



2013

STATE OF CONTENT MARKETING

INTRODUCTION

At CopyPress, we felt it was important to enter this critical year for the Content Marketing channel with a fresh perspective on what marketers were looking at focusing on in 2013. We created a survey and unleashed it on a group of marketing professionals and received 329 responses from amazing people.

We tried to create a survey with a mix of questions that would give us insight into how general marketing decision makers, keepers of budget, would be approaching Content Marketing or even if they were this year. Some of the questions were very straightforward, such as the channels of focus in 2013, and some were more timely, such as questions around authorship.

The insight we got was incredible.

For us, the most exciting part was the amount of amazing open-ended responses we received to help clarify the raw data. Along with these responses we received a handful of full interviews and case studies.

From marketing consultants to enterprise level marketers, we were able to see exactly how the industry plans on approaching content in 2013. The core of this information led us to some interesting conclusions:

- » 1 Half of marketers are changing their channel focus in 2013, and of those surveyed the biggest focus will be on Content Marketing.
- » 2 Over half of marketers are investing \$2,000 or more on marketing per month this year
- » 3 Featured Articles still yield the best ROI across industries
- » 4 Videos are an ROI rich media format, but marketers are having issues finding them, and within budget.
- » 5 Authorship is a big focus for marketers this year, but overall they aren't willing to pay more for a premier author to create a piece of content.

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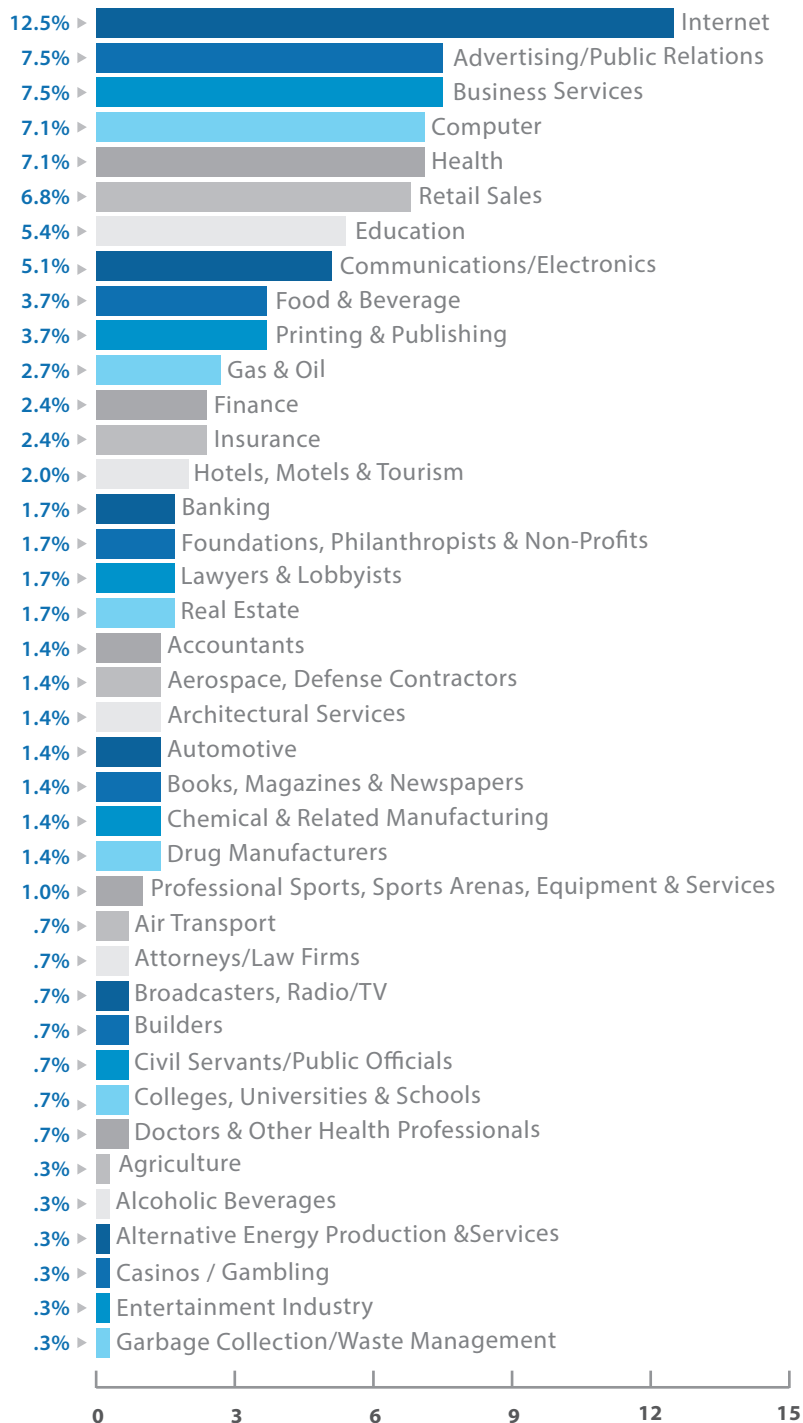
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WHO TOOK THE SURVEY

329 Marketing decision makers answered our call to take the 2013 State of Content survey. These decision makers came from a variety of companies, roles, and industries.

Among the most responsive industries were Internet (12.5%), Advertising/PR (7.5%), Health (7.1%), and Retail Sales at (6.8%).

This gave us a great cross section of B2B and B2C survey participants, as well as public and private sector marketers.



MARKETING CHANNEL FOCUS

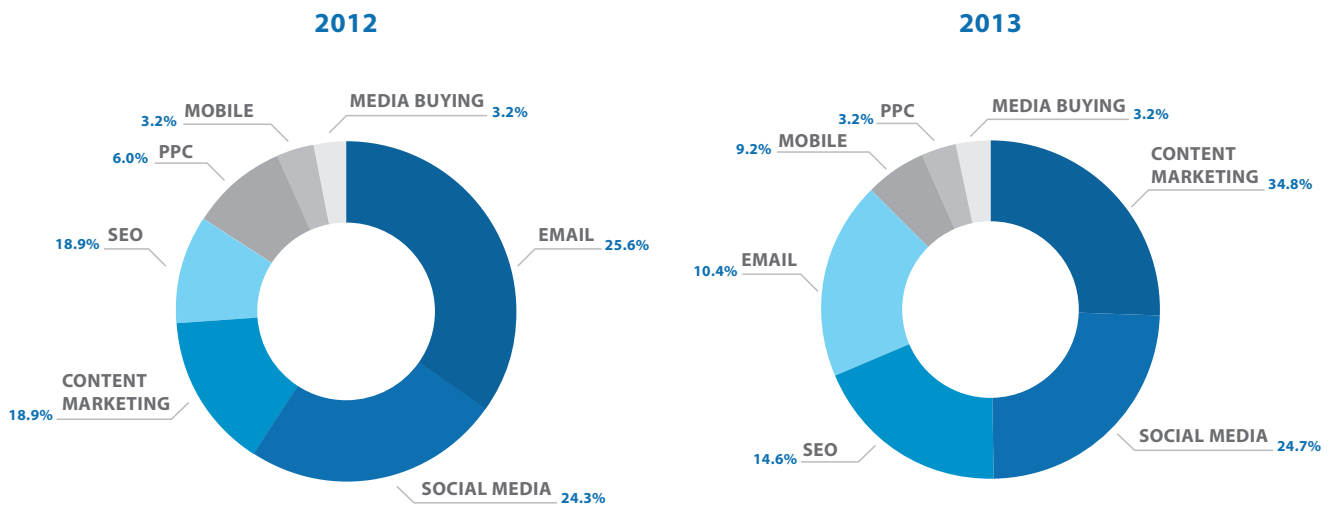
The first thing we wanted to quantify once we knew “who” we were getting data from, was what they focused on in 2012, and where their focus was going to lie in 2013. 317 people told us what they did and where they are going.

