



CHIEF CONTENT OFFICER

MASTERING VIDEO

How a tech giant makes broadcast-quality video content

Roundup of video creation & production tools

Low-risk video experiments

SINK or SWIM

DEATH OF THE RFP PG. 8

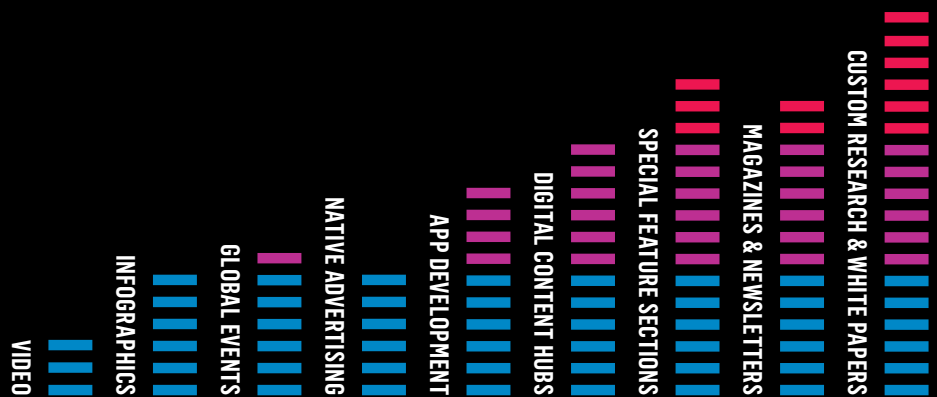
THE AGENCY ISSUE HOW TO CHOOSE AN AGENCY PG. 14

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ADAPTING TO A CONTENT-HUNGRY WORLD

ALSO INSIDE THE MEGA LIST OF CONTENT AGENCIES

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Help Them Help You

You've hired a content marketing agency. Now make sure you've offered the right tools and support to make them successful.

It's hard to believe it's been almost 20 years since *Jerry McGuire* was released. Starring Tom Cruise and Cuba Gooding Jr., the movie's most famous line "Show me the money!" has become a cliché. But for me, what resonated most was the scene when Cruise's character (the sports agent) said to Gooding (the athlete), "You don't know what it's like to be ME out here for YOU. It is an up-at-dawn, pride-swallowing siege that I will never fully tell you about, OK? Help me ... help you. Help me, help you."

Help me, help you.

When I worked in business development for a publishing agency over a decade ago, I actually used this phrase more than a few times ... directed at my clients. And as this is our annual agency issue, let's unpack this a bit, shall we?

Over the years, I've been critical of many agencies out there. Some specific issues include:

- Agencies that don't actually use content marketing themselves,
- SEO and social media agencies that really don't understand the practice of content marketing,
- Agencies that care little about strategy because they only want the execution business and
- Agencies that continue to view content marketing as a campaign.

But for the most part, the agencies that work on your behalf are out for your best interests, and as Jerry McGuire so eloquently states, "It's an up-at-dawn, pride-swallowing siege." They're out there doing whatever necessary to help you with your content marketing.

An agency's success is totally predicated on you, the client. If you don't open certain doors and give access to certain information, you'll both fail. Here's three ways you can "Help them, help you."

1. Involve the agency in your complete marketing strategy. There is no way an agency will succeed on your behalf if it doesn't understand the full scope of what you are trying to accomplish.

2. Form an agency coalition. If you're like most, your company is working with multiple content marketing agencies. Don't hide them from each other. Introduce them and make sure each one knows the part it plays.

3. Give them more than 12 months. Just like a content marketing program is unlikely to bear much fruit in a few months, the same goes for your agency's progress. Give them some runway to get traction. I've rarely seen an agency-client relationship work in a one-year program.

Of course, you are a publisher now, but even publishers don't do all the work internally. You need great partners to get real results. Do yourself a favor ... throw them a bone, will you?

Joe Pulizzi

Founder

Content Marketing Institute

@JoePulizzi



To stay on top of content marketing trends, subscribe to Joe and Robert Rose's weekly podcast, **PNR: This Old Marketing**.
<http://cmi.media/pnr>



“An agency's success is totally predicated on you, the client.”



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APRIL 2015

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A LOOK AT HOW BRANDS, PUBLISHERS AND AGENCIES
ARE ADAPTING TO A CONTENT-DRIVEN WORLD.

THE (TOO) SLOW

DEATH
OF THE
REF

Of all the vestiges of old school, traditional ad land, none is so stifling as the RFP process. If brands want agencies to look to the future and innovate, they'll need to stop treating agency selection like a vendor-procurement process.

Kirk Cheyfitz

DO YOU PARTICIPATE IN RFPs? THE AGENCY PERSPECTIVE.

JOHN MUSTIN

Founder, Wasabi Rabbit

The short answer is “yes, we participate in RFPs” ... that is, I haven't categorically ruled out responding to the perfect RFP. But over the last 10 years I've become ruthlessly discriminating in my determination of which ones we will pursue. Gone are the days where I'd pour hundreds of hours into strategy, spec work and polishing presentation materials in pursuit of RFIs and RFPs, particularly when what we're responding to doesn't let us to communicate our strengths and differentiators effectively.

PAUL ROETZER

Founder, PR 20/20

Never have. Never will.

If the ad industry were a national park, it would easily qualify for the coveted designation of a fossil-rich area; paleontologists would flood the place. Evidence of the distant past is everywhere in ad land; close to the surface; littering the landscape.

In ad land, you are never more than a few steps from outdated writing materials engraved with the ancient saying, “If you want mass reach, you've got to use TV.” Here too are preserved, quaint social practices such as posting on Facebook solely to make product claims. But while fossils like these are pretty routine finds, no ad land fossil is quite so ubiquitous, ancient or useless as the RFP.

First off, let's all admit we hate and mistrust RFPs. On the brand side, Joe Chernov, the pioneering marketer and blogger who heads content marketing for HubSpot, says, “If I hire an agency, it's never through an RFP.” And when asked about responding to RFPs, Paul Roetzer, founder and CEO of data-driven digital agency PR 20/20, says, “Never have. Never will.”

Using the qualifier “never” puts these guys at the extreme of the opinion range, but the extreme is not so far from the mainstream these days. Story, the integrated content advertising agency I help lead, is responding to fewer and fewer RFPs. We see the vast majority of them as a total waste of time. Like us, more and more agencies say they're participating in an RFP process “rarely” or “only when there's already a relationship.”

RFPs are so wrong in so many well-known ways that it's not very enlightening to make a list. (If you want detailed reasons, read *Forbes*, “Why the RFP is a waste of time,” by advertising search consultant Avi Dan.) But let me suggest a few less-common objections:

1 First off, it seems a little like the old definition of insanity: Brands today are issuing RFPs to replace an agency they found less than three years earlier with the same RFP. Think about that.

2 Brands are not hiring agencies to create perfect RFP responses that dazzle the brand managers. Rather, brands (should) want to hire an agency that will create unique communications that dazzle audiences. So, judging an agency by its ability to fill out an RFP is testing for the wrong talent.

3 In RFPs, the brand asks all the questions. To create great content, the agency needs to ask the brilliant questions. RFPs provide little or no room for agencies to break open the discussion and show how they think.

4 Mostly, RFPs ask the usual questions and the usual suspects respond with the usual answers. This is not exactly a recipe for finding revolutionary, out-of-the-box thinkers or thinking. Or people with whom you can work.

5 RFPs may have made sense in a less connected time when investigating a range of agencies and seeing their work was really difficult. But the whole silly process has no place in an era when a brand can search easily for any kind of agency, identify work and processes the brand's marketers admire, and shoot those agencies a LinkedIn message asking for a meeting.

6 Since the best, most innovative agencies increasingly are not responding to RFPs, the process is becoming a less and less likely way to find innovators.

THE (TOO) SLOW
DEATH OF THE RFP

Read more from Kirk Cheyfitz:
<http://cmi.media/cheyfitz>

**DOUG KESSLER**

Founder, Velocity Partners

We rarely participate in agency-search RFPs. We're against spec pitches but might respond to a request for information about Velocity.

Our process depends on a lot of pretty intensive input. Pitches that ask for our ideas based on very little information are unlikely to generate great work. And they take a lot of time and effort that our current clients are essentially paying for.

The fact that governments are the worst and most persistent users of RFPs should be enough to teach businesses to stop doing it. Last spring, for example, the New Jersey Lottery's private operator, Northstar, directed a 73-page RFP to "any interested firm" —not exactly a well thought-out selection of agencies. The "advertising goals" were equally enlightening—sell more and tell people that gambling funds education and helps people. The RFP then dictated a strategy instead of asking for one. And so on. This approach may explain the lottery's lackluster and undifferentiating tag line, *Give Your Dreams a Chance*, and its even more lackluster financial performance, missing its revenue goal by \$24 million for the year ended June 30, 2014, according to Bloomberg.

The final—and perhaps the most wrong-headed—thing about RFPs is they continue to indulge in the quaint 20th century practice of categorizing agencies into rigid silos. They aim to recruit a traditional ad agency or a so-called social agency (as if social wasn't digital) or a digital agency (as if there were such a thing as a good agency that doesn't specialize in digital, now the world's No. 1 medium) or a content agency and so on and on and on. In other words, RFPs continue to cop the attitude that the client or the consultant knows exactly what the problem is, knows precisely how to solve it and therefore knows what siloed marketing practice can solve it.

