brand’s objectives.”

Just as all magazines have the same elements—cover, table of contents, departments, features, back page, back cover—yet are distinctly unique, so too should your content hub look and feel like your singular brand and purpose. Make your hub *yours*.

Design for Discovery

By definition, a content hub is the opposite of one-and-done. Its goal is to drive repeat consumption. Your designer’s job is to arrange each of the hub’s elements and features to encourage engagement of content, links, comments (if you have



Your 101 guide to starting and managing a content hub

See page 2 for app info

MY C HUB CRUSH

The design secrets of Adidas' GamePlan A



Anastasia Lyutikova, lead designer of Adidas' GamePlan A, offers a master class in C hub design. For her full interview, visit imaginepub.com/imagineNation.

I've looked at a lot of content hubs this year. Dozens. Then I found Adidas' GamePlan A—and fell in love. I mean, look at it.

GamePlan A was launched in 2016 by Adidas to create a global community of active people who follow the mantra “work hard, play hard.” Hence, the hub's tag line: “We are creators, tackling work life with an athlete's heart.”

Well done, Adidas. GamePlan A is modern. It's smart. The design is clean and white-spacey, yet full of words and art including: articles, big photos, pull quotes, videos and user-generated content. It has bold headlines, gorgeous typography and quantified social shares. The whole thing feels useful, smart, flexible and effortless.

In reality, of course, it's not effortless. It takes a lot of work to make something seem so simple.

HOW DID ADIDAS DO IT?

I tracked down GamePlan A Lead Designer Anastasia Lyutikova. Lyutikova is senior art director at Scholz & Volkmer, an award-winning interactive creative agency for digital brand management, headquartered in Berlin and Wiesbaden, Germany. Its award-winning clients include Mercedes-Benz, Coca-Cola and, yes, Adidas.

Lyutikova and I emailed back and forth about digital design for content hubs. Here are her master-class do's and don'ts:

CONTENT HUB DESIGN DOS

Do focus on the user—not the design. Always bear in mind the needs of the target group when developing. Whether the platform should be noisy or quiet depends on the user, not the designer.

Do be consistent. Create stand-alone design guidelines, which can be used throughout the entire website and quickly lead the user to the content. A clear structured design language greatly supports navigation.

Do think about the first impression. The more tangible the content and the quicker the users arrive at the content, the longer they'll stay busy with it.

CONTENT HUB DESIGN DON'TS

Don't fail to communicate with the target group. One can have good design that does not meet user needs.

Don't overload the page. Too many different design elements lead to confusion.

Don't design without clear user guidance. Nothing is worse than a frustrated user who doesn't understand the site and leaves immediately.

Additionally, Lyutikova offers three trends that are taking the design of content hubs and digital magazines into the future. All three are fully realized today on GamePlan A:

MICRO-INTERACTION

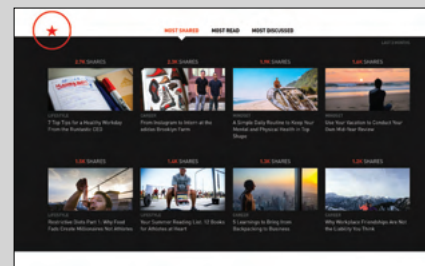
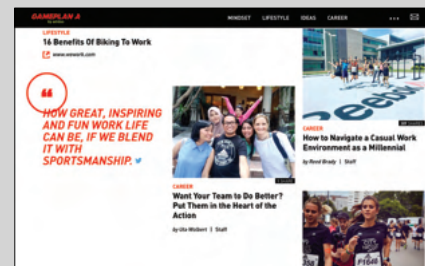
“The technology is evolving ever further so that a more complex interaction design on the web is no longer the focus, and will continue to spread even further in the near future. (Micro-interactions inform the user what is happening, what has happened and what will happen.)”

STORYTELLING

“Hero images with parallax effects, different modes of the multimedia representation, whether video or animated GIF—basically everything a story tells, is fully on trend. It is still supported with the scroll-trend so that the user always remains in the read-flow.”

INDIVIDUALITY

“Individuality is very important in an internet landscape where many websites are already very similar to WordPress. Illustrations, authentic photos and self-created typography give the web pages a personal touch.” —KIM CAVINESS



them) and shares. “Sneak in smart content in strategic places throughout the site, whether it be along the side, below or within the text of the article,” Burke says. “You have to provide a balanced [number] of engagement opportunities—not too much, not too little.

“It's about easy access to sharing, easy access to saving and linking. Navigation is important. Keeping the navigation fairly digestible is key.”

Design for User Control

Content hubs should be designed to provide intuitive access to the full depth and breadth of topics they cover. Think about what your target users will want and need from the site. And then ensure they get it with tight navigation, filtering and email segmentation, all of which help end users define and personalize the content for themselves.

One of the biggest design fails is a hub that throws the kitchen sink at users, content-wise. “They present you with everything they have, and then expect the user to do a lot of the work,” Burke says.

Users avoid such sites because they're overwhelming. Who has time for that? The design goal should be a clean, well-lit experience that is welcoming in presentation and value. “Present content in small, bite-size chunks and offer opportunities for self-selection and cookies, if possible, to create an organized, inviting experience,” Burke says.

Design for Your CTA

Think like a movie director, who does months of work before calling “Action!” on set. Before designing a new C hub, do your prep work. Know the hub's business goals. Identify the CTAs (calls to action).

Work with your team to identify what you want users to feel and do when they visit. This will help shape the design experience, hierarchy and visuals and deter-

A website offers brand information. But a content hub tells your brand story.

mine where you place CTAs and navigation and what the navigation categorizes.

One more CTA pro tip: Don't loren ipsum it. Design with real words in each CTA and include them in wireframes from the start, in the right place, the right way. This'll pay off, Burke says; the CTA will define your design.

Design for Visual Standards

Unlike the rest of your website, every single piece on your C hub will likely have imagery (photo, illustration, video, infographic or GIF) associated with it. That's a ton of art on probably one or a handful of very similar topics. You run the risk of redundancy.

“You have to keep it branded but not repetitive, and I think that's tricky,” says Burke.

Force yourself and your team to make each visual choice matter. Set the bar extra high and push for original imagery that reflects your brand's personality. Don't settle.

Design for Simplicity

Because you want users to spend time with more than one piece of content, resist the urge to razzle-dazzle needlessly. Go for bold, big, clean and simple. Offer the most direct navigation possible and leave zero room for user confusion or paralysis.

"Maybe the dot.com site has all this fancy animation and interaction happening and it's kind of showy," Burke says. "You want your hub to be functional and aesthetically pleasing. You don't want it to have animation for animation's sake. At the end of the day, [users are] there to read or consume content, and you don't want to cloud that with fanciness."