CHANNELS IN 2012

In 2012, the marketers we interviewed had a pretty large focus on earned media.

Email was king, and was a focus for 25.8% of our survey takers, Social Media came next with 24.3% and SEO and Content Marketing were tied with 18.9% of marketers focusing on them.

Earned media being a “focus” could have a lot to do with the nature of those marketing channels. Earned media takes more resource allocation in comparison to the budget allocation needed for paid media channels.



Email leading the pack was something that was surprising, but shows the power of that oft forgotten marketing medium. This is something that we at CopyPress have actually been taking note of ourselves over the last six months. Email marketing is a great supportive marketing channel for other earned media, especially Content Marketing.

CHANNELS IN 2013

The focuses for 2013 are radically different.

The top of the pack isn't where the surprises lie. 34.8% of the respondents are planning to focus on Content Marketing in 2013, which beats second place Social Media (24.7%) by 10.1%.

However, email marketing fell and will only to be a focus for 10.4% of marketers, and SEO fell to a focus for 14.6%.

Along with Content Marketing's growth, Mobile saw a pop up as focus for now 9.2% of our respondents.

EXAMINING THE DIFFERENCES

Roughly 50% of marketers decided to change their focus from 2012 to 2013, 164 out of 329 respondents.

Email was the biggest channel that saw an exodus with 53 people deciding they needed to focus their time elsewhere. That is 33% of the whole group that decided to change their focus in 2013. 23% of the people that decided to switch channel focuses left from Social Media and 22% from SEO.

Obviously Social Media had as many new marketing decision makers focusing on it as it lost (36 of the 164 to be exact), but the results are clear in terms of the drop in focus for SEO and Email from 2012 to 2013. I personally found this interesting as email marketing yields a very tangible marketing ROI, and no great market changes have taken place to effect it, such as SEO. The issue may be that email marketing is such a well-practiced channel in most companies that it no longer needs the benefit of extended focus.

But the question that begs to be asked is, where did the email marketers go? Whether they found email no longer valuable or have simply honed it to a point of expertise is left outside of the realm of our data points, but we did have access to what channels they are switching their focus to.

Of the 79 respondents that focused on email marketing in 2012, 27 or 34% are keeping email their focus in 2013. 29% percent of this group decided to change their focus to Content Marketing, 18% to Social Media, and 10% are changing to SEO. The other thing that this insight could show us is that email lists become stagnant at some point and need to be refreshed through other channels such as Content Marketing.

The numbers with SEO tell a similar story. 59 people focused on SEO in 2012, 23 of 59 (39%) are keeping that channel their primary focus. 20 of 59 of those surveyed (34%) are changing to content marketing and 9 of 59 (15%) to Social Media.

Content Marketing had the most new marketers moving to it, with 63 of the 164 or 38% of those making changes, making the trek over.

As I noted, mobile marketing saw quite an uplift as well. Of the 29 people planning to focus on Mobile in 2013, four of them or 14% are keeping the focus from 2012. 34% switched from Social Media, 17% from Content Marketing, 14% from email, 10% from SEO, 7% from Media Buying and 4% from PPC.

MONTHLY CONTENT SPENDING

Once we found out what channels marketers were focusing on we quickly turned the remainder of our attention onto Content Marketing alone. The place to start investigating what marketers were doing in the space was to start with the pocket book. Spending is a significant indicator of how seriously marketers take a channel. While they may simply say they are focusing on Content Marketing, insight into budgets lets us know whether this is just lip service or fact.

We decided to focus on specific market segments in our line of questioning. For this reason we used the following budget ranges:

Not Using Content	Small Business	Mid Sized Business	Enterprise Level Business
\$0	\$1-\$499 \$500 - \$1999	\$2000 - \$4999	\$5000 - \$10,000 10,000+

2012 MONTHLY SPENDING

301 respondents shared what they spent on content marketing in 2012. 20.3%, the highest amount in the survey, were spending between \$1-\$499 in 2012. If you combine that with the 15.6% for budgets between \$500-\$1999, then the small business segment noted represented a total of 35.9%.

Even more interesting was that after the \$1-\$499 group the next largest budgetary segment was the group that didn't spend any money. This means that a majority of marketers polled spent less than \$2000 a month on Content Marketing in 2012. Keep in mind this is a group that overwhelmingly put their focus in earned media that year, and most earned media marketing revolves around content in some format.

It is not appropriate to paint the picture that no one was spending significant sums of budget on Content Marketing in 2012. 15% of our respondents had budgets in excess of \$10,000.

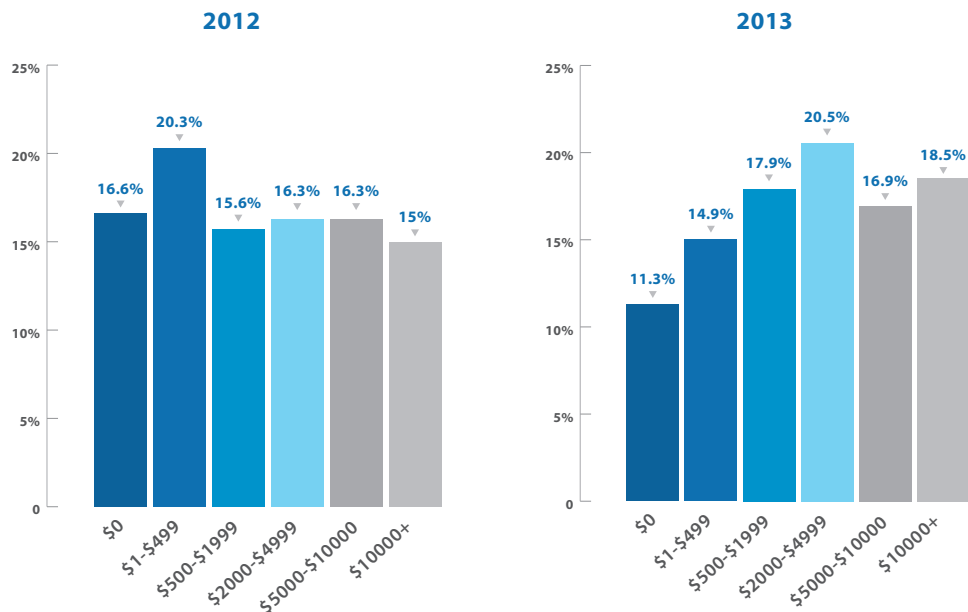
2013 MONTHLY SPENDING

We used the same budget parameters for 2013, 302 respondents gave us their plans for spending in 2013.

20.5%, the largest segment for this question, were planning on spending between \$2000-\$4999. The majority switched to mid size budget tiers and up with a total of 55.9% of respondents looking to spend \$2000 or more in 2013.

Only 11.3% of respondents remained convinced that they shouldn't spend marketing dollars on content.