This kind of thinking is terrible for clients because today's challenges are integrated and new, not siloed and old. It's also bad, of course, for every good, thoughtful, effective agency because the real reason to pay an agency is to get solutions the

clients never would have dreamed on their own. But RFP-thinking is especially hostile to content-focused agencies that have seriously non-traditional, non-siloed, multi-channel ways of solving the new communications challenges posed by the digital-first, social-always media landscape.

As the legal brief writers might put it, for these other good and valid reasons, the sufficiency of which has been acknowledged by all parties, we hereby urge all clients and all agencies to cease and desist from the mindless process of RFPs forthwith. Instead, agencies and clients both need to do a little research and then approach the outfits with which they'd most like to work. That approach works better for everyone because it has the power to produce surprising results. Which is a whole lot better than all the unsurprising stuff that's been produced by doing things the old way. ☺

Kirk Cheyfitz is co-CEO and chief storyteller of Story Worldwide, the global brand storytelling ad agency he founded in 1999. Find him @KirkCheyfitz.

TODD WHEATLAND

Global head of strategy, King Content

I'll go against the grain and say I think the market's changing on this. When I was a CMO with a large company, I would never use an RFP process to bring on a content marketing supplier. Now I'm on the agency side, we experience the same approach from the clients we work with, and virtually never respond to initial RFPs.

However, because of our unique business model, where we are increasingly dealing with the same organizations in maybe dozens of countries—the scale and complexity of what we are doing increase, and eventually procurement starts to take a sharper interest. We're seeing this in all regions now that content marketing has become a much larger component of corporate spend, which means procurement is bringing it under its remit and subjecting agencies to the same processes as other marketing activities.

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The Onion, a satirical paper famous for headlines like “I’m Like a Chocoholic, But for Booze,” now helps brands create funny content. We interviewed its president, **Mike McAvoy**, about *The Onion*’s custom content agency, Onion Labs.

WHAT IS ONION LABS?

Founded two years ago, Onion Labs helps brands create funny content, then distributes it through *The Onion*’s website and social engines. Like many other publishers (*The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times* included), *The Onion* founded Onion Labs to offer something beyond traditional advertising. Publisher-owned content studios offer a chance to access both the editorial expertise and distribution reach of niche-media companies.

Since inception, Onion Labs has become a powerhouse for *The Onion*, now accounting for 80 percent of the publisher’s revenues. And more recently, Onion Labs has created different offerings—from Onion-inspired social media marketing and events to launches of new satire websites sponsored by a single advertiser.

CCO: How did your team initially react to the idea of Onion Labs?

McAvoy: The editorial teams were supportive; they said essentially, “If we were going to be producing native advertising content, we need to make sure it doesn’t suck.” When we launched two years ago, *The Onion*’s editorial teams produced a lot of the campaigns we created.

About a year ago, we decided to really focus on growing Labs and brought in a team of traditional agency folks led by Rick Hamann (previously SVP at Energy BBDO). It was a turning point ... a moment when we really began to capitalize on what Labs was meant to be, which was to create branded content worthy of the *Onion* name. We did it by engaging all of our writing talent, but also by allowing ideas to be shaped by the experience of those who’ve worked for Fortune 500 brands on the agency side.

Are you mostly hired by brands or agencies?

This year we’ll be about 50/50. On the agency side it’s mostly media agencies, but also some creative agencies and PR agencies. We’re finding more and more brands are looking to team up with publishers directly—specifically publishers that have the experience and capabilities to understand what the brand is trying to do, which is something we’ve built out by hiring those traditional marketers.

Do you ever arrive at meetings with brands and they aren’t mentally ready to be “Onionized”?

Once in a while ... but usually (and this has changed a lot over the last few years) brands understand the



MORE THAN NATIVE ADVERTISING

◀ Branded content for *The Onion*.

Onion Labs creates native ads for brands to get across their messages. Then the publisher uses its social media muscle to ensure the content is seen by its massive 12 million-strong social media followers.

Onion Labs helped Lenovo create an original web series called *Tough Season*—which we can only describe as a strangely engrossing fantasy football mockumentary. In the proud tradition of *The Onion*, Lenovo is more often the butt of the joke than not. To give it juice, Onion Labs promotes the series through its websites and social channels.

need to be in on the joke or the need to use different marketing tactics to reach millennials. And Onion Labs really won't work for a brand unless they take themselves less seriously.

Do brands see these collaborations with *The Onion* as one-off, funny projects or something they are committed to over the longer term?

When Labs began it was very project-based and the majority of deals came from agencies. Now brands work with *The Onion* directly because they want to have a longer-term partner and they want a creative strategy that fixes a business problem. The strategy usually seeks out humor, but we also create other types of content for brands through sites like The A.V. Club (which is dedicated to pop culture).

Publishers have huge distribution networks, which is a big advantage in the content-driven landscape today. We have 12 million social followers at *The Onion*—and that's part of the offering at Onion Labs.

On a website it's easy to see when content is branded. Do you run into any problems through your social accounts where it may be more difficult to distinguish? Your readers, after all, are probably about as cynical as they come.

Yeah, they are cynical. Our premise is: Whether it's on site or social, you need to train your audience and not trick them. We've worked 26 years to build trust with our audience and we never want to throw that away by tricking someone into consuming content they didn't think was branded. We make sure that through all the social promotions, as well as the on site content, we're contextualizing it and showing it's sponsored.

What we've found is that as long as you're playing to your strengths (in our case, humor), an audience understands why you're creating content for a brand. ☺



▲ Creative content for brands.

Onion Labs has created YouTube's April Fools' joke for the last two years—even though most are unaware of *The Onion's* involvement. "We're behind the scenes," says McAvoy. "But if you watch the videos, you'll notice they have the sensibility of *The Onion*."

Partnerships.

The Onion launched a site last year called Clickhole—a partnership among *The Onion*, agency Carmichael Lynch and the brand Jack Link's. A variant of the usual sponsored-content model, Jack Link's (the beef jerky folks) was the sole sponsor for Clickhole at launch. The site traded heavily on *The Onion's* name to build an audience and ran native ads for Jack Link's. After three and a half months, Clickhole became self-sustaining and opened up to other native advertisers.

Says McAvoy, "Clickhole has been wildly successful. In 2015, we're going to do more of the same ... Not three more Clickholes but taking ideas that our team is excited about and finding advertisers to support them. That's where we think there's a unique opportunity to serve our audience *and* our advertisers."

HOW TO CHOOSE A CONTENT MARKETING AGENCY IN 2015

Craig Hodges

1 Look at strategic capabilities.

In a recent CMI survey of North American businesses, only about one-third of content marketers have a documented strategy. With those odds, it's critical to find an agency with strong strategic capabilities. Look for more than just a head of strategy; seek those with a consistent approach, a strong methodology and, most importantly, a good track record.

To investigate, look at case studies and get in touch with clients. How has the agency helped other brands develop successful content strategies? What approach has it taken—and does it translate to how it could help engage your audience, enhance your content marketing strategy and achieve your business goals?

2 Investigate the agency's arsenal of technology tools.

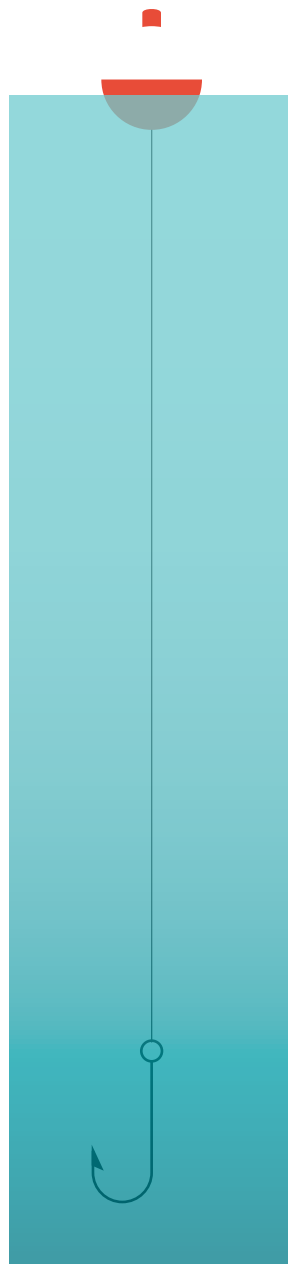
How will your agency measure the success of your marketing program and help boost your ROI? Look specifically at data and measurement tools, and processes and indicators they use to measure success. Also ask how the agency identifies areas needing improvement. As we all know, nothing works well all the time, but the mark of strong players is how they identify problems and change course.

3 Look under the hood (so to speak).

As you vet agencies, you'll meet the agency boss. You'll meet the head of "this" and "that" ... then you sign the deal and don't see those guys for dust.

Question whether the agencies have a solid layer of account and project management—smart, experienced people who will communicate effectively day in, day out. The sort of people you would hire yourself.

As the market diversifies and more agencies jump in, you *must* question whether the people within an agency are the right fit for you and your business.



Do they understand your values, motivations and business goals, and do they have the skill sets to help you live up to them? Ask to meet your day-to-day team early on and have at the ready questions that can flesh out whether those individuals can represent the values of your brand.

4 What marketing technology will you use in partnership with the agency?

Marketing technology is a must-have to identify new audience segments, measure engagement, and attribute action and revenue to your marketing programs. Most agency engagements include some type of marketing technology that allow for daily collaboration and oversight. Look closely at the interface. Ensure it's simple to use and the results easy to understand.

If you have your own marketing technology platforms that will play a role in measuring or assisting with the work your agency does, ask questions around their experience with the platform and how the agency's campaign will plug in or complement it.