Forgo glitz for ease of use to keep your hub audience invested and consuming. Simplicity is not simple to get to, but it is worth it, Burke says.

Design for the WCS

Face and embrace your worst-case scenario. That four-word H1 sure looks pretty, but the reality is that C hub contributors won't always write short. A 15-

word headline will hit your hub from time to time, and you won't always be there to stop the writer after the site is launched.

"Length of text is really key. That's something I work with the content team a lot on," says Burke. "They tell me what they might need, their minimum/maximum lengths, and then I work it into my design if possible. Or we find some sort of common ground."

Design to your limitations so you're never caught lacking. Limits are good. Embrace them. "It's something I learned early in my art career. More rules and constraints make for more creativity and more creative solutions," says Burke.

Design for Flexibility and Growth

Design for where you're going, not where you start. Most C hubs kick off with a handful of posts and best intentions. But what's going to happen in a year or two? Design for that future day.

"You have 10 articles now, but next year, you might have 100. And you need to account for that in either your navigation or use of CTAs on the page. And then, just space. Think hard about how much of it your design will need in the future," Burke says.

"You have to account for that at the beginning, even though you don't have it all. I could make everything look perfect if I knew the length of everything that's ever going to happen, but I can't know that. And it's going to be evolving. So, designing for flexibility and growth is really important." ■

Design to your limitations so you're never caught lacking. Limits are good. Embrace them.

PROBLEM: "You can't measure how your content program impacts your thought leadership position."

bullshit!

SOLUTION:

THE THOUGHT LEADERSHIP INDEX®

A proprietary benchmarking system created by Imagination combining brand, third-party and target audience measurement based on the five key drivers that determine your brand's thought leadership position.

To learn how this exclusive and first-of-a-kind index can measure your thought leadership success, contact Erin Slater: eslater@imaginepub.com

imagination.
Content for Thought Leaders™



Q&A: The New Age of Marketing

**Chief Strategy Officer Dan Hutson on the role of content
in reimagining senior living in America**

By Todd Cywinski

Photos by Patrick Strattner

You think your job is tough?

Imagine your work was to market senior living solutions to a target audience who doesn't want to think about aging. Because no one wants to get old. And the last thing most senior parents or their adult children want to think about is when and if it's time to leave the family home for parts unknown. It's expensive, complicated and life-altering: no thank you.

That's what Dan Hutson does every day.

As chief strategy officer of HumanGood, owner/operator of senior living communities based in California, Hutson has a role that has the potential to transform the lives of our growing U.S. senior population. It's a worthy mission. The number of Americans 65 and older is projected to more than double to more than 98 million by 2060 from 46 million in 2015, according to the Population Reference Bureau's *Aging in the United States* report.

Goal one for Hutson is rebranding the post-retirement decades of our lives as a time of possibility and purpose. At a more nuts-and-bolts level, he is helping oversee the merger of two regional, nonprofit senior living organizations: the former be.group (based in Southern California), where he was VP, communications and marketing, and the former American Baptist Homes of the West.

We talked to Hutson to find out why content is at the heart of his marketing for the newly formed HumanGood, a network of 80 senior living communities in five Western U.S. states.

What is your ultimate goal in using content marketing in your work?

I honestly believe that the future of the senior living industry has to be about self-actualization. It's about helping older adults become their best selves. My personal aspiration would be that the people who live in our communities look back at the end and say, "I've had a great life, but the time I've spent living in this community has been among the best years of my life." Now that's a real challenge. You're talking about people having families, having amazing careers. And our aspiration is to say the time that they live in our communities is more profound and impactful and fulfilling than any time in the past. But I really do believe that this is attainable for many of the people we serve.

There will be senior living companies that remain focused on safety and security and providing health care. Obviously, we're going to provide all those things too. But that should not be the focus of our business. The focus of our business should be on helping people live engaged, purposeful lives.

You're in the process of combining two nonprofit senior living companies into one brand. What are the biggest challenges you've been trying to solve with content marketing?

Ours is a niche industry without strong brands. It's a small market, and it's not like people have great familiarity with our brand or anyone else's brand. There are very few nationally known senior living companies that the average person would be familiar with.

Buying into a senior living community is very much a local sell. People don't typically buy the brand; they buy the community. Our customers come

“The real market opportunity is **how do we influence people who don't think they're in the market** for our product at all?”





“When ... building the brand, the influence you have on purchasing decisions is greatest as an outcome of effective thought leadership.”

3 Top Senior-Audience Marketing Mistakes

What are three things everyone gets wrong about marketing to seniors? **orange** put the question to Dan Hutson, chief strategy officer of senior living community organization HumanGood.

“I don’t know that there’s anything that everyone gets wrong, but here’s what I see most often,” explains Hutson, who’s been specializing in marketing to this audience for nearly a decade.

“One: Content that doesn’t truly differentiate one senior living community from its competitors.

Two: A lack of powerful storytelling that helps people truly understand what daily living in a community looks and feels like—there’s too much focus on features and benefits, not enough focus on bringing the experience to life.

Three: An unwillingness to be provocative and challenge assumptions about aging and life at this stage of life. You can’t stand out if you’re always playing it safe.”

from a 5- to 10-mile radius around a particular community or they have a family member within that radius. But I believe that the brand is going to become more and more important, and building that brand is to the benefit of our individual communities. Brand development over the next several years is going to be crucial in expanding our mission of serving older adults and their families, especially as we start to explore other products and services.

If this is a community-based purchase, how do you use content to create a brand that is unified and local at the same time?

We had developed a lot of great content, both educational and experiential content, content that tried to shine a light on what the living experience is. But on our old site, it was invisible to a lot of our visitors. People didn’t come to the home page and follow this logical progression of looking at general content, doing their research and then drilling down to look at a particular community. Because it’s primarily a community decision, they were going first to the community’s home page where that content was not visible. They might not ever go to any other part of the site.

We had distribution and promotion strategies that made content visible, but in terms of inbound traffic, we were less successful. On the new site, we’re weaving that content throughout the site and making it very visible on all of the community pages even though it’s not specific to that community. It’ll be interesting to see if our hypothesis is accurate, if by layering that content or spreading access to that content throughout the site in different ways, we’ll start to see a real uptick in interaction with that content.

Why is content the best way to market to people facing this life-altering decision?

The biggest generator of leads in our business is the internet. It’s why we’ve worked for months on our

new consolidated website and why we built it on a platform of rich educational and storytelling content. You’ve got to adjust your sales and marketing tactics to recognize that at the point that they become visible to you, they have already done a lot of research. You need to focus on becoming part of that research process long before they ever stand up and say, “Hey, I want to talk to you.”