EXAMINING THE DIFFERENCE



Only 2.4% of those surveyed were actually looking to decrease budgets from 2012 to 2013. The large majority of marketers were looking to stay put on their Content Marketing budget with a total of 73.3% of those surveyed thinking their 2012 budget was sufficient.

24.3% decided to increase budgets.

I think it is interesting to look at where these marketers are getting their ROI later in the survey compared to their budgets, and likewise why they feel items like video are a bit out of touch from a resources and budgetary perspective. A high quality video can cost upwards of \$10,000 depending upon its source and that is well outside of 81.5% of our respondents' monthly budget.

Of the 110 people that are focusing on Content Marketing in 2013, 40 respondents (or 36%) are increasing their overall marketing spend this year.

32 people responded that they didn't have a spending budget for 2013. The main focus for those with no budget is Social Media which accounts for 50% of this group. 5 of the 32 respondents stated that their focus was Content Marketing, perhaps showing that marketers separate salaries from their marketing budget analysis.

Of the 55 respondents spending 10,000+ the focus was mainly on Content Marketing, with 38% of the respondents stating this would make up their large budgets. Social Media (10/55 or 18%) and SEO (9/55 or 16%), followed Content Marketing in the pursuit of the large marketing budgets.

Obviously this data skews based on the channel focus of the group, as traditionally, paid media groups command larger monthly spends, but media buying and PPC both only warranted the focus of a small percentage of respondents in the \$10,000+ category.

CONTENT

We allowed multiple responses to the next set of questions. They were based on the type of content being used by marketing decision makers, and since most companies utilize several types of content, we thought it was important to allow a more open form of questioning.

However, it is important to note that we had to keep the question somewhat contained and certain content types may have been overlooked as a result. We tried to keep the concept of "content" confined to those used heavily by marketers. For this reason we chose the following:

» SALES COPY	» FEATURED ARTICLES	» WHITE PAPERS	» BUYERS GUIDES	» INFOGRAPHICS
» ILLUSTRATIONS	» PHOTOS	» VIDEO	» MOTION GRAPHICS	» INTERACTIVE MEDIA

We did, however, leave an option for alternative content formats that the marketers could not fit within one of these categories.

Our lines of questioning revolved around what Content Marketing decision makers felt yielded clearly higher ROI, which content they felt was difficult to source, and which content they felt was expensive.

CONTENT WITH BEST ROI

284 people responded with what content formats are found to generate ROI. Since marketers could vote for multiple content formats it is an interesting exercise to split the mediums into two categories:

- » 1 Those that a majority of marketers found generate ROI
- » 2 Those that the minority found generate ROI (allowing for the assumption that a majority did not find value in these formats)

The majority is pretty basic, two content mediums were found to generate an ROI for a majority of those that responded to our survey: Featured Articles and Video.

That means the rest of the formats were found to be less efficient from an ROI perspective.

There were a few formats that fell into a median level of value producing ROI for over 30% of respondents. These were White Papers (45.6%), Photos (37.8%) and Interactive Media (36%).

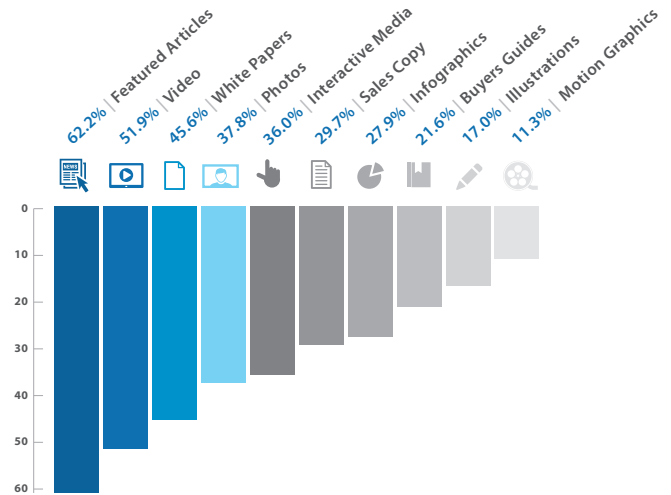
Those found less than valuable from a pure ROI perspective included some surprises such as Sales Copy (29.7% of marketers finding ROI in the medium) and the ever popular Infographic (21.6%).

CONTENT THAT IS DIFFICULT TO FIND

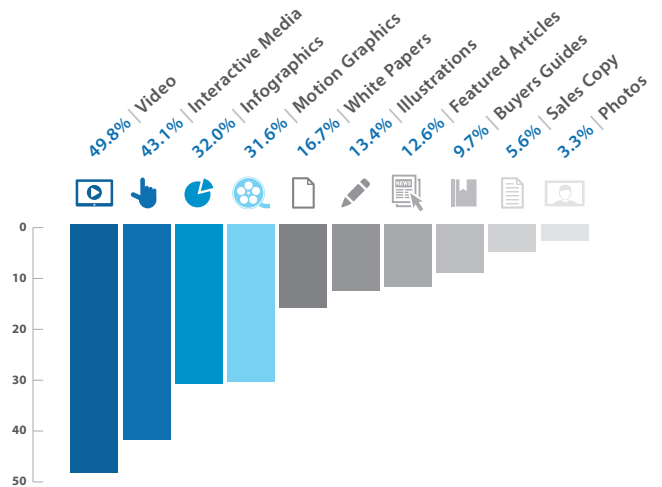
Scalability and quality are two terms we hear thrown around a lot by marketers looking to source content. It is difficult for people holding the budget to find the sources for certain types of content. However, we wanted to get a better look at what type of content marketers had the most difficulty sourcing.

With 263 responses, no content types fell into the majority for this line of questioning.

CONTENT WITH BEST ROI

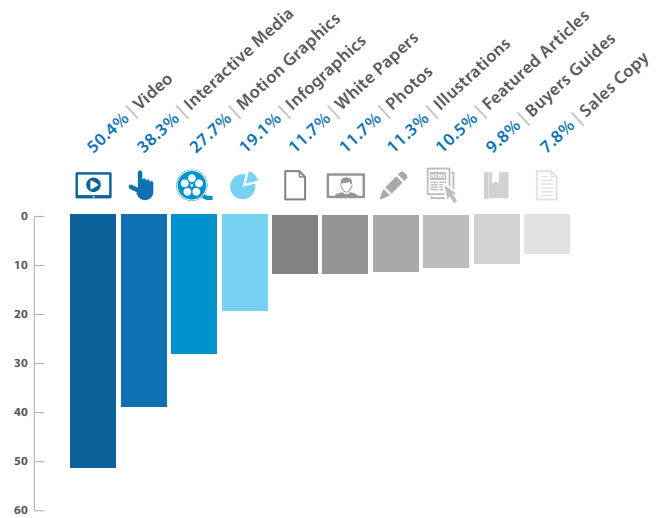


CONTENT THAT IS DIFFICULT TO CREATE



The most difficult form of content to source was Video with 49.8% of respondents having issues there. Interactive Media was a close second with 43.1%. The least problematic was Photos with only 3.3% of respondents to this question having difficulty with the medium, followed by Sales Copy at 5.6%.

CONTENT THAT IS OVERPRICED



CONTENT THAT IS EXPENSIVE

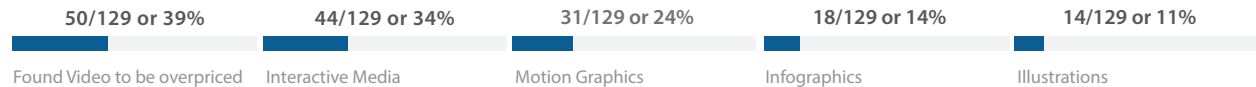
There was an interesting correlation between the content marketers found “difficult” to source and that which they found “expensive.” It begs us to question whether content is really “difficult” to find, or simply difficult to find at the right price?