5 Look for longevity.

Does the agency in question have a roster of clients that have gone the distance? Over and above a great pitch, can they actually execute over time, managing the ups and downs of a program? And can they remain agile and responsive to challenges?

In other words, will they deliver? You will only gain this knowledge by checking with the agency's clients, looking at those that have renewed contracts or signed on for additional campaigns. Play the devil's advocate and hunt down clients that were not provided by the agency. ☞

Craig Hodges is founder and CEO of King Content, a global content marketing agency.

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AFTER THE SPLASH

The Canadian Tire Company paid big bucks for a 15,000-pound ice truck campaign—but just as important as the splashy ice truck commercial was a series of secondary, behind-the-scenes videos that doubled the campaign’s reach.

Last year the national retailer Canadian Tire asked its agencies to develop a campaign to sell a car battery designed to withstand the coldest climates. Their solution? Build a 15,000-pound truck made of ice, demonstrating the power of the MotoMaster Eliminator Ultra battery. And then make it actually drive.

But what took place behind the scenes turned out to be of equal value.

To fuel the campaign, Canadian Tire hired Notch Video to create a behind-the-scenes documentary, a reverse time-lapse melt video and a video of the ice truck’s longest drive. The overall campaign became one of the most successful in the retailer’s 90-year history, leading to a 70 percent increase in Eliminator battery sales versus the previous year. The TV spot garnered over 1.3 million views on YouTube, but the additional online content generated another 1.3 million views. And while the TV spot had to eventually be taken off YouTube due to rights issues, the online videos live on, igniting social conversation and building YouTube subscribers even a year after the campaign launched.

And herein lies the key: The TV spot and media buy made a really big splash and there was a significant cost to creating the actual ice truck, but for a relatively tiny additional cost the secondary video content doubled reach and engagement of the campaign online. It was simply a matter of recognizing the opportunity and finding an interesting way to leverage it. ☞



Of course the Canadian Tire ice truck presented some natural opportunities for content creation, but you don’t need a big budget, just a big idea and a big desire to hop in head first. We asked **Ian Buck from Notch Video** (creators of the secondary video content) how to extend the lifecycle of brand campaigns.

Be Creative

The online space is busy. Be willing to try something different. The reverse time-lapse melt video, filmed over the course of 44 hours, provided a unique look at the truck appearing to grow from a puddle. The truck was going to melt—so why not make it into something awesome?

Be Opportunistic

The ice truck campaign was built around a single TV spot launching during the NHL Winter Classic but there was a clear opportunity to extend reach beyond this small window by creating multiple pieces of video content, each serving a specific purpose.

Think Smaller

This isn’t just about being open to new ideas, but being open to smaller opportunities surrounding your main event. Asking to spend yet more money to create supplementary video in addition to the cost of your big-bang campaign is a risk, but consider that it’s often a fraction of the cost of the whole ... and may extend the life of content.

Be Authentic

Don’t worry about letting the cat out of the bag ... that’s the whole point. The behind-the-scenes documentary took viewers through the process of developing, building and testing the ice truck. This spot not only proved the truck’s authenticity, but also showcased an area of marketing consumers are interested in but so often don’t get to see ... “How did it happen?”



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Key Clients: Charles Schwab & Co., Hewlett-Packard, Comcast NBCUniversal, Silicon Valley Bank

Ascend Integrated Media

ascendintegratedmedia.com
Leawood, KS

Key Clients: American Heart Association, American Thoracic Society, ACE Hardware, American Academy of Otolaryngology

Ayzenberg Group

ayzenberg.com
Pasadena, CA

Key Clients: EA Sports, Microsoft, Red Bull, Mattel

Babcock & Jenkins

bnj.com
Portland, OR

Key Clients: Google, Xerox, LifeLock, Imation

The Barbarian Group

barbariangroup.com
New York, NY

Key Clients: PepsiCo, Samsung Electronics, General Electric

Brafton

brafton.com
Boston, MA

Key Clients: FromYouFlowers, Daniels Trading, Knovel, Applan

Brand Marketing & Customer Experience Division of DMI

pappasgroup.com
Arlington, VA

Key Clients: Volkswagen Credit, Inc. International Spy Museum Marriott Neustar

Brandpoint

brandpoint.com
Hopkins, MN

Key Clients: Plow & Hearth, Lincoln Technical Institute, Club Med, Gallery Furniture

Brunner

brunnerworks.com
Pittsburgh, PA

Key Clients: DK Bicycles, Duck, GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Healthcare

Burns Marketing

burnsmarketing.com
Johnstown, CO

Key Clients: HP, Seagate, IHS MHI Global

BusinessOnline

businessol.com
San Diego, CA

Key Clients: HP, Milgard, TDS, Kwikset

Campfire

campfirenyc.com
New York, NY

Key Clients: L'Oréal, Infiniti, Harley-Davidson, Snapple

Centerline Digital

centerline.net
Raleigh, NC

Key Clients: IBM, GE, National Instruments, Lowe's Home Improvement

Content Harmony

contentharmony.com
Seattle, WA

Key Clients: MaxCDN, Avvo

Content Launch

contentlaunch.com
Bonsall, CA

Key Clients: Konica Minolta, IBM, Expedia, BuyerZone

Content Science

content-science.com
Atlanta, GA

Key Clients: CDC, InterContinental Hotels Group, Equifax, Dell

CopyPress

copypress.com
Tampa, FL

Key Clients: Lacoste, airbnb, MTV, One Kings Lane

Cramer

cramer.com
Norwood, MA

Key Clients: Caterpillar, Covidien, Johnson & Johnson, UPS

D Custom

dcustom.com
Dallas, TX

Key Clients: Texas Farm Bureau Insurance, HP, Teradata, Omni Hotels & Resorts

Demand Media

demandmedia.com
Santa Monica, CA

Key Clients: Experian, Samsung, Chase, KY-Durex (Reckit Benkiser)

Diablo Custom Publishing

dcpubs.com
Walnut Creek, CA

Key Clients: University of California, Overlake Medical Center, Chevron, Oakland Athletics

Dino Publishing

dinopublishing.com
Chicago, IL

Key Clients: Fisher & Paykel Appliances, Sea Ray Boats, Boston Whaler, VesselVanguard

Eastwick Communications

eastwick.com
Sunnyvale, CA

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Eblyline

eblyline.com
Sherman Oaks, CA

Key Clients: Bed Bath and Beyond, Intel, Forbes, Schneider Electric

Embryo Creative

embryocreativegroup.com
Boston, MA

Key Clients: Boston University, Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital, Broad Institute, Temple University

Endurance Marketing

endurancemktg.com
Atlanta, GA

Key Clients: The Kroger Co., Sage North America, Meda Consumer Healthcare, Sleeping Well, LLC

EnVeritas Group

enveritasgroup.com
Greenville, SC

Key Clients: Carlson/Rezidor Hotel Group, WIKA Instruments, LP, Wingate University, Radisson & Radisson Blu

Ethology

ethology.com
Phoenix, AZ

Key Clients: NextCare Urgent Care, Sundt Construction, Infusionsoft, LifeLock

FVM Strategic Communications

thinkfvm.com
Plymouth Meeting, PA

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Fahlgren Mortine

fahlgrenmortine.com
Columbus, OH

Key Clients: Ohio Council for Home Care and Hospice, Elmer's Products, Emerson Network Power, City of Columbus

Fathom

www.fathomdelivers.com
Valley View, OH

Key Clients: Key Bank, Eaton, Cleveland Clinic, McGraw-Hill

Forbes Media

forbesmedia.com
New York, NY

Key Clients: Cadillac, TD Ameritrade, Microsoft, Aflac

Fractl

frac.tl
Delray Beach, FL

Key Clients: eBay, Lumber Liquidators, Movoto, Rehabs.com

FusionSpark Media

fusionspark.com
Langley, WA

Key Clients: Pinelands Preservation Alliance, Water Research Foundation, Cadence9, Whidbey Telecom

The Garrigan Lyman Group (GLG)

glg.com
Seattle, WA

Key Clients: Babolat, Microsoft, T-Mobile, Philips

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razorfish.com
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Indianapolis, IN

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Story Worldwide

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New York, NY

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New York, NY

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syncshow.com
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nytimes.com/ads/idealab
New York, NY

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thinkstripes.com
Dallas, TX

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timeinc.com/businesses/time-inc-content-solutions
New York, NY

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TopRank Online Marketing

toprankmarketing.com
Spring Park, MN

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verticalmeasures.com
Phoenix, AZ

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waggeneredstrom.com
Multiple Locations

Key Clients: Microsoft, Shire, T-Mobile, Volvo

Weber Shandwick

webershandwick.com
New York, NY

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withsims.com
Atlanta, GA

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washingtonpost.com/sf/brand-connect/
Washington, D.C.