It sounds like your work focuses on getting prospects to the top of the funnel. How do you then influence the purchase decision?

Quite honestly, I’ve always found influencing purchasing decisions is the least interesting thing about communicating with an audience. When you’re talking about building the brand, the influence you have on purchasing decisions is greatest as an outcome of effective thought leadership.

People ask who our biggest competitor is. Our biggest competitor is not another senior living organization, not another community. Our biggest competitor is people’s homes. Change is difficult for everyone, but when you’re talking about someone in their 70s or 80s—the thought of uprooting yourself from a home you’ve been in for 30 or 40 years, where you’ve raised a family, celebrated milestones and developed emotional attachments—that’s daunting. We’re asking prospective residents to downsize, to move into a new community with new neighbors, a new lifestyle and different routines. Until you actually experience the benefits of community living, it’s pretty intimidating.

Our job is twofold. The first is educational. We need to provide the unemotional factual basis upon which people can make decisions for themselves. They need the factual ammunition to justify the decision and know that that decision was the correct one for them.

But ultimately—and this is the second part of the job—what drives the purchase decision is much more

subjective. We need to provide them with the kind of emotional storytelling that engages and convinces them that this is the right decision. It's really about making our content visible and compelling in a way that causes someone to think, "You know what? Maybe staying home isn't the best option for me."

How do you make your content visible? How do you become part of your audience's senior living research?

Content is meant to bring people to you, right? For us, it's part of an inbound strategy. It's about making us visible to the right customer. But we can't possibly compete if we treat content as just another broadcast opportunity. We can't be louder than our biggest competitors. We can't be everywhere that they are. So how do you create content that is so in line with what the customer needs and wants that it attracts those prospects versus what our competitors are doing? The real market opportunity is how do we influence people who don't think they're in the market for our product at all.

You market to three distinct audiences: seniors, their adult children and other senior-serving professionals who can provide referrals. How do you create content for three different audiences and roll it into one content marketing strategy?

The decision to move to a senior living community is a complex emotional purchase decision that usually involves a lot of different players. There are frequently family members involved. Not everyone necessarily has the same opinion or outlook, so it can get very complicated.

People largely don't understand community living. That's one issue. The other issue is a lot of misconceptions based on old stereotypes of what senior living communities are about. They tend to equate

them with old nursing homes or retirement homes, and that's not really what our communities are about at all. So there are both educational opportunities and storytelling opportunities to help combat that.

What are the benefits of living in a community? How do contracts work? We offer a contract-based product where you pay an entrance fee and a monthly fee for services, and that entrance fee may or may not be rebateable upon death. So there's some real financial complexity there. A lot of financial planners don't understand the benefits, so there are opportunities to educate them so that they can better counsel their clients.

If education, storytelling and correcting misconceptions are the tactics, what is the content marketing strategy?

It's to help people age well, help them continue to live purposeful, engaged lives. The whole concept of retirement is really anathema to us. People can now enjoy another 10, 20, 30 years beyond that traditional retirement age but no one has really defined what that period should look like.

Through our storytelling, we can begin to help people craft for themselves what that life might look like, whether it's continuing to work or revisiting old interests, old passions, pursuing new passions, things that they never had time to pursue before.

The key is that our customer wants to be engaged. They want to live purposefully. They want to feel that they're continuing to contribute and be useful, that they're engaged with the world around them, with their friends, with their neighbors, that they're continuing to grow and learn. This is a time of life when you have greater freedom to become that most authentic self, to become the person that you have always aspired to be. Our job, through education and storytelling, is to help people understand how they can make that so through the use of our product. ■



Required Reading

Where does this longtime content marketer turn for daily intel and inspiration? We asked Hutson for his marketing and media must-reads.

"I cast my net pretty wide," he says. "I look at both marketing-focused content and more general content that sparks content marketing ideas. Content Marketing Institute's site has been a primary source since Joe Pulizzi launched it as Junta42.

"I read the *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *Los Angeles Times* every day. I subscribe to SmartBrief newsletters on marketing, leadership and other subjects—they do a great job of curating a wide range of content. I devour *Harvard Business Review* both online and in print—I'm a magazine junkie."

“You can’t stand out if you’re always playing it safe.”

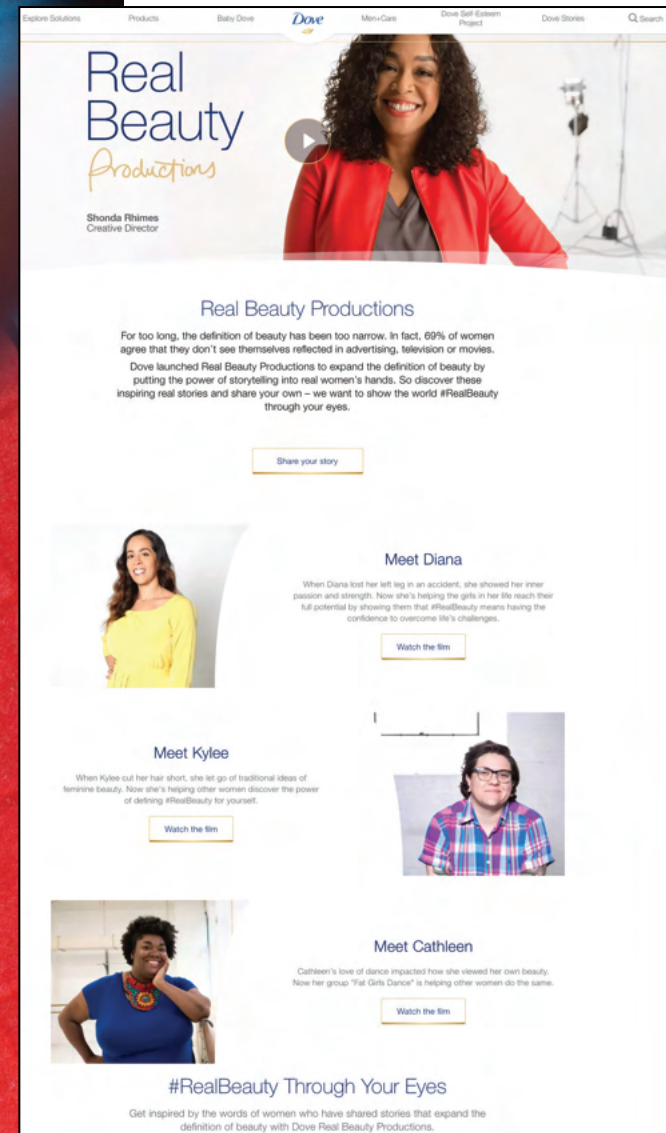


HIT OR MISS

#RealBeauty finally gets real and an insurance company courts new dads, while a bourbon brand stays sexist and Wendy's hits puberty

By Libby Ellis

iStock/malerapaso



Rhimes With Love

Here's why Shonda Rhimes is awesome: She prioritizes diversity on her TV shows. ALL of her leading ladies are badassess. (See Olivia Pope from *Scandal* and Annalise Keating in *How to Get Away With Murder*.) She doesn't shy away from race, sexuality or anything else. It makes sense that Dove wanted her to lead the next iteration of its #RealBeauty campaign. In it, Rhimes and Dove pick user-submitted stories and create videos of women talking about their experiences with beauty.