254 Respondents gave us their opinion on what content mediums they found expensive.

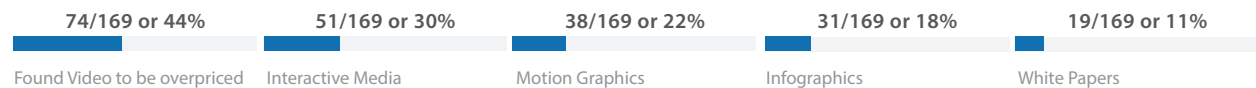
Video led the pack again with just about half of marketers finding the medium overpriced (50.4%), followed again by Interactive Media at 38.3%.

EXPLORING THE DATA

Of the 129 respondents that had no budget or a small budget range that responded to question eight (based on the above representation of budget breakdown)

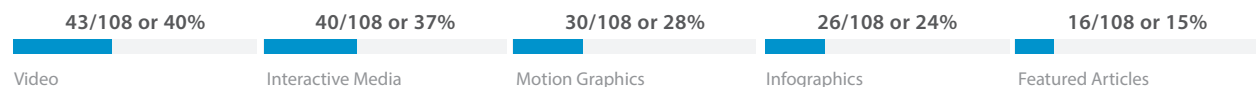


Of the 169 respondents that fell in the Mid to Big budget range that responded to question eight (based on the above representation of budget breakdowns)

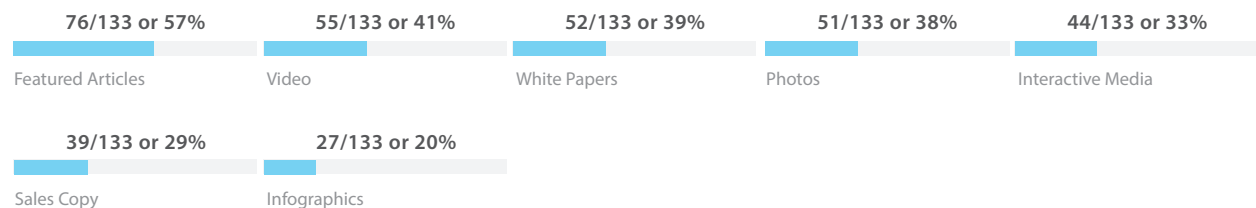


The correlation between these two groups was interesting because it showed budgetary restrictions did not affect the outlook on unit based pricing. The correlation between perceived difficulty and expense were also interesting.

Of the 108 respondents with the largest monthly budgets, people that should have better resources at their disposal, the following was found to be the breakdown for content attainability (responses to Question seven):



The top five content types in terms of ROI for the 133 respondents to question six with No or Small budgets were:

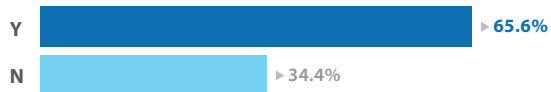


AUTHORSHIP

If Content Marketing itself isn't the buzzword for 2013 then authorship will seemingly take that title. Everyone is talking about authorship at marketing conferences and most of the conversation seems to revolve around Google. We wanted to get a better idea of just how marketers perceived this new shiny object.

So the first and most important question was to find out how many marketers were focusing on authorship as an element of their Content Marketing strategy in 2013. 291 respondents answered this question.

65.6% answered that authorship was indeed an important part of their Content Marketing strategy for the year, while the remaining 34.4% did not feel it was critical.



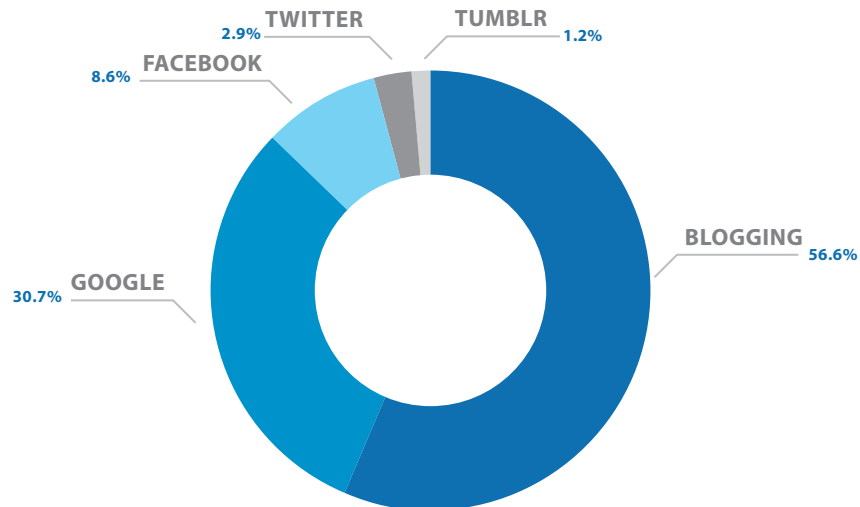
WORD ASSOCIATION

Next we wanted to get a good idea of what authorship even meant to the marketers. People are buzzing about the word, but the concept in and of itself is vague.

Over half of the 244 marketers that answered the question associate the word "authorship" with the word "blogging." This makes a lot of sense as the "blog" is to the online author what the novel is to the print author.

30.7% of respondents associated "authorship" with "Google", and 8.6% with "Facebook."

So while much of the online marketing buzz seems to be about the "authorship" connection with "Google," many people controlling spend are thinking about the non-platform focus and concept of authors and how they figure into the Content Marketing scope.



VALUE OF AUTHORSHIP

The easiest way for us to get at the core of how much "authorship" was worth to decision makers was to ask about their desire to pay for it.

We asked the respondents whether they would pay 2x more for content created by popular authors, the seeming core of authorship. 294 people answered this question.

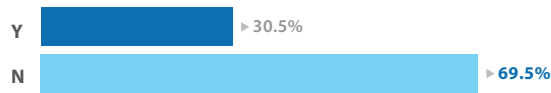


While 65.6% of respondents are focusing on some element of authorship this year only 41.2% are willing to pay twice as much for content from popular authors.

FAMILIARITY WITH GOOGLE AUTHORSHIP

With Google at the heart of much of the authorship conversation we thought it was important to find out how many decision makers knew about the rel="author" tag that allows for the speculated AuthorRank connection.

In this case, 69.5% of the 295 respondents were not familiar with rel="author" tag.



BREAKING DOWN THE DATA

Of the marketers that associated "authorship" with "Google", 24.32% did not know what rel="author" was. Almost a quarter of marketers in the survey that are hearing the buzz about search and authorship are not sure how to deploy the value in the strategy.

More interesting still is that of the 190 respondents to question nine that felt authorship was an important part of their Content Marketing strategy, less than half (45.26%) are willing to pay 2x more for content created a popular author. While authorship is important to a majority of marketers, only about half of that group is willing to pay for the authorship value of a high end content contributor. This would seemingly be a hurdle as we move through 2013 and writers look to quantify their value.

What was also compelling is how people who found ROI in expert articles approached paying experts. Of the 176 people that find value in this content that answered question 11, less than half again (47%) are willing to pay 2X the amount for an article written by a popular author.