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z-comm.com
New Orleans, LA

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256media.ie
Dublin, Ireland

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dialogi.fi
Helsinki, Finland

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Agency Fish

agencyfish.com
Western Australia, Australia

Key Clients: QATAR Airways, Garuda Indonesia, SriLankan Airlines

Agency Marou

agencymarou.com.au
Victoria, Australia

Key Clients: Zoos Victoria, Plenary

Asset Management Pty Ltd, Catholic Super, Raw Wildlife Encounters

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ajansluxus.com
Istanbul, Turkey

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Ariad Communications

ariad.ca
Toronto, Canada

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AUDE

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Warsaw, Poland

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London, United Kingdom

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Berlin, Germany

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Cirrus Media

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New South Wales, Australia

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contentgroup

contentgroup.com.au
Canberra City, Australia

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cypres.com
Leuven, Belgium

Key Clients: Mobistar, bPost, Brussels Airport, Beaulieu International Group

Distilled

distilled.net
London, United Kingdom

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e2msolutions.com
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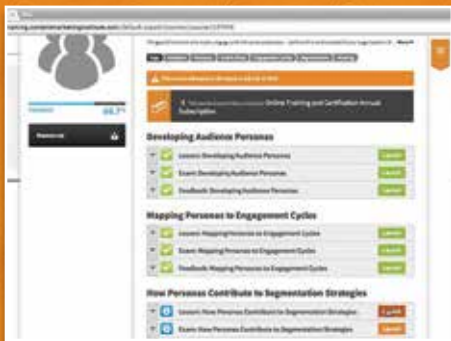
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Roanne Neuwirth.
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Engage the C-Suite through a Client Advisory Board

Connecting with hard-to-reach C-level clients remains an ongoing challenge for marketers. More should consider creating a client advisory board, which when done right, provides traction with your most coveted clients.

Roanne Neuwirth

CLIENT ADVISORY BOARD DEFINED

What: Convenes your key clients and stakeholders multiple times a year to advise on strategy, product or service direction and innovation.

Why: A way for your senior leadership team to learn from and better understand your most important senior executive clients, and for your clients to engage with peers to learn and contribute to shared exchange of value. It also creates an ongoing platform for content collaboration, co-creation and shared insight.

WHAT A CLIENT ADVISORY BOARD IS ... AND IS NOT

A Client Advisory Board is



- A listening tool
- An ongoing dialog
- Focused on business strategy, growth, transformation
- Targeted to top-tier strategic executive clients

A Client Advisory Board is NOT



- A lead-generation tool
- An event
- A focus group
- A research program
- Focused on product input and testing
- Targeted to product users, execution teams

Let's start by clarifying the concept of a client advisory board. The term is used fairly broadly to describe a range of marketing- and sales-related activities, which all contribute in their own ways, but are designed differently and provide separate outcomes.

A client advisory board is a forum that brings together key clients and stakeholders multiple times a year to advise on strategy, product or service direction and innovation. It serves as a strategy-level sounding board for your leadership team to learn from and better understand your most important senior executive clients, and for your clients to engage with peers to learn and contribute to shared exchange of value.

It is worth understanding what advisory boards are not, as mixing them up with other programs is a key contributor to failure to deliver on their promise. What is conspicuously absent from an advisory board is any type of selling or pitching or product-level testing and discussion. Advisory boards are also distinct from events and one-way sharing as they are designed as collaborative interactive conversations. The figure to the left highlights key differences.

Source: Farland Group

WHY DO IT?

If an advisory board is well executed, clients become extremely vested in the board and the evolution of the business it is advising, and both the clients and the company derive value from the collaboration.

Benefits can include:

- Deeper, stronger, more aligned client relationships
- New revenue growth and increased share of wallet based on improved positioning
- New leadership direction and approaches based on client perspectives
- Product and service innovation arising from insight into customer emerging needs
- Thought leadership and content ideas created from the perspective of external stakeholders
- A pulse on changing and evolving market insights and access to new thinking

Clients also gain value, and we find that executives from the sponsoring company are often surprised at the extent to which their clients appreciate these benefits.

- Peer connections in a confidential, vetted environment
- New, innovative ideas; access to early-stage thinking
- Contribution to advancing the dialog on key business challenges
- Opportunity to influence the strategy and direction of key partners/vendors
- More targeted, useful and valuable client experiences

INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESS

There is a science—and an art—to creating effective client advisory boards that deliver on their promise. Here are several areas to focus your planning.

Get membership right.

Core to any successful client advisory board is recruiting the right set of members to provide advice and share strategic insights. Ideally you want to involve those clients who bring the most value; they are likely the most senior executives in those key relationships, are leaders in their industry and have an interest in shaping your future. Executives highly value peer connections, so those clients invited to join the board must be true peers to each other and your own executive team to sustain a strategic conversation.

Deliver on the content.

Getting the right agenda is critical in driving discussion and keeping board members engaged.

HOW TO LEVERAGE ADVISORY BOARDS TO FUEL CONTENT CREATION



Get advice and input on research findings to test for relevance and usefulness of the output.



Develop work streams with board members to explore a particular business challenge and potential solutions, co-creating a thought piece with the shared observations.



Extract and analyze the higher-level business challenges and priorities of advisory board members over time to create a position paper on trends.



Invite board members to consider sharing case examples presented at meetings with a broader audience.

Your clients will provide input on any range of topics and challenges you put in front of them. The key is to focus on areas where you really want and need advice. Senior executives also value early access to innovative ideas and are happy to engage in advancing the dialog on leading-edge, provocative thinking that you are still forming into a point of view. The tone of the content matters—if you pitch or present sales-oriented materials, the conversation will rapidly derail. We also find the most effective advisory board meetings include peer cases and examples (from members or others). Everyone learns from the best-practice sharing and peer stories, and this helps to surface the clients' points of view on priorities and challenges facing them in their business.

Co-create the agenda.

Your clients are the best resource to help you get the content right, and ensure a discussion that is valuable to all participants. Seek board input on the agenda in advance of the meeting and evolve it together. Early glimpses into board member priorities help improve and influence the content shared at the meeting away from sales and toward relevance and insight.

Act on advice.

The most important step in getting results is to make sure you take action on the advice and input you receive. Clients want to see that their time and effort were not wasted, and will expect a report at a future meeting. To drive broader action you will need to build a systematic way to share and embed the advice and insights throughout the enterprise, whether it is with the sales team, the senior strategy leaders, the content marketers or beyond. We also find it helps to work together with your board members to find a way to hold yourselves accountable for taking action, and determine how you plan to track and measure progress coming out of your board meetings.

Client advisory boards require a systematic approach and process to deliver on the potential strategic outcomes you seek. But if you focus on those elements that make it successful and apply rigor to their implementation, you will greatly enhance and amplify your conversations with your executive clients, deepen the relationships—and in the process access ongoing leading-edge insights into your clients' priorities and challenges.


Roanne Neuwirth is a senior vice president at Farland Group. Find her @RoanneNeuwirth.

PODCAST HIGHLIGHT:

**CONTENT MARKETING NEXT
 WITH PAMELA MULDOON**

In each issue, CCO highlights a podcast series available on **The CMI Podcast Network**. This time we look at *Content Marketing NEXT*, a bi-weekly series from Pamela Muldoon that examines the future of content marketing—viewed through the eyes of guests.

Pamela Muldoon began her career in radio broadcasting, but now works with companies and agencies to develop audio content strategies. She also runs The CMI Podcast Network, shepherding a varied group of podcasters as they explore the industry of content marketing.

Muldoon’s own podcast examines the outer edge of content technology, the discipline of content marketing and even how future trends will affect careers in content. Her show also includes *Blast The Buzzword*—a segment that mocks (and then resoundingly rejects) the worst buzzwords in marketing. And *In the Hot Seat*, where guests have three minutes to answer three important questions. (No one sees you squirm on podcasts.) 



**NOW AVAILABLE ON
 CONTENT MARKETING NEXT**

Muldoon speaks to Andy Crestodina, co-founder of Orbit Media Studios in Chicago. Crestodina is a rare numbers geek who can explain technical concepts in plain (even entertaining) English. He shares wisdom about mobile content, natural language search and content analytics.



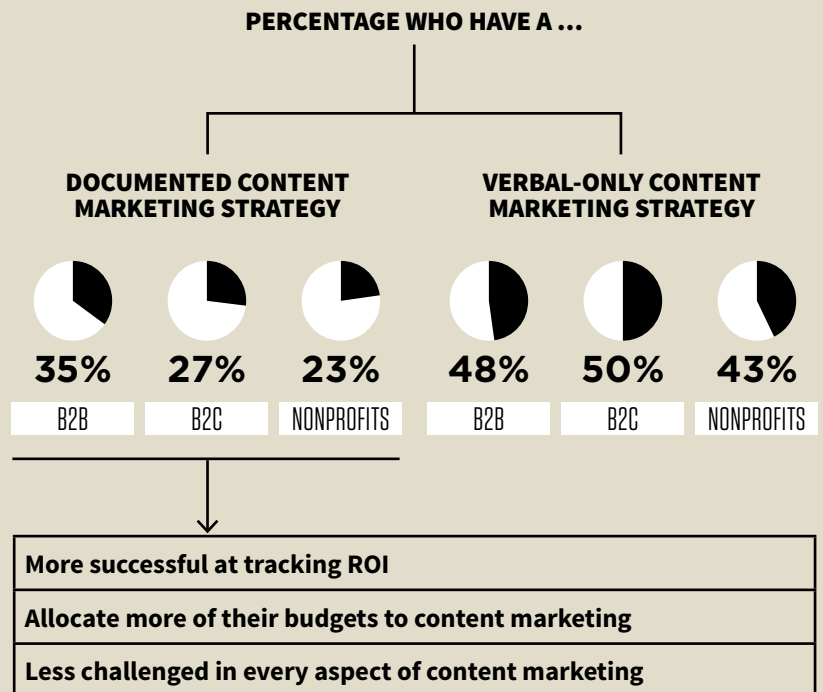
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**BY THE NUMBERS
 DOCUMENTING STRATEGY**

One of key differentiators between the most effective content marketers and their less effective peers is the presence of a documented content marketing strategy. (Having a verbal-only strategy helps in some regards, but the benefit is minimal compared to those who have taken the extra step to write it down.)