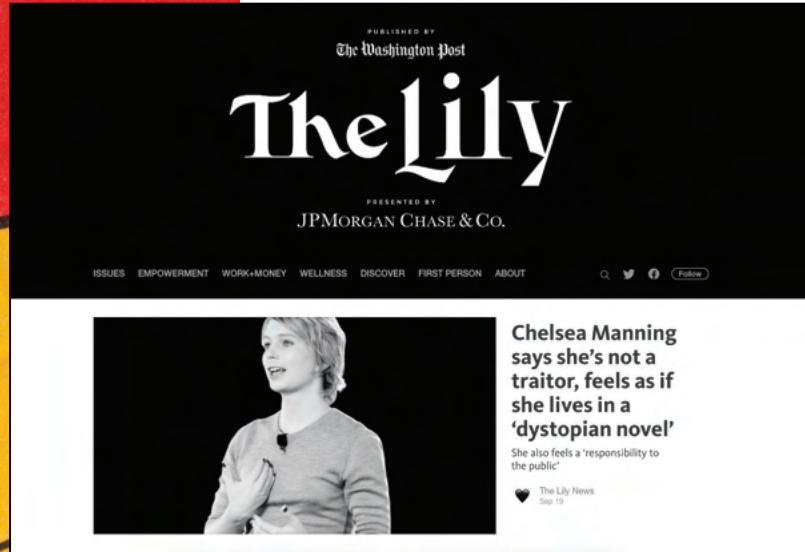
Hail, Shonda! Dove may finally be taking this 13-year-old campaign in the right direction. Yes, it's been successful, but it's also had a few tinges of cringe-worthy faux empowerment. Remember the creepy ad in which women wandered to a vacant building and described themselves to a male sketch artist so they could find out, "Hey, I'm not that ugly!?" And the curvy-bottles misstep? And the black-woman-turns-into-a-white-woman video? This is better—way better. The short films feature women telling their own stories out from under the literal male gaze. Yes, the site still has content about having "youthful hair" in the mix, but we're hoping Dove grows out of that and listens to its own marketing.

House Party

In 2016, 92 percent of home sellers used a Realtor rather than going it alone. Buyers want the help of a pro too—88 percent of buyers purchased their homes through a licensed agent, according to a 2017 report from the National Association of Realtors. To continue building its rep among members and the consumers who hire them, the powerful association partnered with *The Washington Post* to create a smart, interactive survey that puts potential buyers at the center.

Users are asked to rank what's important in the decision-making process when contemplating buying a home, what they look for most in a Realtor and more. Peppered throughout is the story of a couple buying their first place. The outcome is a relatable story along with millennial-friendly me-centered content that offers real-time results so you can see what percent of users share your opinions on each question. The bonus? A wealth of consumer data that the association can use for future content planning.





Banking on Women

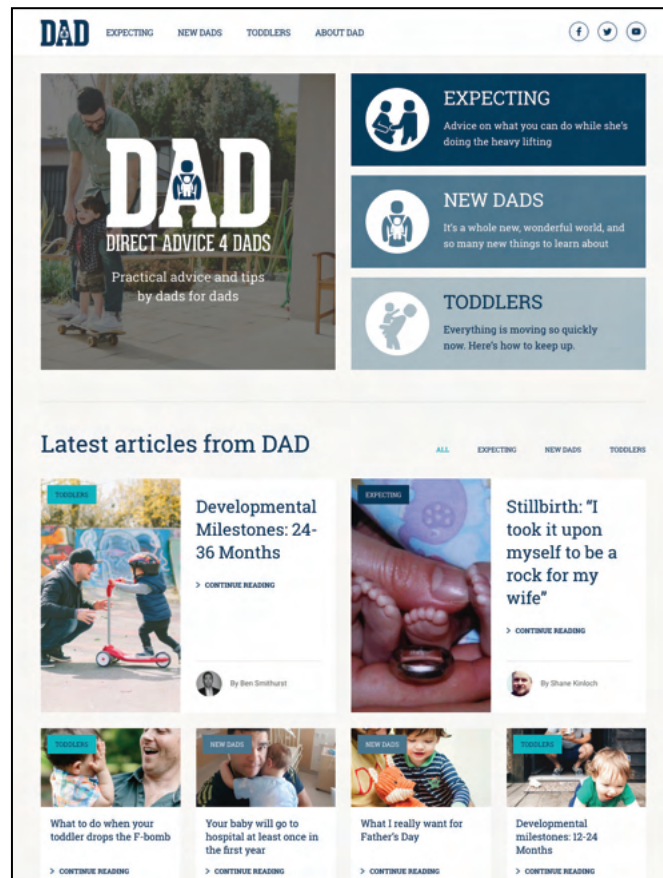
This year, *The Washington Post* targeted female readers with “The Lily” newsletter, offering original content and curated links primarily for, by and about women. “The Lily” is named after the first U.S. newspaper for women, which covered big issues of the mid-1800s, including temperance and the suffrage movement. Today’s version offers a great mix of easily digestible content. And its sponsored content from JP Morgan is totally on-brand.

Tied to the newsletter’s August Money Month campaign, sponsored articles like “10 Summer Reads for the Working (or Vacationing) Woman” fit right in. This one is a Skimm-like list from 10 female executives from JPMorgan. In addition to being relevant to readers, it says the financial behemoth actually has 10 women executives without having to state it. A quote at the end of the article links to #LeadingVoices, the branded content hub celebrating corporate diversity. The newsletter also includes a link to a survey that seeks to find how readers interact with money. The results will help generate relevant content for “The Lily” and give JPMorgan useful insights, presumably. We think Susan B. Anthony would approve.