65% of the mid to large sized budget marketers that responded to question nine stated that they were indeed going to be focusing on authorship in 2013. Of this group 31% did not know what rel="author" was, a seeming discrepancy between the focused approach to Google's value in authorship in terms of how marketers are approaching the concept.

From the 131 small to no budget marketers that were involved in the survey, 75% planned on focusing on authorship in 2013, but only 28% knew what rel="author" was.

CASE STUDIES AND INTERVIEWS



INTERVIEW

Gael Breton

Co-founder, Higher Click

Gael Breton is Co-founder of Higher Click, an inbound marketing agency. They mostly focus on organic traffic but also run the occasional paid campaign. They pride themselves on being very conversion oriented.

How have you seen content marketing change over the last 12-24 months?

As soon as Google penguin hit, people knew they couldn't rely on crappy link sources to grow their search rankings. It was a time of demise in the SEO world where nobody knew where to turn. Then SEOMoz and especially Rand Fishkin started to push the idea of generating traffic through long tail content marketing. Moreover, content could actually earn good links. Links that do not get you penalized and will stay for a long time if it was good enough.

How do you see content marketing changing over the next 12-24 months?

Sadly, I can see a lot of people begin to cut corners. I think we'll see a lot of crap content out there very soon. People want the traffic but don't want to put the effort in most of the time. However, this is opening the realm of real organic promotion and makes the job of an internet marketer very close to traditional marketing.

I also feel like big brands are going to go very big on this. We saw what Red Bull did with Stratos. Coca Cola also aims to earn a "disproportionate share of popular culture" through their content by 2020. Content is about to get crowded and you'll have to push the limits in order to earn some mind share.

Do you feel quality content has an effect on sales actions on your website? Not just via traffic being driven, but actually helping conversion rates?

Good content people are actively looking for definitely does. However, you have to acknowledge the type of content you're publishing and match it with the right conversion. If you're publishing an informational blog post, you should probably not push for the sale, but rather an email list subscription. If you're doing product comparison, or a buying guide, you can be a little more aggressive. It's all about the intent of the person consuming the content.

Do the separate channels of your marketing team collaborate when it comes to a content marketing strategy? (i.e. PR, SEO, Social Media)

In essence, we're an SEO company and also social media freaks. When we work on big brands, we have to work with their PR department. Content really is the corner stone of all 3 disciplines and that's what makes it tough to execute in a big corporation. Everyone wants to use it to reach their objectives, which sometimes ends up in conflicts of interests.

What is the one content marketing tool you cannot live without?

Quora, there are so many ideas and smart people there.

What publications do you frequent to find out more about content marketing?

SEOMoz, Problogger

CASE STUDY

Gael Breton

Postgrad.com Campaign

ABSTRACT

What were your goals with the campaign?

Earn back traffic and audience after a severe Google penalty.

What type of content did you utilize?

Daily blog posting.

Where did you house the content?

On the client's blog.

Where did you promote the content?

Reddit, email list, Facebook

Can you send us some of the content itself?

<http://www.postgrad.com/blog/>

RESULTS

Traffic

From 0 to 7500 monthly visits in under 6 months.

Sales

The client maintained their advertising contracts which was the goal.

Observations : Why was it such a success?

Because we posted regularly and reconnected with what students really want by surveying them and understanding their needs.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

A lot of people talk about building big expensive content but regular small updates may work just as well – if not better – in the long run for a business. They're also more stable because if one fails, it doesn't take away all the traffic with it.



INTERVIEW

Bryant Jaquez

Owner, BrewSEO

Bryant Jaquez helps successful companies grow their sales into giant mountains of cash (or in other words, he helps businesses make money.) He is the owner of BrewSEO of and more recently a co-founder of the full service marketing firm, Noble Creative.

How have you seen content marketing change over the last 12-24 months?

I have loved watching content become less about stuffing keywords into a blog post or landing page. Now content is about creating something amazing and letting SEO be a supporting factor in its design. I think Google's knowledge graph and "search intent" guidelines have forced marketers to focus on creating beautiful pages. I try to hold myself to the standard of only publishing content if it tops everything I have already published. This allows me to continually improve.

How do you see content marketing changing over the next 12-24 months?

I think companies need to create resources. Legendary examples of content, i.e. videos, data visualizations, are ways to help people. I don't think customers are interested in reading "top five reasons you should buy a pair of my shoes" blog posts.

Do you feel quality content has an effect on sales actions on your website? Not just via traffic being driven, but actually helping conversion rates?

Absolutely. People buy from companies and individuals who they trust. I always tell people that the online world is almost identical to the offline world. In both places you need to build a relationship with someone if you want them to trust you and eventually buy from you. Online, "talking" and relationship building is done through content.

Do the separate channels of your marketing team collaborate when it comes to a content marketing strategy? (i.e. PR, SEO, Social Media)

My favorite projects are the ones that combine content marketing with other aspects of the company. An example of this is merging customer-support, sales, PR and of course SEO with my content marketing projects.

What is the one content marketing tool you cannot live without?

Twitter because it tells me what people are talking about.

What publications do you frequent to find out more about content marketing?

Copy blogger is still the most valuable resource for content marketing advice. In addition to that, I spend time watching how my marketing heroes and favorite companies do content marketing. Some of the best ideas in the world are reused or stolen from someone else.

CASE STUDY

Bryant Jaquez

The Decal Guru Campaign

ABSTRACT

What were your goals with the campaign?

Earn back traffic and audience after a severe Google penalty.

What were your goals with the campaign?

To create a fun and entertaining way to reformat the product descriptions in a client's e-commerce store. Our goal was to find a way to entertain visitors with our product descriptions and refrain from sounding "salesy." We also wanted to stand out in a competitive marketplace.

What type of content did you utilize?

The content we created was creative descriptions that focused on pop-culture and the creativity of our decals. The descriptions read more like a comic book, or a news magazine than a product description.

Where did you house the content?

On our website.

Where did you promote the content?

We promoted the content through image heavy social media sites and through SEO.

Can you send us some of the content itself?

<http://thedecalguru.com/product/ironman-pose-macbook-decal/>

<http://thedecalguru.com/macbook-decals/>

http://cdn2.bigcommerce.com/server2000/69b5b/products/53/images/1762/Ironman_Pose_Macbook_Decal_Sticker__79594.1327605884.350.350.png

RESULTS

Traffic

Increased 200%

Sales

Increased 300% over the course of 6 months.

Other

The best part of this strategy is that our traffic increased 200% but our sales increased by 300%. This happened because the visitors started spending more time browsing our site, the conversion rates increased dramatically across the board (including social media and newsletter conversions) and the new content has allowed us to help the client expand their decal selection into car decals instead of exclusively Macbook, iPad and laptop decals.

Observations : Why was it such a success?

This project was a success because it occurred right after Google's Panda update. Our client saw a massive improvement to every KPI we were able to track.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

You do not need to reinvent the wheel to have content strategy work for you. We didn't have to create expensive data visualizations or even videos. Sometimes giving customers an entertaining, non-traditional product description and a simple shopping experience is all you need to triple your sales.



INTERVIEW

Jordan Kasteler

Online Marketing Strategist, PETA

Jordan Kasteler is an Online Marketing Strategist for People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), a non-profit organization. He has a history of entrepreneurship, co-founding and serving positions in such companies as BlueGlass Interactive, an Internet marketing agency and SteelCast, a tech incubator housing several other self-started companies. His work experience ranges from in-house SEO at Overstock.com to agency-level SEO. Jordan is also an international conference speaker, blogger and book author of A to Z: Social Media Marketing.