Dig into all of CMI’s content marketing research: <http://cmi.media/research15>



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DAVID NEUMAN, PRIME VISIBILITY, @DAVE0911

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WWW.SPROUTSOCIAL.COM

Our preferred tool for publishing, Sprout Social is easily the best one-stop tool for monitoring channels and engaging. What's more, it ensures comments on ads are captured (something Facebook doesn't even do for native advertising), which allows us to answer questions on the information we have available, etc.

BRANDON HARIG, CEREBRALPALSY.ORG, @THECPORG

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BuzzSumo lets us to track the most shared content in social media for industry keywords, our company or competitors. We can also track who shared each piece of content (and sort by number of followers in Twitter, for example). We're alerted when Wrike or any top competitors get a new backlink so we can quickly share this content and connect with the writers and influencers who mention us.

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JEREMY "WAZ" WASNER, RACKSPACE, @RACKSPACE

DEPARTMENT EDITOR



Ann Gynn trains others to create successful content marketing or works to get the job done on behalf of her clients. Follow her @anngynn.



INFORM INSPIRE THINK ENGAGE

LIKE A TV PRODUCER

Want to go all in with video? Take a cue from EMC, the Big Data and cloud-computing company, and start telling stories the way a TV producer would.

Erin Rodat-Savla

The brick building that houses the heart of EMCTV could be any other building in any other corporate office park. In fact, Maggie Burke, senior director of corporate marketing, seems impressed that I've managed to find it among the dozen others on this cul-de-sac. She leads me through a rabbit warren of decommissioned cubicles, empty offices and miscellaneous storage stacks to a dimly lit corridor lined by metal mesh walls. A banner overhead suggests we've arrived: "EMCTV – Inform. Inspire. Engage."

Despite the fact that I've already seen some of EMCTV's programming, it's still surprising to see a fully operational TV studio in this former warehouse. Behind these walls, there's a Hollywood makeup mirror. There's a small, nicely appointed seating area—the green room, of course. And there's the multi-camera production booth, with its bewildering array of buttons and screens. I'm told it's fully portable, giving the team the ability to mix and cut video on the fly, even as it streams live from any site.

Turn a few more corners, and I find myself under a fully outfitted, 24-by-36-foot lighting grid, facing a standing news set. (I half expect to find Diane Sawyer testing her mic.) Towering over me is a newly acquired 14-foot camera jib. I no longer feel like I'm in an office park.

Although they work there every day, no one is more surprised





In one **DataCrunchers** episode, the hosts provide color commentary as they watch 20 tons of rock crush a data center only to have the data recovered before a truck speeds around a race track. Burke says, “We blow things up, drop things out of airplanes, have crazy races. It’s fun. It’s different. It’s not taking ourselves too seriously.”

“At EMC, we sell highly technical and often abstract products and services. But, the truth is, there are thousands of stories around how Big Data and IT change the way we live, function and work. The stories are there, if you think about where to look.”

**- MAGGIE BURKE, SENIOR DIRECTOR,
CORPORATE MARKETING AT EMC**

to find this studio in place than Dave Ross, senior manager, and Glenn DiTommaso, chief technical engineer. The original two-man team, Ross and DiTommaso have produced video for EMC for 14 years. With no small amount of wonder, Ross struggles to express the turn of events, “Ten years ago, I never would have predicted anything like this. I figured we would just keep doing what we were doing. The stuff we’ve done over the past four years? This warehouse? I never, never saw it.”

From Corporate Videos to Network-quality News

Burke, a former CBS network news correspondent and producer, made the

leap from broadcast to corporate TV 14 years ago. A decade later, she joined EMC at a time when the formerly sales- and engineering-oriented B2B company had just appointed its first chief marketing officer. CMO Jeremy Burton brought in Burke to create video communication for executives and interject the news-style commentary into EMC’s corporate video. (Prior to this, Ross and DiTommaso—who also started out in network TV—produced mostly customer testimonials and the occasional executive interview with just a couple of cameras and a computer between them.)

Burke says her charge was general, “Get executives out in front, so the whole company can see them, understand them

WHAT DOES BRAND-SPONSORED NETWORK NEWS LOOK LIKE?

Live Broadcasts & Product Launches:

Following the “reporting-to-you-live-from” format, EMCTV reporters and anchors cover key EMC events. An internal broadcast network allows five times as many EMC employees to participate and the coverage generates volumes of on-demand content for replay, particularly by the salesforce.

In September 2013, the team produced *Speed to Lead*, a 24-hour product launch for EMC’s VNX unified storage line. The “follow-the-sun” broadcast hopped between reporters at 13 locations. This orchestration surprised even EMCTV’s infrastructure partner for the event, Major League Baseball Advanced Media, whose technical lead quipped after wrap, “You know we’ve never done anything like that, right?”

Brand-awareness Documentaries:

EMCTV has produced several short films documenting EMC’s contributions to extraordinary historical preservations, including massive digitization projects at the Vatican Library, The Yad Veshem World Center for Holocaust Research, Pisgah Astronomical Research Institute and Finca Vigía, Ernest Hemingway’s home in Cuba.

“People engage with brands if you communicate what you stand for. What do you want people to feel when they think about you? These films say something very human about EMC—that historic preservation is something we value and believe in. I’ve had salespeople say that they’ve landed deals because of our Vatican video,” explains Burke.

Ongoing Programs:

Recurring programs like *IT Insider*, an interview show with IT and security bigwigs like the CIA’s former information security officer; *The Geek Pit*, a product demo show or the Mythbusters-styled *DataCrunchers* show off EMC technology and thought leadership in ways that appeal to its corresponding audience, particularly the young and “techie” set.

Newsworthy Events:

EMCTV recently captured the moment when EMC and Lotus Formula 1 broke a Guinness World Record—launching a semi-truck 83 feet, 7 inches off a ramp and over an F1 race car speeding down the track. (The video joins multiple other clips focused on the EMC and Lotus F1 technical partnership and how EMC’s private cloud infrastructure supports the team’s race performance.)

READY TO BUILD YOUR OWN STUDIO?

If you're wondering whether to go in house for video content, Burke asks just how much video is on your roadmap for both marketing and internal communication. If it's still only a handful of videos, stick with agencies or experiment with new hybrids like YouTube's playground studios in New York City. If it's much more than that, Burke says, you will be surprised how small you can start—and how worth it will be.

It's less expensive than you think.

You don't need to start with a full-blown studio, of course, and prices have plummeted on the basic equipment. The EMCTV team estimates that the roughly \$50K invested four years ago is almost 10 times more than what you'd need to spend today for basic cameras, a TriCaster Mini and other starter infrastructure. Ross points out, "You pay that just walking into the door of some agencies."

Don't discount executive cost, convenience and comfort.

If your executives are the stars of the shows, the ease of getting them into the studio, as well as working with familiar faces, can also contribute to significantly lower costs and higher quality productions.



Over the years, Burke and the EMC team have distilled eight tips for corporate marketers to start thinking like TV producers.

Read about it a <http://cmi.media/emctv>

and engage with them. We need video." They started modestly with a single serial program called "Bill's Breakfast Club," a chat show for the salesforce featuring the head of worldwide sales. Today, as a semi-autonomous arm of the corporate marketing department, the 10-person EMCTV team is averaging a show a week, about eight product launches per year, multiple mini-documentaries for brand awareness ... all on top of producing TV news-style coverage of the company's quarterly meetings, the innovation conference Launchpad and the IT conference EMCWorld. This success—and the still-increasing demand for its work—is what led the company to agree to EMCTV's proposal: Convert unused warehouse space into this dedicated, on-site studio. It opened in February 2013.

Burke contrasts EMCTV's approach to traditional corporate TV: "For many organizations, the gold standard is still some talking head executive shot on a green screen. It's understandable. It takes money to create our kind of content, but the things you can do with new, lower-priced technology make it possible to produce richer stories. We tell stories that are definitely not your norm. We do mini-documentaries ... and think of them the way *Dateline, 20/20* or *60 Minutes* would. We try to find really fascinating stories, then tell them well ... to evoke positive feelings about the company."

This story-and-news approach helps cut through the fact that, as Burke admits, "EMC sells something that, quite frankly, is a little difficult for people to understand. Our job is to build an awareness of everything that 'data storage' really means." The videos dovetail into the company's brand awareness, thought leadership and audience engagement efforts by broadcasting interesting characters and fascinating visuals to its core external audience of engineers, data scientists, security officers and CIOs, as well as its strongest brand advocates: its 65,000-person global workforce. "These are the people who are going to tell your story with a real emotional connection to it."

A small, nimble production team, coupled with employee experts as on-air talent.

The team operates in Massachusetts and California. In addition to Burke, four team members serve as producers and directors, with two cameramen and editors on each coast, and additional roles to support the team's operations.

For the volume and complexity of what EMCTV produces, it's still a pretty lean team. The key: Recruiting EMC employees as on-screen talent.


Several times a year, EMCTV runs internal auditions, identifying EMC employees—be they systems engineers or vice presidents—to be event reporters and anchors, as well as the hosts for recurring programs. These recruits then go through reporter boot camp to develop research, interviewing, teleprompter, mic and other on-screen skills.

"We've now got about 24 people who are really, really good at this. We couldn't do what we do on the budget we do it without them," Burke says, pointing out the main advantage—they already know the products and messages. "The on-air parts are far easier to teach than how to portray your company."

EMCTV also supplements its field crew with employees from other divisions, often younger members of departments like IT or educational services, who bring introductory video or technical skills and a real desire to learn. Ross explains, "Managers are generous with their time because they learn a tremendous amount on set. It becomes an informal apprenticeship."