Father Knows Best

A frazzled parent covered in baby goop struggles to get a stroller up the steps while balancing a grocery bag. Instant thought: new mom. Western Australia’s oldest and largest private health insurer, HBF, is flipping that stereotype on its head—and filling the gap in expectant/new parent content. “Direct Advice 4 Dads” blog and social strategy connects new dads with men who have been there. The real-talk articles include things like, “Sooner or later, we all give our kids a complex,” and a story on circumcision cheekily called, “The Big Decisions: Beanie or Helmet?”

The financial services’ brand push is subtle: Many new dads need to expand their family’s health insurance to include their kids or shell out for a more comprehensive plan. In its first five months, the blog got 171,000 unique visitors and 21,000 Facebook likes. We’re watching to see how well the DAD platform performs as a conversion path for HBF and whether the bank gets a #1 Dad Content mug for the holidays.



Burgers With Bite

The cutest redhead in fast food has quite a mouth on her. With social journalism part of many brands’ overall marketing strategy, developing a voice for social can be a challenge. Clearly, we’re all for a little snark, but this mean-girl persona doesn’t jibe with Wendy’s wholesome Midwestern roots. This exchange is fairly representative:

Ayanna Hargrove @ayannagurl9

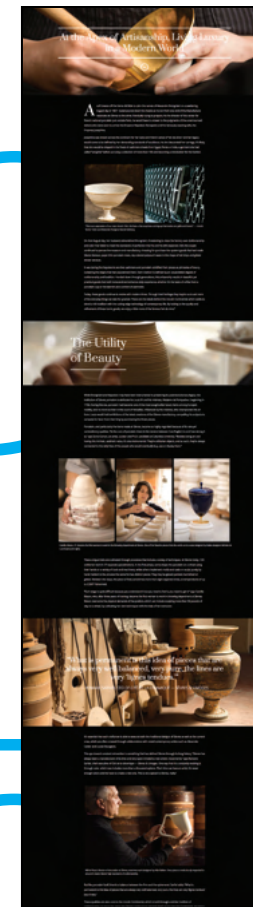
@Wendys how do you feel about Burger King being my favorite restaurant

Wendy’s @Wendys

Sorry for your tastebuds

Maybe Wendy just turned 13 in fast food years? Hardees has clicked “block,” and McDonald’s and Burger King are ignoring the whole thing. Which is fine, right? It’s consumers Wendy’s wants.

On paper, the results are good, according to *The Wall Street Journal*. Wendy’s reports its Twitter following went up 80 percent in the last year. In the first quarter of 2017, Wendy’s reported its 17th consecutive quarter of same-store sales growth in North America. The Twitter world may be responsive, but this approach doesn’t address the real issue: Off-brand social media that fails to address the company’s biggest competition—consumers’ evolving food habits. In 2016, the National Restaurant Association found that, “more than 7 in 10 adults are trying to eat healthier at restaurants than they did two years ago.”



Car Crash

Every year, car brands kill it with advertising. Content marketing? Not so much. Case in point: Lincoln’s lame attempt at storytelling that connects the brand to something bigger than itself. One piece of its sponsored content in *The New York Times* starts in 1807 with the tale of a porcelain manufacturer and a “soft breeze off the Seine.” Scrolling down, we learn about the evolution of Sèvres and the fine ceramics business. Wait, is this about a car?

Finally, we get to this: “But like porcelain itself, there’s a balance between the firm and the ephemeral... These qualities are also core to the Lincoln Continental, which is built through a similar tradition of craftsmanship. In much the same way Sèvres continues to reinvent itself, so too has the Continental.” With consumer demand for authenticity soaring, this piece comes off as a wee bit pretentious and lacks a connection between the story and the product.





Millennial Mishap

At first glance, a tweet from Bank of Ireland giving props to a millennial saving up for her own place seems reasonable:

Bank of Ireland ✓ @bankofireland Orla and her boyfriend stopped renting and moved back with their parents to save the deposit for their 1st home. #ad

The tweet linked to a blog post detailing how Orla is saving for a mortgage.

The backlash on Twitter was swift. Some took issue with its “Mommy and Daddy to the rescue” suggestion. Others viewed the bank’s campaign as an unviable solution that downplayed the reality of Ireland’s housing crisis. And still more mocked that few people work close to their parents’ home, making the suggestion unworkable.

Richard Chambers ✓ @newschambers Orla and her boyfriend are also foraging for berries while commuting 150km round trip from her parents’ house.

The timing of the ad and blog was particularly poor. An August 2017 report from Irish real estate and rentals site Daft.ie shows that rents in Ireland increased nearly 12 percent year over year in June—with available housing at an all-time low.

Bank of Ireland deleted the tweet and accompanying blog post in response to the criticism. In a statement, Bank of Ireland said: “The ad featured one couple’s deposit saving experience, it wasn’t intended to cause offence and wasn’t intended as advice for customers.” Perhaps next time, the bank will think twice before doling out tone-deaf tips suggesting that parents are the best bail-out option for millennial would-be home buyers.



Will Girls Go Wild?

In what Wild Turkey says is a push to earn the brand a more prominent place in the global spirits scene, the distillery has hired none other than Matthew McConaughey as its global storyteller. So far so good. The guy has plenty of name recognition and, like Shonda Rhimes and Dove, the partnership doesn’t seem totally off base. However, Eddie Russell, co-master distiller, along with his father, Jimmy, told NBC that it’s more than McConaughey’s superstar reach (and, seemingly, global-domination abilities) that got him the gig. Their reasons for making him Wild Turkey’s content star go skin deep: The brand is targeting a female audience.

“He speaks to women pretty easily,” Russell explained. “Just by looking at him [you know that].” When McConaughey was spending time at the distillery, “the ladies would come in more made up [than usual],” Russell said with a laugh.

Women, congratulations! You now have a reason to drink bourbon! And slather on more makeup! But wait, he’s a “manly man” so, fellas, no shame in your Wild Turkey game. It’s too soon to say what McConaughey will bring to the table, but the way this partnership was promoted has us seeking a little Southern Comfort.

Influencer Marketing

If you're still wondering about the who, why and how of influencer marketing, you're not alone. To help get you up to speed, here's a roundup of resources, ranging from beginner to expert level, to influence your own thinking about this on-trend tactic. —Mark Borowsky

BOOKS

- 1 Personal Influence: The Part Played by People in the Flow of Mass Communications**
by Elihu Katz and Paul Lazarsfeld
The Ur text for influence marketing.
- 2 The Influencer Economy: How to Launch Your Idea, Share It With the World, and Thrive in the Digital Age**
by Ryan Williams
Makes big promises and delivers.
- 3 Payoff: The Hidden Logic That Shapes Our Motivations**
by Dan Ariely
A motivational read.
- 4 Six Degrees: The Science of a Connected Age**
by Duncan J. Watts
Empirically sets the rules.