How have you seen content marketing change over the last 12-24 months?

I've seen content marketing take on the name "content marketing" from previous names like "linkbait", "sharebait", and just the age-old practice of creating quality content. Now that it has a new name everyone's much more into it than they used to be.

What has really perpetuated people pushing content marketing now is the fact that Panda cracked down on low-quality content and Penguin cracked down on spammy link building. So now people have to be legit by providing quality content to appease search engines and get links, but also realize that it's a win for users too. Marketers finally understand Google's mantra of "Content is king."

How do you see content marketing changing over the next 12-24 months?

People will really start to get creative with the mediums that their messages will be served on. In other words, I foresee far more interactive and engaged content taking on forms such as parallax content and incorporating micro-sharing to let people choose what they want to share from the content.

Do you feel quality content has an effect on sales actions on your website? Not just via traffic being driven, but actually helping conversion rates?

Absolutely. As a non-profit we serve as a publisher to gain awareness. The awareness often turns to action as people want to know what they can do after learning about the issues. The higher the quality the more people want to share and spread the message, and therefore more conversions.

Do the separate channels of your marketing team collaborate when it comes to a content marketing strategy? (i.e. PR, SEO, Social Media)

The marketing department is largely in charge of most content published, but receives feedback and requests from every other department in the organization. Ultimately, marketing largely decides how the requests are presented.

What is the one content marketing tool you cannot live without?

StumbleUpon. At PETA, it's our top traffic driver even though StumbleUpon has decreased in referrals for a majority of publisher sites this year.

What publications do you frequent to find out more about content marketing?

Search Engine Land, Marketing Land, Search Engine Journal, Mashable, CopyPressed

CASE STUDY

Jordan Kasteler

PETA BWVAKTBOOM Campaign

ABSTRACT

What were your goals with the campaign?

To generate awareness about how a vegan diet clears your arteries, lowers your cholesterol and thus increases your libido and penile blood flow. Ultimately, we want people to go vegan for animals but people have more selfish reasons for going vegan so we show all the many various personal and environmental benefits.

What type of content did you utilize?

Video

Where did you house the content?

On YouTube and a separate microsite with the embedded video <http://www.bwvaktboom.com>

Where did you promote the content?

YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Google +, Reddit, StumbleUpon, BuzzFeed and various media pitches to blogs, publishers and media.

Can you send us some of the content itself?

<http://www.bwvaktboom.com>
http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=m0vQOnHW0Kc (main video with 3 million views)

<http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL39218D833C546418> (YouTube Playlist with various endorsement videos to build buzz to the main video). Each got 10's/100's of thousands views within themselves.

RESULTS

Traffic

Over 3 million views to the main video and hundreds of thousands more views on the endorsement videos. Plus we had about 300,000 visits to our microsite.

We received about 2,250 requests for a Vegan Starter Kit from the microsite and massive exposure to our message and cause.

Observations : Why was it such a success?

It received notoriety from top video lists like Mashable's top non-profit videos of 2012 (<http://mashable.com/2013/01/02/youtube-non-profit-2012/>) and was our most popular video of 2012. It was also truly viral in nature.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

It can work to be controversial and push the boundaries of comfort. This is often the PETA way.



INTERVIEW

Arnie Kuenn

President, Vertical Measures

Arnie Kuenn is the president of Vertical Measures, a search, social and content marketing agency. Vertical Measures helps clients get more traffic, more leads and more business via the web. He has held executive positions in the world of new technologies and marketing for more than 20 years and is the author of the content marketing book Accelerate! Moving Your Business Forward Through the Convergence of Search, Social & Content Marketing.

How have you seen content marketing change over the last 12-24 months?

My snarky response would be that "everyone is doin' it man." It seems the whole SEO world is writing and talking about content marketing. But in my experience only a small percentage of those recent converts truly understand it. Content marketing is a big mental shift and few have totally grasped it. I am picking on SEOs, but even many marketers seem to be missing it. Too often I see them still trying to write or create sales pitches or overly branded materials. They are still stuck with

their old habits and ways of thinking. So to answer your question, the biggest change I have seen is the interest in content marketing, but the execution still has a long way to go.

How do you see content marketing changing over the next 12-24 months?

I think we will begin to see enough training at conferences, other venues and in-house where executives will finally understand what content marketing really means and how it can help their business. From an actual content perspective I think the focus has to be on the multi-screen approach. That will probably be the biggest change in the content itself.

Do you feel quality content has an effect on sales actions on your website? Not just via traffic being driven, but actually helping conversion rates?

Absolutely. I think that is the goal of true content marketers – to impact conversions and subsequently revenue. In fact, that should be the goal of every marketer. Putting out content just to check it off your list is not a very wise approach. Your customers know what is helping them and what isn't. It is not easy and takes real measurement, but to me, content that converts needs to be the focus. Most people will start with trying to just attract more traffic, but eventually they should have the data to tell them what is working and what is not.

Do the separate channels of your marketing team collaborate when it comes to a content marketing strategy? (i.e. PR, SEO, Social Media)

Yes. We do have different teams here based on the functions you described. But very often you will see meetings here that are client centric which often includes people from the various functional teams. I often talk about the convergence of search, social and content marketing and that's what it is all about. Nothing works well in a silo, a good content marketing plan includes many aspects starting with a strategy, and incorporating research, development, optimization, promotion and measurement.

What is the one content marketing tool you cannot live without?

Now that may be the most difficult question of all. I suppose if you only allow me to have one tool, I would pick SEOMoz's toolset as it includes a lot of what I would need to research and measure a content marketing program.

What publications do you frequent to find out more about content marketing?

I would say the publications that come to mind first are Content Marketing Institute, Copyblogger, BlueGlass, WebInkNow and of course our own blog at Vertical Measures.

CASE STUDY

Arnie Kuenn

Toys for Tots Campaign

ABSTRACT

What were your goals with the campaign?

Our primary goal was to raise money and awareness for the Toys for Tots charity organization and local event. Our secondary goal was to increase brand exposure through our Facebook page.

What type of content did you utilize?

We created and utilized a digital flyer, which included a photo and text that described the action people needed to take to raise money. It was going to be a very simple approach with a single image on Facebook. We expected some success because it was a timely, charitable cause, but once we tapped into a large site who published it to their audience, it quickly went viral. We then crafted a blog post

RESULTS

Traffic

5,532 people visited our website during the time this post was active (12/6 – 12/12).

Sales

5 conversions from Facebook during the time the post was active (12/6-12/12).

Other

190 new fans were acquired during the time this post was active (12/6 – 12/12).

The Facebook post achieved:

- 56,434 shares
- 1,003 likes
- 98 comments

KEY TAKEAWAYS

We were able to raise \$3,000 with the Toys for Tots Facebook promotion alone. In the midst of its virality, we posted a blog post asking for additional donations in exchange for recognition on the Facebook post and a link inside the blog post. Four companies stepped up, and with their generous contributions we were able to raise a total of \$6,000. In addition to the money raised, the Facebook post also promoted a local Toys for Tots event.

to explain the campaign and further its success.

Where did you house the content?

The image was housed on Facebook and the blog post was posted on our company blog.

Where did you promote the content?