When it comes to creating your core team, however, Burke advises, "Look for TV people. There's no real replacement for experience. Everybody from my team comes from TV, not corporate marketing—BBC, Smithsonian, Lifetime, A&E, CBS. They know visual storytelling."

And don't assume that corporate work isn't attractive to creatives; there's something to be said for stable benefits, corporate budgets and the lack of dubious assignments, like covering the sinkhole eating a supermarket parking lot.

Certainly the energy of Burke, Ross and DiTommaso isn't that of creatives being quashed by corporate life. They're eager to tell their own story in hopes it encourages more organizations to redefine and push the boundaries of corporate content. "We've put together a team of unbelievably talented people ... and EMC leadership has let them blossom. This is a dream job for us. We're making TV and having fun." 

Erin Rodat-Savla is vice president at Farland Group, a B2B marketing and strategy consulting firm. Follow her @ersavla.

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Andrew Davis dishes out content marketing advice to unsuspecting targets. In this issue, he pleads with Sally Pofcher, CEO of Paper Source, to think less about promotion and more about inspiration.

Sally Pofcher
CEO
Paper Source

Dear Ms. Pofcher,

I love your stores. I can't stand your emails.

Your staff is attentive and knowledgeable. Your classes look fun and interesting. Last year, literally a year ago, I spent a half-hour learning how to heat emboss from one of your friendly team members—and I really enjoyed it. Instead of dropping \$100 on embossing hardware and supplies on a whim, I decided to wait and left the store empty-handed—but not before signing up for one of your emails.

Over the next 12 months you emailed me offers and new product news every single week. Here's the thing: I don't need a discount. I need some inspiration.

I need to be inspired to use your embossing tools for hundreds of cool projects. I need you to remind me how much fun I had heat embossing paper in your store. I need you to inspire me to create my own branded thank-you cards and crafty personalized wine gift bags.

You know where I live (not specifically, but you know the shop where I signed up to be on your email list) and you've never once invited me to attend an embossing class at the store down the street from my house.

It's not like you haven't created inspirational content to share. Your blog is inconsistently littered with neat ideas (and worthless promotions). I found a great article showing me how to create chalk paper placemats. You've inspired others to decorate their pumpkins with glitter paint, to emboss gift wrap and ribbon, and even to create an embossed hot-air balloon mobile. That stuff is pretty good. (Though to be honest, the stuff your in-store staff showed me was a lot better ... they are a crafty bunch!)

You see, as a wannabe crafter, I need you to create a moment of inspiration, an instant in time that sends me on a journey I never expected. Instead of sending me a 10-percent-off coupon, why not send me great ideas you're posting on your blog? Why not inspire me to spend my Saturday making chalk placemats or embossing wrapping paper?

I think you'll find that most of us who aren't die-hard crafters are not convinced to spend money because you've given us a discount. We're motivated to spend when you've inspired us to try something new.

Here's the deal, Ms. Pofcher. If you send me weekly inspiration instead of discounts, I'll buy that \$100 worth of embossing supplies I looked at last year.

What do you say? Do we have a deal?

Whether you wanted it or not,
Andrew

DEPARTMENT COLUMNIST



Andrew Davis is the author of *Brandscaping: Unleashing the Power of Partnerships*. Follow him @TPLDrew.

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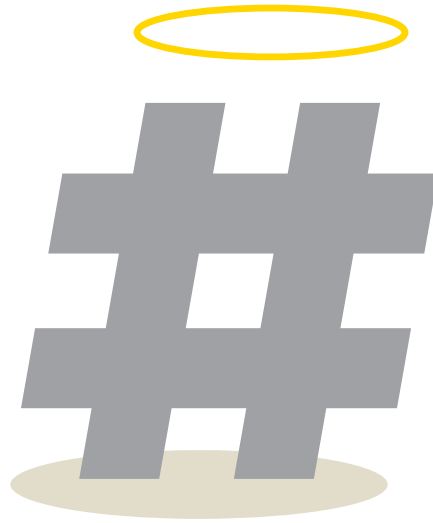


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AVOIDING A SOCIAL MEDIA TRAGEDY

The tragic #SydneySiege showed just how off key marketers can be when they ignore (or worse, capitalize on) unfolding, tragic events.

Jonathan Crossfield

Many years ago, I briefly worked as a door-to-door salesman, the worst possible form of interruption marketing.

Every knock of the door, I dreaded stumbling into an intense argument or family tragedy. Somehow, the opportunity to buy a discount gym membership would seem inadequate compensation for interrupting Great Aunt Irene's wake.

I would look for signs as I walked up the path. Raised voices? Move onto the next house. Of course, that's common sense. No one would try to sell to a family in mourning or pitch a product to a couple throwing plates at each other.

Unfortunately, the same courtesy is occasionally lacking in social media.

On Dec. 15, a madman with a gun walked into the Lindt coffee shop in Sydney's Martin Place, and the Central Business District went into lockdown.

At the time, I was two blocks away in a client's office, which the police cordoned off directly opposite the building entrance. Throughout the day, like most of Sydney, I turned to social media to stay updated. The hashtags #SydneySiege and #MartinPlace became gathering points for anyone affected by the event.

That massive, shared experience blossomed into positive community initiatives such as #IllRideWithYou, which began in retaliation to stories of racist attacks on public transport. Social media made me proud.

Sadly, not all uses of social media that day were so commendable.

Making a Hash of It

Hashtags are not to be taken lightly. They're highly variable and fluid things, and can really explode during a major news event.

Cue the hashtag chasers—marketers searching for large audiences with minimal (or no) effort.

"Search and connect with other participants at #sydniesiege with @annectoapp. Networking made efficient." @dearnetworking

Yes, this account is apparently programmed to seek potential event hashtags—most likely any trending tag to include a city name or event-related keyword.

Naturally, its strike rate isn't 100 percent, and on a normal day that might not matter if you're only concerned with playing the numbers. But occasionally it is going to hit a conversation where not only does it not belong but is wildly inappropriate.

LESSON
1

DON'T TRUST MACHINES TO CHOOSE YOUR HASHTAGS FOR YOU.

Think First, Post Later

With so many people eager to leave the Sydney CBD, car-service Uber's pricing algorithm melted. Huge demand meant Uber fares skyrocketed to around four times usual rates, in many cases well over \$100 for a routine journey.

Uber actually thought this was a good news fact worth tweeting.

"We are all concerned with events in CBD. Fares have increased to encourage more drivers to come online & pick up passengers in the area." @Uber_Sydney

Naturally, distressed Sydney-siders didn't respond well to being price-gouged in the middle of an emergency.

After a social media backlash and a highly critical Mashable article, Uber "clarified" its original tweet. Apparently, the increased fare was only to encourage more drivers into the city, while fares from the city would be free. (I suspect "clarified" should read "backtracked in the face of a PR disaster," but I'm being charitable.)

In a public emergency, clarity is everything. If Uber's later tweet was correct, the first was appallingly worded, with little regard for how it would be received.

LESSON
2

NEVER CROW WHILE OTHERS CRY.

Profiting From Tragedy

"AUST gets wake-call with Sydney terror. Only Daily Telegraph caught the bloody outcome at 2.00am. Congrats." @Rupert_Murdoch

Ah, @Rupert_Murdoch—a verified account you could easily mistake for a vicious parody. If you like your old men grumpy, rambling and megalomaniacal, then this is the one to follow.

Murdoch's response to the siege was predictably single-minded. But it was the sheer insensitivity of his glee that saw his tweet criticized and condemned around the world.

By crowing over his newspaper's scoop with such ghoulish language, Murdoch confirmed that both he and his newspaper were completely out of touch with the audience. That's bad enough for any brand, but a media company?

If your business profits or benefits from the tragedy in any way, keep it to yourself. Your success comes at the expense of too much misery.

LESSON
3

READ AND CONSIDER EVERY UPDATE FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF THOSE MOST AFFECTED BY THE EVENTS.

Be Prepared

With any luck, your business already has a social media policy to cover the routine online activities of your marketing team and wider staff. You also should have a crisis plan at the ready if your brand encounters major criticism, suffers a product failure or becomes the center of a negative news story.

A large news event or tragedy, however, can change the mood of the social media landscape in minutes. At a bare minimum, if you switch on the telly and at least one channel has suspended regular programming for rolling news coverage, it's probably time to suspend yours.

Beyond that, when a major news event or tragedy starts to pop up in your timeline or newsfeed, make a quick assessment of the situation.

1. Does the event directly impact your business?

If so, then the crisis is yours too. Activate your social media crisis plan.

2. Does it affect your local area? One particular Boston business was highly criticized for continuing to tweet content at its usual high rate in the aftermath of the Boston Marathon bombing, cluttering the timelines of other Bostonians searching for news.

3. Does it affect a significant number of your followers or customers, wherever they are?

If your timeline and newsfeed are full of heated and heartfelt discussion about the latest tragedy or atrocity, your audience is probably not in the best frame of mind to receive your hilariously satirical new listicle on the business acumen of cats.

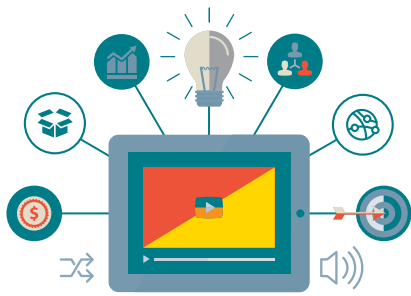
Social media is about listening just as much as it is about sharing. If you don't listen to your audience, if you're blithely unaware of their mood, you risk one day becoming the equivalent of a door-to-door salesman at a wake. ☹️

If you switch on the telly and at least one channel has suspended regular programming for rolling news coverage, it's probably time to suspend yours.