PODCASTS

- 1 Stories of the Influencer Economy**
by Ryan Williams
Follow the money.
- 2 Influence Marketing**
by John Mark Troyer and Kathleen Nelson Troyer
Brought to you by Influence Marketing Council.
- 1 Influence Pros**
by Heidi Sullivan and Julianna Vorhaus
Hours and hours of how-to.
- 2 B2B Growth**
by James Carbery and Jonathan Green
Smarts to influence the C suite.



Thinkstock/EvilWata, iPopba

FEEDS

- @jeffbullas**
550,000 followers can't be wrong.
- @ginidietrich**
Loves shoes, wine & influencer marketing.
- Pam Didner blog**
Consistently insightful.
- @FeldmanCreative**
Calls out the BS.



THOUGHT LEADERS

- Fred Reichheld**
Bain & Co. fellow, creator of Net Promoter System
Because NPS.
- Sam Fiorella**
Sensei Marketing, co-author of *Influence Marketing: How to Create, Manage, and Measure Brand Influencers in Social Media Marketing*
Lives and breathes influencer marketing.
- Ann Handley**
Chief content officer, MarketingProfs
The *Everybody Writes* author knows her stuff.
- Jonah Berger**
Professor of marketing, Wharton School and author of *Contagious: Why Things Catch On*
A Wharton prof's zeitgeisty smarts.
- Michael Brenner**
CEO, Marketing Insider Group, co-author of *The Content Formula*
Hint: It isn't E=mc².
- Ardath Albee**
Consultant, author of *Digital Relevance: Developing Marketing Content and Strategies That Drive Results*
By the B2B content guru.
- Ian Cleary**
Founder, RazorSocial
A valuable, provocative voice.
- Lee Odden**
CEO, TopRank Marketing
Influences influencer marketers.
- Brian Solis**
Principal analyst, Altimeter Group
Prolific pundit on influence.

SLIDESHARES



1 "22 Influencer Marketing Ideas From Influential Marketers"
Placester and Feldman Creative
Great ideas in a pretty package.



2 "Influencer Marketing Predictions: Where to Place Your Bets in 2017"
LinkedIn
9 trends that help define IM now.

"40 Top PR Pros Share Their Secrets for Effective Influencer Marketing"
The Shelf
40 pros, 70 slides, all good.

"What Is Influencer Marketing"
Influencer Marketing Hub
This delivers a definitive answer.

TED TALKS



1 "The Hidden Influence of Social Networks"
by Nicholas Christakis
A fascinating look at why they work.



2 "How to Make Choosing Easier"
by Sheena Iyengar
The influencer-choice connection.



3 "The Tribes We Lead"
by Seth Godin
The glasses, the dome, the legend.



4 "Are We in Control of Our Own Decisions?"
by Dan Ariely
Short answer: No.

NOT SURE HOW TO GET STARTED?

What do you need to know about influencer marketing to get your program off the ground? Here are some guidelines:

Influence Your Goals

Ask yourself these two questions to identify the right influencers for you: Are you looking to build brand awareness and a base of subscribers who can be converted into leads? Or is customer loyalty and retention your goal?

If you want to build awareness, influencers on social media can help you establish an audience on their platforms.

If you're trying to increase brand loyalty, turn to current customers who can provide an inside look at what it's like to be a customer of your product, adding credibility no celebrity could ever confer.

Know What to Look for

Identifying influencers can be the biggest challenge when planning an influencer engagement strategy. Tools like BuzzSumo and Followerwonk can help. So can searching your most relevant social channels to see what's being said about your product, service or industry—and who's saying it. Look for influencers who have an established presence and respected following, rather than those with just a clever voice, or who have expertise that's too broad or overly niche.

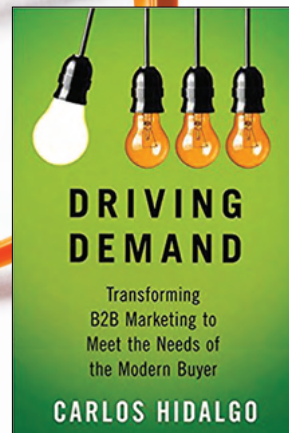
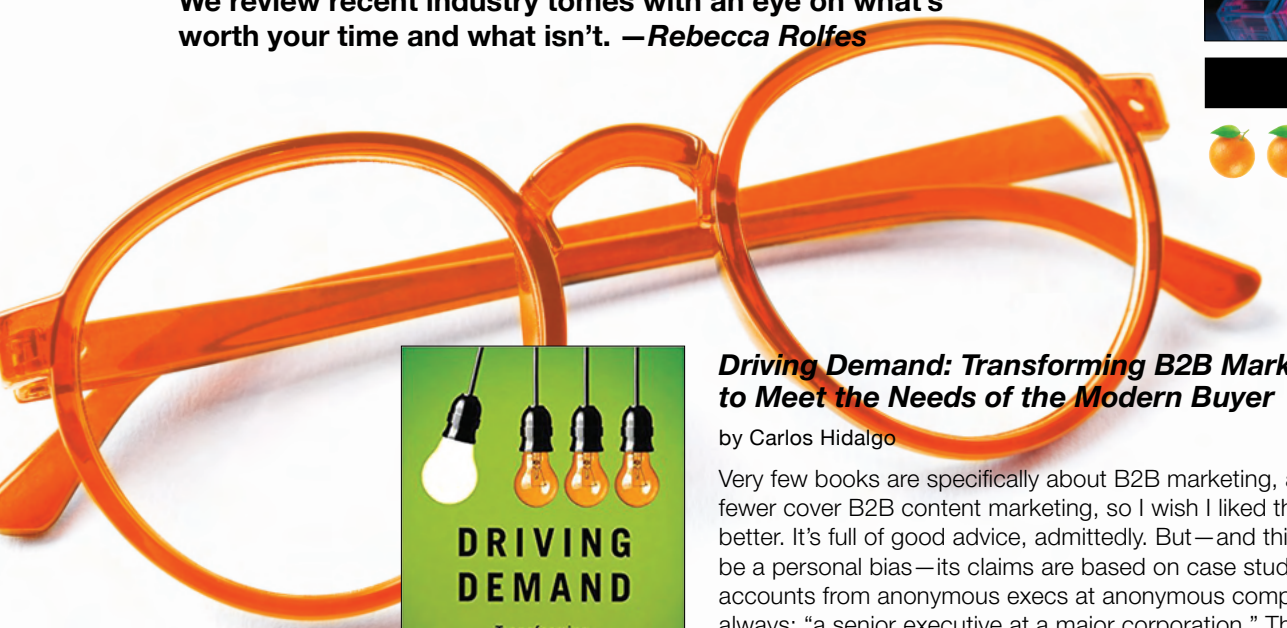
Seek Influence, Not Numbers

A social media titan may have an enormous number of followers, but that doesn't automatically translate into influence. Digiday reports the ideal number of Instagram followers lies between 10,000 and 100,000, according to a Markerly survey. These micro-influencers can have greater influence than a celebrity YouTube or Twitter feed with millions of fans. And with algorithms helping determine what shows up in individual users' feeds, it makes finding influencers who truly engage their followers more crucial than ever.