We promoted the image primarily through Facebook, but we also used Google Plus and Twitter to promote the Facebook image. The blog post was promoted using Facebook, Google Plus, LinkedIn and Twitter.

Can you send us some of the content itself?

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10151279294298166&set=a.408748378165.186654.6207253165&type=1>

<http://www.verticalmeasures.com/vm-news/every-child-deserves-a-christmas-morning-explodes/>

Observations: Why was it such a success?

There are many factors that contribute to why this campaign went viral:

- Its appeal to people that want to help raise money.
- The photo and text of the flyer.
- The timing of the post (day, time, around the correct holiday, in the midst of the larger Toys for Tots Campaign).
- The initial sharing, especially by those with larger followings.

See blog post for more: <http://www.verticalmeasures.com/vm-news/every-child-deserves-a-christmas-morning-explodes/>

The reasons the campaign was a success:

- We raised a total of \$6,000 for Toys for Tots
- We increased awareness and attendance for the Operation Social Santa Toys for Tots charity event
- We increased awareness of the Toys for Tots campaign
- We increased brand exposure for Vertical Measures



INTERVIEW

Tyson Stevens
SEO Manager

Tyson Stevens is an in-house SEO manager and strategist for a lead generation company. He personally own a few other properties that are currently being built out.

How have you seen content marketing change over the last 12-24 months?

Before, content wasn't the big push. The goal was to put out mediocre content as quickly as possible, targeting as many keywords as possible and pushing links to that content to increase search engine rankings.

Google doesn't allow much room for building links anymore. Link building is quickly becoming "link acquiring." One of the few and best ways to acquire links is to push out linkable assets – link-worthy content.

As companies have moved away from heavy link building for rankings, I've seen them move more towards sharing great content with a community with which they interact.

The linkerati have become communities within specific industries/niches - whatever you prefer to call them. The communities end up being the ones that share and link. This all happens naturally due to the nature of the content presented to them.

Thus, producing and sharing engaging content with targeted communities and influencers is becoming the safest way to increase rankings in Google while promoting your company or brand online. Communities engage with and share great content. Organic rankings in search engines become organic once again.

How do you see content marketing changing over the next 12-24 months?

I see Google hacking down on all types of link building, so more and more companies will move towards content marketing out of necessity. Market conditions will compel them to do so. Content isn't the new marketing, it's just the best type of marketing and everyone is realizing it.

In order to survive online, companies will need to adapt to the changing environment. That changing environment will be an emphasis on marketing via social channels. Doing so will have a dual effect: gain social proof and attract links.

The better the content produced by a company, the further their reach. The further the company's reach, the greater chance their content will be shared.

Do you feel quality content has an effect on sales actions on your website? Not just via traffic being driven, but actually helping conversion rates?

For our main strategy, quality content has had an indirect effect on leads generated. The content marketing we do is aimed at generating social sharing and link acquisition in order to increase domain and page trust and authority. This increase affects where we rank in search engines. The increase in rankings increases traffic, but not conversions.

We don't create much content with the end goal of increasing conversions, just increasing traffic for now.

Do the separate channels of your marketing team collaborate when it comes to a content marketing strategy? (i.e. PR, SEO, Social Media)

Yes and no. Pretty much, we're all one channel together—one big happy family. Our PR, social and SEO are all the same people. So, when we strategize, it's the whole team working together and splitting up the chores according to best fits and whoever wants to lead on certain projects.

What is the one content marketing tool you cannot live without?

oDesk

What publications do you frequent to find out more about content marketing?

I have a list of content marketer's and blogs I follow on Twitter. I frequent whichever title or topic peaks my interest. And hence, we come full circle with the importance of producing great content and content marketing.



INTERVIEW

Russ Somers

Vice President of Marketing, Invodo

As a full-service video for business solution, Invodo helps enterprises sell more through the power of video. Invodo provides the industry's first eCommerce-optimized video platform as well as the world's first video production facility and set of tools designed to produce video at Web scale.

Russ Somers leads Invodo's marketing team, managing product marketing and lead generation as well as driving the company's marketing communications, social media and PR initiatives. Russ brings industry experience from a number of Internet and technology companies to Invodo. At Hoover's Russ led product and subscription marketing. Earlier roles included brand management, pricing and analytics roles at Dell and Sabre Holdings. Russ holds a Master of Business Administration from the McCombs School of Business and a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from the University of Texas at Austin.

How have you seen content marketing change over the last 12-24 months?

The biggest change that I've experienced is that content marketing is now understood outside the marketing office. Other C-suite execs now understand the value of content marketing and ask about content initiatives. The sales team does too.

As everyone's moved into content marketing, there's been a big variation in quality of content. At some point or another, we've all traded our personal information for a content asset that turned out to be a three-page glorified blog post full of platitudes, so users are getting more sophisticated about when they will and won't opt-in.

How do you see content marketing changing over the next 12-24 months?

The marketing community is going to have to make a decision about content marketing. Is it a short-lived initiative about clickbait with fear-based memes like "You're Doing it Wrong" and shallow infographics that are long on style and short on substance? Or is it an enduring movement to help companies grow by providing high-value information to the market and building trust that turns into sales?

I expect the need for visual content to increase. Visual content – video and infographics – are becoming big players because they're heavily link-able and great for driving search traffic and sharing. That's also driven an increased focus on spreading the signal and a reduced focus on gated content since visual content is rarely gated. David Meerman Scott is a bit too idealistic about the idea of always making your content free, but going forward I expect to trade off direct lead generation for the higher signal that un-gated content can achieve.

Do you feel quality content has an effect on sales actions on your website? Not just via traffic being driven, but actually helping conversion rates?

We're an enterprise sale and "conversion" for us is web-to-lead conversion. So content of course is a key lever to achieve that, although sales aren't closed on the site. We track marketing influence throughout the sales cycle, including consumption of content (both free and gated) from the site. That shows that the majority of sales are at least influenced by content several times during the sales cycle – makes sense given that part of what clients rely on us for is expertise, and our content is designed to help convey that expertise. The sales team will tell us the same thing – the research we release fuels sales conversations and helps close deals.

We're actually far less concerned than most B2Bs with content as a traffic-driving device, because for us it's about the few right leads. Content for us is a web-to-lead conversion device and a sales cycle accelerator.

Do the separate channels of your marketing team collaborate when it comes to a content marketing strategy? (i.e. PR, SEO, Social Media)

The full marketing team has to be involved. Content and Programs (demand gen and web/email strategy) work closely together the most because Content's the fuel for Programs, and Programs are the amplifier for Content. PR is also a close collaborator for Content and there's a lot of idea-sharing there – and, again, PR can be an amplifier for Content. Even Events collaborates with Content, because there's nothing better than a well-timed content release to make an event successful.

That said, we're a small and scrappy B2B team so collaboration is inevitable – one reason why all the functions listed above are seated in the same office is to enhance teamwork.

What is the one content marketing tool you cannot live without?

Marketing automation, in our case: Pardot. That may seem odd because it's not a content marketing tool, but without it we would have no way to use content programmatically and measure the impact.

What publications do you frequent to find out more about content marketing?

Copyblogger remains my favorite publication ever about writing for the Web. Web Ink Now is a close second – more strategic and less tactical. Marketingprofs is a key resource as is Convince and Convert.