DEPARTMENT EDITOR



Jonathan Crossfield is an award-winning writer, blogger and journalist. Find him @Kimota.



Be a Video Maven

Make 2015 the year to dominate with video. Consider these tools to move your video creation and production from ‘meh’ to mastery.

VIDEO CREATION TOOLS



There are dozens of “upload-your-photos, get-a-video” sites. **Animoto** is the biggest and it has a wealth of themes, a slick UI and great ease of use.



GoAnimate is a leading animated-video creation site. Everything is controlled by simple drag-and-drop tools, and the platform automatically syncs your narration to the animated figures on screen. GoAnimate has huge libraries with tens of thousands of assets representing hundreds of industries and occupations. Finally, publish directly to YouTube or other sites like Wistia, Vidyard and Viewbix.



The presentation deck grows up. **Knowledge Vision** lets you create interactive online video presentations by combining video, presentation decks and narration. It’s easy to produce, interactive for viewers, and fully trackable for marketers.

POST PRODUCTION



Imagine something halfway between iMovie and FinalCutPro—but hosted in the cloud to better enable collaboration across teams. That’s **WeVideo**. It’s a great place to combine animated clips (such as those from GoAnimate) with live-action clips, such as iPhone footage, professionally shot footage or stock footage.



Five videos your brand can’t live without:
<http://cmi.media/5videos>

HOSTING / DISTRIBUTION / ANALYTICS

All of the following hosting sites are device and bandwidth sensitive, and will send an optimized video stream for the viewing environment. Each allows you to control the viewing experience rather than YouTube serving up 16 clickable thumbnails to other people’s videos at the end of yours. In other words, the viewer remains with your CTA and does not get lured away by a video about cute, bacon-wrapped kittens.



Arguably the most comprehensive of video hosting sites, **Brightcove** has everything you need to drive awareness, engagement and conversion. Publish and stream on-demand video for any device. Create branded video portals with tools for SEO and social capture. Brightcove has a strong analytics component that can integrate with your existing solution, as well as the major marketing automation technologies.



Wistia leads in small business-focused video hosting. Uploading videos is quick and easy, and the platform offers great customization of the player—from appearance to calls to action and captions. As with other video hosting platforms, Wistia offers viewer engagement metrics so you can adjust on the fly, as well as integration with Hubspot, Google Analytics, Pardot, Mail Chimp and Clicky.



Vidyard lets brands customize their video players, making the content look more professional. The platform is often cited for its robust, real-time analytics (and data can be channeled to Eloqua, Hubspot, Marketo and Pardot). Vidyard also lets you push video to YouTube, meaning it’s not an either/or decision.



As with Brightcove, **Vidcaster** focuses on enterprise accounts. In addition to marketing applications, Vidcaster also serves training and video subscription services. The service includes leadwalls and integrations with major marketing automation platforms; it also optimizes implementations for SEO.

INTERACTIVITY



Viewbix is an interactive video player optimized for social video advertising. Calls to action and leadwalls are easy to customize and install. Setup takes only five minutes. It also offers a robust analytics platform, which allows you to monitor your ads across different platforms, providing real-time support for creative optimization.



Whereas Viewbix specializes in interactivity for short-form content, such as social video ads, **Hapyak** specializes in interactivity for longer form content. It provides the functionality to insert links (calls to action), chapter markers, and quizzes and annotation. And Hapyak supports all this with robust analytics, which allow content producers to measure engagement (as opposed to simply plays or video starts).

Sharpen Your Pencils

Content marketing influencers share their productivity secrets.



BRIAN KOLB
*Chief Operating Officer of
Wrights Media*
@BrianKolb

I found myself wasting so much time with emails, texts and phone calls attempting to set up meetings with colleagues. Now I use **Pick.co** to do the work for me. Pick compares my availability with the calendars of those I'm meeting with and offers suggested times that work for all. It saves time and takes the headache out of scheduling a meeting.

I'm a firm believer that to be productive, you have to keep things simple. I use **Omnifocus**, a task-management platform, to stay on top of personal and professional goals. It makes me more efficient and saves me a ton of time.

JASON MILLER
*Author and senior content marketing
manager at LinkedIn*
@JasonMillerCA

Usually I listen to Megadeth or the Sex Pistols throughout the day—and while that's great for clearing out emails and keeping me sharp, it's not great for writing. Someone recently turned me on to a cool little app called **Coffitivity**. It recreates the ambient sounds of a cafe to boost your creativity and help you work better.

OneNote is my savior for all things organization. I used to swear by Evernote, but I think OneNote has more features and has a better interface (I know what you're thinking, but Microsoft really did a great job on this app). It organizes my notes, multi-media assets, lists and blog drafts. The information is synced among all my devices, and the notebooks I create are easily shared with other folks.

MICHELE LINN
*VP of content at Content
Marketing Institute*
@michelelinn

Most of my productivity hacks are “old school.” I'm a firm believer in shutting off my email and phone, and getting things done one by one; when it comes to thinking tasks, I have read (and believe) multitasking drops your IQ level and productivity substantially. I plan these super-focused sessions during times of day when I am at my sharpest, such as first thing in the morning.

I also subscribe to a daily email called **Nutshell Mail** that sends me updates from my social networks. I generally turn off all social notifications to remove distraction, so Nutshell Mail allows me to do a quick check so I know what I should respond to or share. (Bonus: You can set the time of delivery so it works with your workday.)

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Interactive designer David Seah's line of paper-based productivity tools are like a four-shot espresso on a slow morning. Seah has spent years pondering what inspires and compels creatives to work productively. You can find all his tools available as free PDFs at davidseah.com, but our personal favorite is his sticky-pad version of the **Emergent Task Planner**, sold through Amazon.com. If you still carry around paper notebooks and calendars, this old-fashioned to-do list will change your life. No, really.

MICHAEL STELZNER
Founder of Social Media Examiner
@mike_stelzner

Do you find it hard to stay focused? Enter **Focus@Will**. Founded by William Henshall (who you may know from '80s dance band, Londonbeat), the platform combines science and music to create soundtracks that help you focus for hours on end ... and it really works. I use it every day with great effect. There's a free version with limited music or an extended version for a nominal monthly fee. They've even got a mobile app. Give it a try and thank me later.



Experts Share Visual Content Mistakes to Avoid

Chuck Frey

Like words, graphics and images can be powerful tools—but they must be used with great care to enhance, not detract from, your content marketing and branding.

Unfortunately, as visual content grows in popularity and inexpensive tools make graphics and images easier to create, many marketers churn out mediocre visual content that gets ignored by the very people it was supposed to influence. Even worse, some marketers post confusing or poor-quality images that don't look like they're from the same brand or meet audience perceptions of the brand.

VISUAL CONTENT MISTAKES TO AVOID ...

No visual strategy

“Your visual strategy should not only be a reflection of your brand, but embody it. A visual strategy is what brings your brand to life in all of your interactions and online engagements,” says Paul Biedermann, creative director and owner of re:DESIGN.

Too often, marketers become enamored with creating striking images and forget about what they're trying to accomplish, warns Donna Moritz, a social media marketing and visual content specialist, and founder of the Socially Sorted blog. “What do you want your fans to do when they view your image? Marketers need to think of their visual content as a doorway to great information. It's not about just catching the attention of fans with visuals but having them take action on your content,” she explains.

The Swedish-based division of Pepsi-Cola may have fallen in love with this attention-getting image of a voodoo doll resembling Portugal's soccer superstar Cristiano Ronaldo that it used in a series of Facebook ads in 2013. But Ronaldo's fans and his team were not amused. Pepsi was forced to issue an apology.



objective,” says Lisa Loeffler, publicity and promotions manager for social media guru Jay Baer and his popular Convince & Convert blog. “Remember to take the time to step back from your personal creative lens and say, ‘If I was a fan of my brand, would this resonate and inspire me enough to share it in my social communities?’”

Off-brand visuals

Another frequent faux pas is inconsistency: Marketers post infrequently or publish clashing images that don't look like they're from the same company. This approach can cause confusion and do more harm than good, Biedermann says. “A weak, conflicted, fractured presentation is the death knell for standing out in today's extremely busy media environment. Only by presenting a strong, unified brand across all media touch points does a business stand any hope of gaining the traction it needs to be seen and understood,” he adds.

Another common mistake is neglecting to properly brand images, which helps audiences to quickly identify the image's source. “Add your company name, logo, website address and other important identifiers to your images. Maintain your brand's look and feel by consistently using its colors, fonts and graphics,” says Rebekah Radice, a social media strategist and author.

One size fits all

Another common mistake is creating a single graphic or visual treatment to use across all social platforms. Every social network has specific guidelines and constraints for graphics. Each one spells out image sizes and other parameters that enable them to appear in their optimal form on many types of devices.

Yes, it's time-consuming to create a separate optimized image for each social network. But if you want your images to perform well, you must tailor them to each channel as much as possible so that they can be presented without being cut off or distorted.

“Creating content that's highly shareable should be your top

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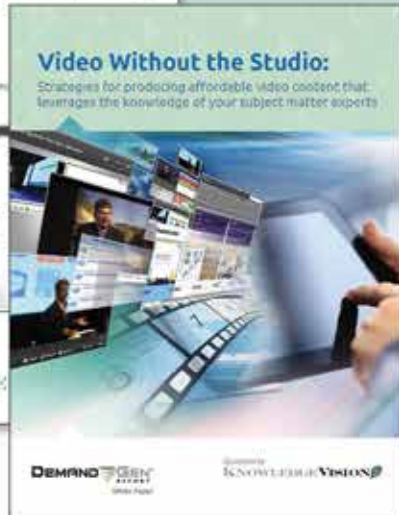
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Want a checklist of questions to ask to get the best visual content results? See the article online: <http://cmi.media/visualmistakes>



SO WHAT'S EFFECTIVE?

