

Content Marketing

Creating content to build consumer engagement in an omnichannel world

Content marketing was a tough sell just five years ago to CMOs, who often had trouble distinguishing it philosophically from advertising. Today, most get the concept that content is a different animal.

"Today, brands are taking on the role of media companies, but to succeed, content needs to keep up with brand values and resonate with the audience," says Andrew Hanelly, senior vice president of strategy at content marketing agency McMurray/TMG.

Taking the long view is essential if a brand wants to create a successful content strategy, he notes. "A lot of our business is based on quick turnaround strategies, but we need to think about what will have a long term value."

TELL A STORY

A big part of this is figuring out the best way to tell your brand's story to consumers, via any and every media channel they access.

"Twenty-second ads on TV, events, customer briefings, instore, social media... it's a huge initiative," said Chris Capossela, executive vice president and CMO of Microsoft, at the recent ANA Masters conference. "Marketing's dream and nightmare is that there are so many different forms of storytelling."

For General Mills, for example, the story for Pillsbury needed to be rewritten a bit. Pillsbury was traditionally marketed as the brand that made your house smell great on a Saturday morning with the smell of cinnamon rolls for the family, noted Mark W. Addicks, senior vice president/CMO of General Mills Inc. at ANA Masters.



Kraft boosted sales by promoting the popular Bunny Cake to different segments of its database who seemed likely to celebrate Easter.

But online activity showed that the "Maker" generation was using Pillsbury products in their own unique ways. Rather than just making the intended end product, they were using Pillsbury dough as the starting point to create something special and new for their families. This led the brand to promote recipes like the ever-popular Crescent Dogs and empower users to make the products the "canvas" for their own ideas and creations.

Marketers who provide good content consumers can use in their day-to-day lives will shift public perception in their favor. Of course, at some point, that attention needs to be leveraged into economic

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Pillsbury used recipes like Crescent Dogs to help appeal to the “Maker” generation of cooks.

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value. Smart marketers don’t think about their content marketing plan as a platform but rather as an ongoing system that the entire team contributes to on a regular basis.

“Your marketing organization shouldn’t be like a high school cafeteria with different cliques,” says Hanelly. “Everyone has to work together to build trust and create credibility.”

Smart brands have a core team working on their marketing content, and often work with agencies or partners to fill in where they don’t have bandwidth or strengths.

McMurray/TMG recently worked with Florida-based Parrish Medical Center to upgrade their online content portal (parrishmed.com). “They want to be branded as a trusted broker of health and wellness information and increase conversions, but are doing so with a long view. They want to earn their way into people’s lives.”

This can take the form of engaging a current or prospective patient to spend even just a minute or two of their day on the site with a great user experience, so when they’re ready for the next step—such as booking an appointment—they’ll think of Parrish.

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WATCH AND LEARN THE TRICK TO CONNECTING WITH ONLINE VIDEO

Video is one form of content that can have staggering engagement metrics—if it makes a true connection to your brand.

“People like videos that captivate them and create an experience, but there can be a disconnect,” warns Andrew Hanelly, senior vice president of strategy at content marketing agency McMurray/TMG. “A lot of sports and entertainment videos are popular online, but that doesn’t mean that someone wants to watch 100 videos about your conference.”

Fortune favors the bold when it comes to online video, and that means creating clips that have fun with your product and the audience, he notes. One great example of this is the “Family Meeting” video KFC created with The Onion. The clip shows a typical family sharing a dinner of KFC chicken...with the zombie-like monster Bob who lives with them. Bob is distressed that the family’s now teenage son is no longer scared to have him lurking in his closet or under the bed, and the parents reassure Bob that he’ll always have a place in their family.



KFC and Tidy Cat are partnering with outside content producers to create engaging videos that consumers eagerly share.

“We have to try harder to get your attention, and it’s okay to make fun of yourself,” says Hanelly. “We can’t just tell you our bucket of chicken costs \$10 and it will feed your company. Brands who don’t take themselves too seriously have a better chance of getting passed around.”

Tidy Cat is another brand that used humor to connect with consumers via video recently, with a clip of stressed out individuals going into a soundproof booth for what they thought would be guided meditation time. After a few moments, kittens were released into the booth with them, to participants’ (and viewers’) delight. The video, co-created with actor Rainn Wilson’s Soul Pancake site, went viral and was shared all over the web.

Native advertising can be an accelerant for this type of content, notes Hanelly. “You need to get your content in front of an audience that is similar to who you are trying to reach, on platforms that are relevant to your audience.”

Think of it as being the opening act for a band that has a huge following, he suggests. “People go to the stadium to see the headliner, but on the way they see you too.” —BNV

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Every piece of content on the site, such as an article or a recipe, is also positioned as a sharable social object, with something like an accompanying graphic that can be used on Pinterest, for example. That increases reach and shelf life.