INTERVIEW

Mathieu McCuaig

Director of Marketing and Communications, TelcoBridges

Mathieu McCuaig brings more than eight years of marketing and business development experience to TelcoBridges. He has been in the communication industry since 2004, and has worked with both military systems, as well as civilian and commercial systems. Mathieu has an International MBA from the University of Ottawa School of Management (Telfer), a bachelor of business administration with a major in international business and a minor in management information systems from the University of Ottawa School of Management. Mathieu also studied at the Universität von Paderborn in Germany. He holds a certificate in satellite communication system from the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association in Washington D.C.

How have you seen content marketing change over the last 12-24 months?

I would say that the offer has grown. A year or two ago I had to search for content marketing companies, now I get weekly (maybe even daily) solicitations. Furthermore, I'd like to add that content marketing companies have broadened their offerings. You can now have infographics, social media, articles, blogs, etc. all from the same content company and all integrated together.

How do you see content marketing changing over the next 12-24 months?

I would expect continued entrants in the market, probably followed by the typical period of consolidation and "niching." This will undoubtedly foster increased innovation as companies try to differentiate themselves by offering unique content marketing products and services.

Do you feel quality content has an effect on sales actions on your website? Not just via traffic being driven, but actually helping conversion rates?

I am still on the fence about this one. On the one hand, the amount of visits generated by the benefits to SEO will outweigh any readership visits. On the other hand, perhaps readership could provide greater context relevant visits that one would

expect to have a higher conversion rate. In the end though, I tend to believe that with a proper keyword plan, the additional benefits of generating a high volume of visits through organic SEO will overshadow any additional benefits brought about by higher quality content.

Do the separate channels of your marketing team collaborate when it comes to a content marketing strategy? (I.e. PR, SEO, Social Media)

Absolutely, and I coordinate very closely all aspects.

What is the one content marketing tool you cannot live without?

As a software, Genius has an integrated email marketing platform with Salesforce and also provides an SEO tool that benchmarks our site with that of our competition. I think their SEO center is a hidden gem and I use it to report on KPIs. Content wise, I am working on the creation of our new website and it will incorporate a new blog with daily keyword-rich content to be updated every day. I am very optimistic about that content marketing initiative.

What publications do you frequent to find out more about content marketing?

I pay close attention to the publications of my vendors. Right now I read Genius and Braffton.



INTERVIEW

Andrea Buginsky
Freelance Writer

Andrea is a freelance writer with a BA in Mass Communications-Journalism from USF. She has been writing freelance web copy for over five years. She has written for several websites, including Gather, Daily Glow, Yahoo! Content, and CopyPress. She has also had three books published.

How have you seen content marketing change over the last 12-24 months?

Not very much.

How do you see it changing over the next 12-24 months?

I think with all of the new content marketing sites, and the more home-based businesses, the competition is going to grow. Companies are going to have to come up with ways for their content to stand out more.

Do you feel quality content has an effect on sales actions on your website? Not just via traffic being driven, but actually helping conversion rates?

Absolutely! If your prospective customers are not impressed with your content, they will move on to the next vendor and not look at what you have to offer.

Do the separate channels of your marketing team collaborate when it comes to a content marketing strategy? (I.e. PR, SEO, Social Media)

I'm freelance, so this doesn't pertain to me.

What is the one content marketing tool you cannot live without?

A good search engine.

What publications do you frequent to find out more about content marketing?

None



INTERVIEW

Dan Tynski

Vice President of Business Development, Fractl

Dan Tynski is VP of Business Development for Fractl. He was previously the owner of Voltier Digital, a content marketing agency that was acquired early last year. Fractl is a new kind of content agency, specializing in creating truly viral content. They push the boundaries of differentiated content – harnessing new and exciting web technologies to create some of the most share-worthy content on the web. Having launched in only the past three months, Fractl's first few campaigns have already reached over 10,000,000 people. They're on a fast upward trajectory and are looking to take on a select group of forward thinking partners who want to grow with their team.

How have you seen content marketing change over the last 12-24 months?

Everybody finally understands that great content is the key to long-term growth and success online. As a result, we're seeing many businesses really begin to invest heavily in content strategies and divest in some of the techniques that no longer work or contain too much inherent risk.

From an agency perspective, a lot of service providers have begun offering content marketing services where none existed before. There has been a huge shift away from any/all strategies that smell even remotely black hat. Efforts are being made across the board to stay above board.

How do you see content marketing changing over the next 12-24 months?

As the market is flooded with more and more content, the challenge of creating something truly different will become increasingly difficult. The challenge of finding strong traction for any content that is less than truly stellar will become nearly impossible.

We will see certain content mediums continue to lose efficacy (like IG's), while new mediums will pop-up and coast on their novelty factor.

Those companies who are able to harness new technologies and design innovations to create novel visualizations and tell stories in engaging and new ways will hold a significant advantage.

We will also see an increasingly strong need for the development of internal digital PR teams with extensive outreach capabilities. As Google focuses on authorship, winning marketers will recognize the need to forge strong relationships and open lines of communication with top thought leaders in each major vertical.

Do you feel quality content has an effect on sales actions on your website? Not just via traffic being driven, but actually helping conversion rates?

Without a doubt. There is no substitute for quality. Of course, great content marketers should strive not only to have an engaging message, but should also endeavor to innovate on the medium through which that message is delivered.

More than anything, content needs to be emotionally resonant. In the future, there will be much more time and attention spent analyzing the true motivations and intent of target audiences so that content can be built to cater to these emotional needs.

By developing a deeper understanding of what the consumers of our content are truly driven by, not only will we become much better at predicting viral success, but we will begin to see popular content as a channel that's further up the sales funnel and that can actually drive immediate conversion events.

Do the separate channels of your marketing team collaborate when it comes to a content marketing strategy? (i.e. PR, SEO, Social Media)

PR, SEO and Social channels should always be seen as deeply entwined within any well planned content strategy.

For our clients, the goal of content is often to reach the largest possible relevant audience. This goal often has PR implications, especially if the content we've created for the client is seen by hundreds of thousands to millions of individuals.

With truly viral campaigns, online content can even drift offline to exposure in television, radio and newspapers. If this happens, you need to have a strategy in place with your PR team, and should be utilizing whatever PR resources you have from day one to help get your content the widest exposure possible.

Great content these days sees a majority of its spread taking place through social channels. In fact, our team sees social audiences and networks as one of the primary tools for disseminating differentiated content, with massive sharing an inherent byproduct of emotionally-resonant campaigns. Content campaigns can and should also be optimized to enable their viral growth across social channels.

From an SEO perspective, differentiated viral content generates exactly the signals that Google wants to see. It's astonishing the organic lift even a single widely shared piece of content can bring. Taking the time and effort to create one "home run" can be worth much more than 20-30 singles and doubles.

What is the one content marketing tool you cannot live without?

Being effective at content seeding and outreach is a major differentiating factor for agencies offering content marketing services. It takes time to build strong relationships with bloggers & influential websites – and important insights to create promotional strategies that give the lift most content needs to achieve widespread exposure.

We're happy utilizing BuzzStream as our primary method for organizing our outreach efforts, which are increasingly extensive.

What publications do you frequent to find out more about content marketing?

CopyPressed, Neuromarketing, TrendHunter, SEL & Marketing Land, Hacker News, SEOmoz

ABOUT

COPYPRESS

CopyPress is a software company based out of Tampa, FL with a focus on tools that make content production, promotion, and conversion more successful. With a marketplace of hundreds of writers, designers, and creatives, they handle the Content Life Cycle for clients such as Macy's, eHarmony, and eBay.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:
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