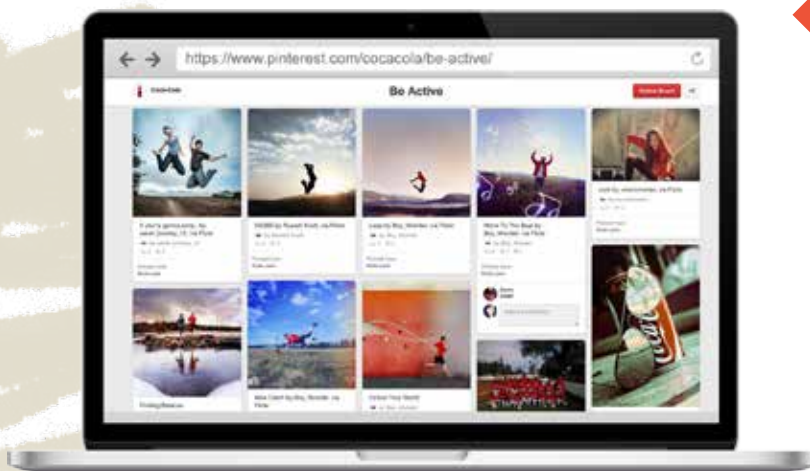
Continued from page 40

Create a cohesive, visual story

Martin Shervington, a consultant, speaker and coach on all things Google Plus, recommends taking a bigger-picture view of your visual content: "Think storytelling. Take people on a journey through your content, linking each element back to another. Visuals can make content fly, but you need to know the direction in which you want it to go, and where it can land. Engagement for engagement's sake is a rookie error," he says.

VISUAL CONTENT GRAVEYARD: THE PRESENTATION DECK

You've created a visually rich story and developed a beautiful portfolio of content to tell that story and take your prospects on a journey. "Too often the presentation deck is an afterthought," says Clare McDermott, editor of *Chief Content Officer* magazine. Whether delivered face-to-face, or to a large audience via webinar, slide decks are the place where visual entropy reigns. "Webinars in particular are such a fantastic way to tell your story, but from a design standpoint they are created by presenters with no background in visual storytelling. If you've invested in visual content, don't overlook your amplification activities like webinars, infographics, datagraphics and presentation decks."



Evaluate audience preferences

For best results, Joseph Kalinowski, creative director of the Content Marketing Institute, recommends testing different visual approaches and then tweaking images based on the engagement data. "We test to see how well the images in the CMI blog posts are shared. We keep tabs on what works and what doesn't," he says. But this requires a major time commitment, he warns: "It seems there are always updates to the different platforms that will affect how images are previewed."

Customize for each channel

Moritz is a big believer in looking at your visual content from the perspective of your target audience, especially if you're not convinced that it needs to be tailored to each social media network. "It's important to step back and understand the nuances of each platform to see what type of content works best natively on that platform. Take off your marketer hat and step into the shoes of your fans. Then you will see that the styling and message of your visual content must vary from platform to platform," she advises.

Involve your fans

Your fans already know they like their own images so why not use them? Coca-Cola's Pinterest boards deliver on its promise of "Discovering moments of happiness, one picture at a time." The global soft drink producer cleverly solicits user-generated images via its Flickr page, which it then repurposes for its engaging Pinterest boards. Consistent use of the color red helps reinforce its brand.

Starbucks' visual marketing program makes extensive use of user-generated content that shows its products in visually creative ways and people enjoying the products.

Develop in-house talent

Loeffler predicts that marketers and community managers will need to cultivate graphic design skills if they hope to respond to the increasing need for real-time content: "The ability to conceive, design, package and showcase your visual content on the fly is the next set of skills that social media practitioners will need to possess," she says. In other words, you can't just conceive an idea for a piece of visual content and throw it over the wall to your

GE Transportation created this engaging, interactive trip calculator to demonstrate how much fuel its new hybrid railroad locomotives can save versus conventional diesel-electric locomotives.



graphic designer. This iterative process is simply too time-consuming in today's real-time social media environment.

No quickie shortcuts


It may be tempting to focus on quick and easy image creation rather than taking time to create quality images your target audiences expect. A growing number of free and low-cost image-creation tools make it easier to satisfy this need for speed.

But Biedermann cautions against jumping in too quickly: "While these tools can be helpful, they work best only

after an effective branding/design/visual strategy is firmly in place. That is too often the missing link; as a result, far too many businesses add to the visual noise pollution rather than cut through it."

In other words, it's OK to use these inexpensive tools, but your graphic designer should create templates to speed image creation and keep marketers on brand. Designers also should create detailed guidelines on the proper use of logos, color, type and other visual elements. Do's and don'ts need to be clearly spelled out to enable your visual content creators to develop a consistent

brand experience for your target audience.

But isn't this time-consuming? It can be, but Stephanie Diamond, author of *The Visual Marketing Revolution*, shares a clever way to make time for it. "Look at what you're doing in your business and eliminate something that has no impact on the bottom line. Magically, time opens up when you strategically eliminate things that are not valuable to your audience or your business," she says. 

Chuck Frey is the director of online training at Content Marketing Institute. Follow him @chuckfrey.

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A content smörgåsbord.



Sir Kensington's Has a Story To Tell

As content marketers, we often talk about the importance of telling your story; the condiment makers at **Sir Kensington's** seem to be taking that advice quite literally.

The New York-based brand wrote a fanciful story about the origins of Sir Kensington, including his Oxford education and career in the British East India Company. Published on the company's website, the tale includes Old-World illustrations and an excerpt from Sir Kensington's scholarly thesis on ancient gastronomy.

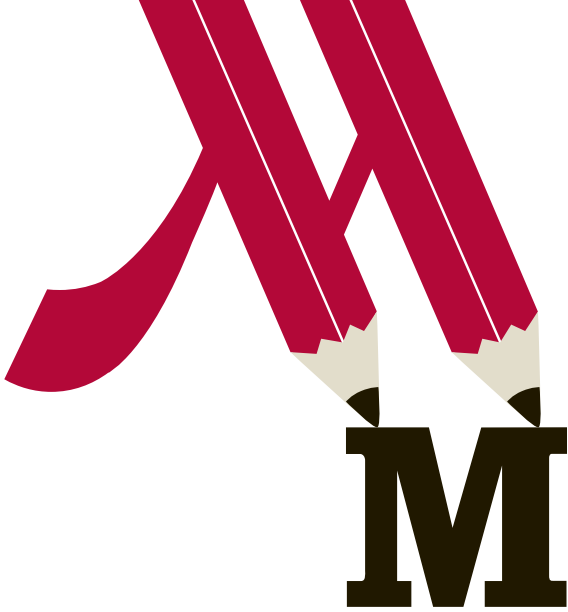
The story's cheeky tone works well for Sir Kensington's, whose all-natural ketchup, mayonnaise and mustard are sold in distinctive jars illustrated with a drawing of the fictional mustachioed Sir Kensington himself. (The invented aristocrat also wears a top hat and monocle, of course.)

Sir Kensington's commitment to ketchup—and quirkiness—has extended to the Fries of New York exhibit, a “tribute to ketchup's most beloved delivery vessel” where 100 individual fries from some of the city's most acclaimed chefs and iconic restaurants were displayed. Fans were invited to participate in the event by sharing photos of their favorite fries on Instagram using the #classifry hashtag.



Airbnb Launches *Pineapple* Magazine

Airbnb is taking its brand “out of the internet and into the home” with *Pineapple*, a quarterly travel magazine. Each issue of the print publication features three cities, with stories and photos that “capture the adventure and bring the people, places and communities of these cities to life.” Airbnb is distributing 18,000 free copies of *Pineapple* to its hosts around the world, with a limited supply sold through bookstores and other retailers in Europe and the United States.



Medium and Marriott Partner for *Gone*

Publishing website **Medium** has partnered with **Marriott International** to launch *Gone*, a “new collection of stories about any and all things travel-related.” The four-month series includes 60 articles; the majority is produced by Medium, and all are labeled “presented by Marriott”. The hotel chain approves the content of five articles, starting with a story about the opening of a new Marriott hotel in Port-au-Prince.



UNDERSTANDING BIG DATA THROUGH COMICS

How is the data we generate through our digital devices transforming the nature of privacy? **Al Jazeera America** aims to explain in *Terms of Service: Understanding Our Role in The World of Big Data*, a 46-page online graphic novella by journalist Michael Keller and nonfiction comics artist Josh Neufeld. The network’s first comics project, *Terms of Service* was created by Al Jazeera America’s interactive team, a unit designed to “push the envelope and tap into new forms of storytelling.”



SHOPPING FOR BOOKS? ASK A PENGUIN

Need help choosing a book for a friend or family member? The Penguin Hotline can help. Inspired by the Butterball Turkey-Talk Line, **Penguin Random House** launched its hotline to assist shoppers during the holiday season. Due to its popularity, the program has continued. Consumers fill out an online form that asks about the age, reading habits and interests of the person receiving the book, and a Penguin employee replies with “publisher-agnostic” recommendations.

DEPARTMENT EDITOR



Natalya Minkovsky is a writer and content strategist. Find her @hejhejnatalya.

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