KRAFT'S CONTENT RECIPE

Kraft also faced the same challenges for reaching consumers, and realized that it needed to transform its approach to reach consumers who reject mass merchandising and want marketing customized to their needs and wants.

"Agile and addressable marketing is the new norm. You need to be relevant and deliver the right message at the right moment to the right person to drive purchases," said Deanie Elsner, executive vice president and CMO, Kraft Foods Group Inc. at ANA Masters.

"A LOT OF BRANDS THINK ABOUT THEIR CONTENT MARKETING STRATEGY IN TERMS OF JUST ONE PIECE OF CONTENT AT A TIME. BUT IT ISN'T ABOUT ONE-OFFS. YOU NEED TO THINK BIG PICTURE."—ANDREW HANELLY

Data is an enormous part of Kraft's content marketing strategy, to help the brand target and deliver content to engaged segments. The company collects data on around 22,000 different attributes, including what people like to cook, types of recipes preferred, ethnic leanings, health issues and family size. Elsner estimates that Kraft has 500 custom segments that they buy media to target.

On a big scale, this data helps Kraft get ready for trends before they actually hit. The company has the seventh largest recipe site globally, and its recipes are viewed over one billion times each year.

"We are present with the consumer, because our portfolio [of products] participates in every snack and meal throughout the day," noted Elsner.

Kraft is also present at every holiday consumers celebrate with special food, including Easter, when thousands of bakers flock to Kraft's site every year to get the Bunny Cake recipe.

This year, Kraft wondered if it could amplify the impact of the recipe. It built custom segments around people who had been to the site and might be celebrating Easter, and then pushed the Bunny Cake

recipe out to them. This resulted in a 23% sales lift for the month on the Jello, Bakers, Cool Whip and Jet Puffed products needed to create the cake.

Online content has also proved successful for other Kraft brands. When it launched its K-cup coffee business in January 2013, the launch was completely digital—as only 15-20% of households nationally have the Keurig system, a lot of money would have been wasted with a big TV campaign. Instead, Kraft went to the database and pushed content straight those it knew had or were likely to have Keurig systems. In two years, the brand has built a \$200 million coffee pod business.

WHERE TO BEGIN

The funnel for getting content to consumers and creating engagement is dead. Today's consumer is using their phone as a remote control to shape their experience when it comes to getting information about everything, from entertainment and news to products and services. This means marketers need to create a strategy for having relevant content at every point a consumer wants information.

An essential part of content marketing is patience. The first day you put your content out there, you can't throw in the towel if it doesn't immediately take the Internet by storm.

"A lot of brands think about their content marketing strategy in terms of just one piece of content that falls at any given time," says Hanelly. "But it isn't about one-offs. You need to think of the big picture."

There are many different things brands need to consider, he notes. What makes your brand special? What will make your target audience relate to you? What would differentiate your brand from the competition? How will you measure results and apply those results to the next phase of your plan?

MEASURING SUCCESS

That last part is the trickiest for many brands to wrap their heads around. After all, Hanelly says, the last activity someone had with your brand isn't necessarily the one that actually drove the sale.

It pays to keep in mind that your end results shouldn't be simply driving likes on Facebook. "We're trying to get people to convert, and need to know which channels will impact that conversion at a higher rate," says Hanelly.

In an age of social sharing, the idea of collecting email addresses may seem a bit old school. "So many marketers downplay the value of that," he says. But marketers that collect email addresses can then shift the prospect into an ecosystem they own, and

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THE SWEET LIFE

CLEVER CONTENT HELPS LEVEL THE CANDY COUNTER FOR AMERICAN LICORICE CO.

Founded 100 years ago in 1914, one could say that the American Licorice Company is actually kind of a marketing pioneer, at least when it comes to product placement. Way back in 1925, the company created a licorice shoe prop for Charlie Chaplin to eat in the classic film "The Gold Rush."

Today, thanks to a fragmented media landscape, getting your product in front of America's eyeballs is a little more complex, to say the least. This makes content marketing essential for the company, best known for Red Vines and Sour Punch candies.

The brand's marketing resources are admittedly smaller than its competitors like Hershey, Mars and Nestlé.

"They all have paid media budgets that make ours look like a rounding error," joked Michael Kelly, media/consumer communications manager for La Porte, IN-based American Licorice, speaking at ANA Masters. "But what we're seeing is that in the era of social and mobile, we can earn a disproportionate share of voice."

The brand knows it can't compete in the realm of paid media, but it can see considerable wins with earned media, if it leverages its agility and creativity to reach consumers through emotional connections.

Indeed, with nearly 1.7 million likes, Red Vines is the most liked licorice on Facebook (Twizzlers has 1.1 million likes). It is the third most followed candy on Twitter as well, says Kelly, with nearly 61,000 followers. Still, the company's organic reach has been slipping—Red Vines organic reach of content has dropped 73%, while Sour Punch's has slipped 78%.

"This means we have to be creative—we have to play 'Moneyball' and focus our energy in

the right places, and understand the role of these platforms in consumers lives," he said.