Read or Wrong?

We review recent industry tomes with an eye on what's worth your time and what isn't. —Rebecca Rolfes

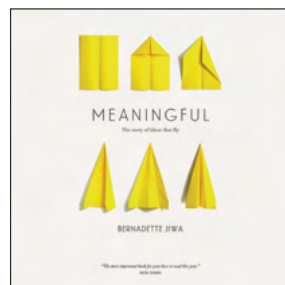


Driving Demand: Transforming B2B Marketing to Meet the Needs of the Modern Buyer

by Carlos Hidalgo

Very few books are specifically about B2B marketing, and even fewer cover B2B content marketing, so I wish I liked this one better. It's full of good advice, admittedly. But—and this may be a personal bias—its claims are based on case studies, i.e., accounts from anonymous execs at anonymous companies, always: “a senior executive at a major corporation.” This lack of specificity undercuts a solid message. The book's also littered with simple declarative sentences, two long clauses held together by a weak verb. It's a little like being bludgeoned to death by some form of the verb “to be.” Still, this gets 3.5 oranges for covering a little-understood topic and making a strong case for how it can drive customers to your door.

TAKEAWAY: “This lack of content alignment is due to the fact that many marketing departments are simply creating content for content's sake, rather than basing it on an understanding of the intricacies of the buying process.”



Meaningful: The Story of Ideas That Fly

by Bernadette Jiwa

Innovation used to precede marketing. Make a cool thing, then let marketing figure out how to explain its coolness so people want it. That's no longer the case. If the story you're telling about the customer's wants and needs were part of innovation, the new thing would not only be cool; it would be relevant. “Relevance is the new requirement,” according to this short and extremely relevant book. Competitive advantage comes not from being faster, cheaper, bigger or better; it comes from taking the time to understand the customer's story “before making what she wants.”

TAKEAWAY: Content marketing knows, understands, remembers and rewards customers. It can and should begin where innovation starts rather than where it ends.

X: The Experience When Business Meets Design

by Brian Solis

Don't buy this book for what it says; buy it for how it looks. The words are sometimes hackneyed, and the theme is a mashup of design thinking, the experience economy and digital anthropology.

TAKEAWAY: If users can't read your words (because you're using black type on a dark blue background, for example), your design has failed. Also, I am really tired of reading about Steve Jobs and Apple. Hasn't anyone else, anywhere, any time done anything in design that matters? Ever?

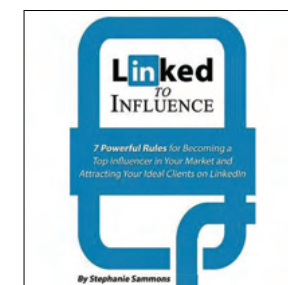


The Content Formula: Calculate the ROI of Content Marketing & Never Waste Money Again

by Michael Brenner and Liz Bedor

Do you have an intern in your content marketing department? Give him or her this book. Giant type, worksheets, blank pages for notes—a primer for Content Marketing 101. If, on the other hand, you're a CMO, don't waste your time.

TAKEAWAY: “Organic Unbranded Traffic: (\$50,000 X 500,000) / 100,000 = \$250,000.” Like that.



Linked to Influence: 7 Powerful Rules for Becoming a Top Influencer in Your Market and Attracting Your Ideal Clients on LinkedIn

by Stephanie Sammons

The title tells you all you need to know. If you need someone to hold your hand while you get going on LinkedIn, this is your book.

TAKEAWAY: “Your brand in the digital age is YOU. It is not your company.”



Play Bigger: How Pirates, Dreamers, and Innovators Create and Dominate Markets

by Al Ramadan, Dave Peterson, Christopher Lochhead and Kevin Maney

You don't want to be yesterday's “whale.” You want to be today's category creator. Think Uber without the sexual harassment scandal. You need the ultimate outside perspective on something, a groundbreaking product and a kick-ass point of view (aka story, aka content marketing message)—all at the same time. These authors (aka consultants) will walk you through it. Overall, this read's interesting and convincing but so riddled with Silicon Valley name-dropping that it's a little gag-inducing.

TAKEAWAY: Any business book with a chapter that has “Mobilization: The Shit Gets Real” in its name deserves consideration.

Thinkstock/Suradech14, photomaru

The Plan Was No Plan

Two lifelong fans of good (and bad) TV take a second shot at digital empire building

By Beth Gaston

It's a familiar refrain—thank God for *90210*. The '90s teen soap that made Luke Perry a household name, *Beverly Hills, 90210*, also brought together two English lit. majors who would, somewhat haphazardly, build the digital destination for fans of dumb TV and the smart writers who cover it. Following high-profile accolades, internet fame and a nice payday, they packed it in. And now they've started over, a little older and wiser. This time, they have a business strategy and content plan. Sort of.

Sarah D. Bunting and Tara Ariano “met” on a message board dedicated to television’s most famous ZIP code. Frequently hijacking the discussion to snark on other programs, the pair was encouraged (perhaps ironically) to go away and start their own site. And so they did—without much of a business strategy or a single face-to-face meeting.

“We ran our first site for close to a year and had a legal agreement to do so without ever having met in person,” Ariano says. “That potentially could’ve been a mistake, but it really worked out.”

Fueled by positive reception for their detailed-recap format and decent site traffic, the pair’s efforts grew. With the help of Ariano’s husband, David T. Cole, they launched the site that would eventually become Television Without Pity (TWP) to its devoted fans.

Without realizing it, the TWP founders had become content marketing experts, publishing thoughtful commentary at a regular cadence that just happened to leverage the universal pastime of television. Readers may have shown up to follow *Dawson’s Creek* or *American Idol*, but they returned for TWP’s unique voice and compelling commentary.



“We’ve been repositioning the site to focus on podcast coverage. It’s very improvisational.”

—Tara Ariano, founding editor, Previously.TV



Jens Kreuter



“The internet has a way of doing what it wants and you have to adapt or perish, so we adapt.”

—Sarah D. Bunting, East Coast editor, Previously.TV

“We saw an opening and just stood in it and made jokes,” Bunting says. “I wish I could say there was more of an architecture for our vision of the site, but ... there was a need for it, apparently. People liked what we did and came to it.”