For one thing, he noted, there is no such thing as "the consumer." He splits candy eaters into five categories—candy conflicted, stealth chocoholics, candy enthusiasts, nutritional noshers and the young and the guiltless.

"Your voice and content campaigns must resonate," said Kelly. "And it's important to understand the different devices customers are using on the path to purchase—we need to have cross attribution if we're going to hit consumers with the right content at the right moment."

Fortunately for Kelly's company, candy—unlike, say, washing machines—lends itself to visual content. But just showing a picture of a sweet isn't enough—how it is portrayed matters. "We've found that if we show sugar crystals on our candy, it helps us," he offered as an example.

Visual humor has also worked to build awareness for the brand. When Apple launched the iPad Mini, American Licorice created a sharable graphic with the Red Vines Mini package and the tagline "We had one first."

Fans also provide the company with some of its best content, notes Kelly. Sometimes big ideas come from agency, sometimes they come from fans. When it discovered the amazing "Licorice Flix" portraits of famous movie characters and actors San Francisco-based artist Jason Mecier was making out of Red Vines, it partnered with him to create a viral video and exhibit called "Eye Candy" showcasing his art.

"We look for ways to empower and boost our own fans, and we want to find media partners that compliment our brands," said Kelly.

Not missing an obvious viral opportunity, Red Vines began making their own quick and simple silly stop motion Vine videos in-house to share online. Partners like Regal Theaters got in on the fun by tagging the candy in their own Vines. —BNV



Red Vines created the licorice shoe Charlie Chaplin ate in the classic film "The Gold Rush." Today, users such as artist Jason Mecier help create content for the brand, like this Harry Potter portrait.

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use that ecosystem to deliver more relevant content.

“Getting those leads into our database is such a huge thing,” he adds. “Email is more of a workhorse than a show pony. It is so powerful in building a relationship and selling to someone down the road. Humble tools can be the best.”

HUGGIES' PERFECT FIT

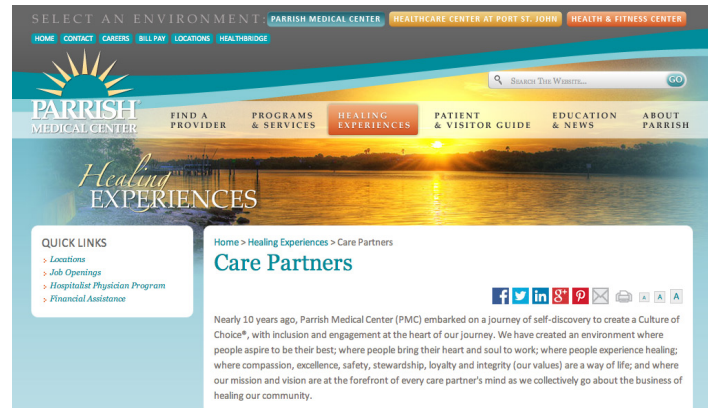
For Huggies, the beauty of email was as simple as child's play. Diapers are a big business—between 18 to 23 billion are sold annually, 49 to 63 million each day. Babies and parents, like diapers, come in all different shapes, sizes and preferences, but Huggies was struggling with a one-size-fits-all content strategy.

“We were sharing the same message with millions of consumers, and we realized we needed to abandon our current approach,” said Emily Harger, commercial platform manager, Huggies brand, Kimberly-Clark North America, speaking at DMA Annual. “We were spending so much on postage and paper and we saw a huge opportunity to deliver content to users digitally.”

A great way to reach moms is via email, so Huggies needed to build that database. It partnered with YesMail to segment its database and begin delivering customized content to specific segments, in an automated fashion. Huggies saw a 30% increase year over year on contactable names, and a 400% increase in engagement for opens and clickthroughs, as well as increased coupon redemption.

CONTENT BY THE NUMBERS

According to the Content Marketing Institute (CMI)/Marketing Profs “2015 B2C Content Marketing Benchmarks, Budgets and Trends—North America” report, on average B2C marketers used seven social platforms this year, down from six the previous year. But only 37% ranked their content marketing



Parrish Medical Center is hoping a revamped content portal will help position the facility as a trusted information resource.

efforts as effective, and only 27% of respondents had a documented content marketing strategy.

The biggest goals for content marketing for CMI respondents were CRM/loyalty (88%), engagement (88%), brand awareness (87%) and sales (77%). The biggest challenge respondents cited was, not surprisingly, measuring effectiveness. Sixty-two percent used web traffic as a measure for success, 54% cited sales, 39% conversion rates and 39% SEO.

The most effective social platform for content distribution were Facebook (58%) and Twitter (52%). But social wasn't cited as the top content tactic over all. That honor went to newsletters, cited by 66% of respondents. Social other than blogs was cited by 58%, 59% cited illustrations or photos, 54% cited video, and 53% cited articles on websites. !



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