Making It Big?

In 2007, Bravo (part of the NBCUniversal family) purchased Television Without Pity for an undisclosed sum. Fans immediately (and correctly) worried that corporate oversight would change the site for the worse. A year later, Bunting, Ariano and Cole bid farewell to the destination they’d built. By 2014, the site was shuttered for good.

With a whole new world of peak TV to dissect—and no corporate backing—the trio got back together in 2013 at Previously.TV, which thrives today. Site upkeep is a full-time gig for the three partners, who

oversee a staff of freelancers and a fourth partner who handles business development part-time.

And like the leap of faith it took two decades ago, the team is refining the plan as it goes. “We’ve been repositioning the site to focus on podcast coverage,” Ariano says. “It’s very improvisational. That’s our plan for the time being. It’s exciting to do something new.”

Bunting adds, “It can be hard to plan the shape of your editorial because what advertisers want and what consumers of your commentary want tend to go in directions you don’t necessarily anticipate.”

Not only is the Previously.TV podcast network expanding; it’s doing so with a focus on unique or throw-back coverage that can’t be found elsewhere. The site also offers user forums for more than 2,000 shows, along with traditional prose recaps. And all of Previously.TV’s content takes advantage of a cleverness and tone that’s familiar to former TWP devotees.

It’s All About the Content

Once again, Bunting and Ariano have serendipitously found success by harnessing the power of engaging content.

“The internet has a way of doing what it wants and you have to adapt or perish, so we adapt,” Bunting says. “It’s the same approach, it’s just a different medium. In five years, [the internet could be replaced by] a chip in the base of everyone’s neck. I’m horrible at predicting this. We’re just looking at the landscape and trying to adapt to it.”

And why not? Diving right in has been a pretty good plan over the last two decades for these two digital entrepreneurs.

“I guess we should have done more looking and less leaping but the thing is, once you know better, you won’t do anything, so I think it worked out pretty well,” Bunting says. “That’s all part of the same original mistake.”



Learn the fail that fueled the fame of an award-winning foodie blog.

See page 2 for app info



who's inside

SOCIAL SEEN

- 1 Antonio Figueiredo, global director of emerging industries and technologies, Salesforce
- 2 Mark Johnson, CEO and CMO, Loyalty360
- 3 Jay Baer, consultant and *New York Times* best-selling author
- 4 Mark Boothe, head of Adobe Marketing Cloud social media, Adobe
- 5 Mary Kay Evans, CMO, Verizon Digital Media Services
- 6 Esther Christoffersen, retail lead, cloud and enterprise marketing, Microsoft
- 7 Jamie Anderson, SVP

- and CMO, SAP Hybris
- 8 Aditya Gupta, VP and head of e-business, OCBC Bank
 - 9 Kiran Dhillon Midha, VP of product marketing, Cxense
 - 10 Johan Ugander, assistant professor of management science and engineering, Stanford University
 - 11 Jeriad Zoghby, PhD, southwest agency lead for Accenture Interactive and global lead for personalization
- THE LEDE**
- 12 Pat McGrath, makeup artist
 - 13 Topshop

- 14 Kohl's
- 15 Eva Chen, head of fashion partnerships, Instagram
- 16 Tiffany & Co.
- 17 Snapchat Spectacles
- 18 Sainsbury's
- 19 Hyatt
- 20 Target
- 21 Christopher Simmonds, co-founder, *Print* magazine
- 22 Hodinkee
- 23 Joe Pulizzi, founder, Content Marketing Institute
- 24 Jitesh Ubrani, senior research analyst, IDC
- 25 Tourism Ireland
- 26 Jill Cress, CMO, National Geographic Partners

- 27 Gucci
- 28 KFC
- 29 Castorama

WHAT THE FUNNEL?

- 30 Tom Collinger, executive director, Medill IMC Spiegel Digital and Database Research Center

INBOX INTEL

- 31 Elaine Armbruster, director of email marketing and marketing automation, The Ohio State University
- 32 Christine Nessen, senior director of contract marketing, Office Depot
- 33 Emily Neville-O'Neill, senior product manager,

Harvard Business Review

- 34 Kate Chandler, digital content director, National Federation of Independent Business

BEER, HERE

- 35 Michael Kiser, founder, Good Beer Hunting
- 36 Alan Moreno, co-founder, Plank Road Tap Room
- 37 Karen Hamilton, director of communications, Lagunitas Brewing Co.
- 38 Tony Magee, founder, Lagunitas Brewing Co.
- 39 Rob Tod, founder, Allagash Brewing Co.
- 40 Ryan Clooney, brewmaster, Crystal

Lake Brewing

- 41 Meredith Anderson, marketing manager, Half Acre Beer Co.
- 42 Garrett Oliver, brewmaster, Brooklyn Brewery
- 43 Ryan Browne, creator of God Hates Astronauts
- 44 New Belgium Brewery Co.
- 45 Goose Island Beer Co.
- 46 Heineken

ORANGE Q+A

- 47 Dan Hutson, chief strategy officer, HumanGood

HUB RULES

- 48 Anastasia Lyutikova, Adidas GamePlan A designer; senior art director, Scholz & Volkmer

Adidas

HIT OR MISS

- 50 Dove
- 51 National Association of Realtors
- 52 HBF
- 53 J.P. Morgan
- 54 Wild Turkey
- 55 Lincoln
- 56 Wendy's
- 57 National Restaurant Association
- 58 Bank of Ireland

THE PLAN WAS NO PLAN

- 59 Sarah D. Bunting, East Coast editor, Previously.TV
- 60 Tara Ariano, founding editor, Previously.TV

Get Content Smarts at Imaginepub.com

Calling all content marketing thought leaders!

Check out imagineNation, our content hub and content marketing playground at imaginepub.com. You'll find tons of insider industry smarts and big ideas, including these:

IT TAKES IMAGINATION podcast

Tune in each month as we talk shop with top content marketers, serving up insider smarts and creative inspiration over a great Chicago beer.

THE GREAT MAGAZINE MARKETING MAKEOVER

Learn 9 ways print magazines can use digital to foment FOMO.

FUTUREPROOF YOUR ASSOCIATION

Download our new whitepaper on the 4 M's that will redefine how you communicate: member value, myopia, millennials and messaging.

DESIGN RULES FOR A GAME-CHANGING CONTENT HUB

What's the UX and design strategy behind Adidas' gorgeous GamePlan A? Senior designer Anastasia Lyutikova provides a master class.



Download these content marketing smarts for our content hub, imagineNation

See page 2 for app info