

Unlocking customer equity with valuable content

By  Scott Cundill

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Since when did advertising ever retain customers? The age of intrusion has conditioned marketers into believing that bombarding consumers with annoying, pushy and often irrelevant messages will create the promise of healthy sales.



Image via [123RF](#)

In fact according to research conducted by Nielson, in 2013 alone, 27 million pieces of content were shared every single day. These figures validate that most people would rather share insights and interesting tidbits of information than product driven adverts and brochureware. It's no wonder that content marketing has naturally taken its rightful place in the world of business today.

Although content marketing has made great inroads in terms of advancing customer engagement, the real question is how to leverage content to drive sales and achieve business growth. In addition, harnessing content on both a broader and deeper level for the purpose of building customer equity is the most valuable measure of all.

Research from IDC.com echoes this sentiment by stating that top technology companies who regarded content marketing as an integral organisational competency actually ranked content development as the second most important initiative, falling close behind the measurement of ROI!

It's interesting to note that although the phenomenon of content marketing has exploded on a global scale (confirmed by [contentmarketinginstitute.com](#)) many business and brands still believe that they lack the internal competencies to source and generate content, resulting in them outsourcing it at a considerable cost.

Firmly establishing a culture of content within an organisation will provide a sustainable solution, taking away the need (in part) to bring in external content service providers. It will also open up the gateway to ensuring that the content generated has a measurable link to sales and customer retention. It is the job of every employee to look for something interesting to teach and inspire their customers. Staff should be on the lookout for interesting insights, articles, YouTube clips, blogs, white papers, research or statistics that their clients or customers would find interesting and valuable. Establishing a culture of content is a long term strategy and companies themselves are best positioned to generate content ideas - after all who knows their customers and core business offerings better than the company itself?

Proactively seeking out content is vastly different from writing and publishing it. As such the copywriting and packaging aspect of the content can be outsourced, but the actual generation of ideas needs to live and grow from within the organisation.

It is interesting to note that research from the Content Marketing Institute indicates that 82% of customers feel more positive about a brand after reading custom content and 90% find the content generated useful. Interestingly, 80% said that they prefer content that is entertaining in some way. Despite this compelling research, many players are still not seeing the overall benefits of a content driven marketing and communication approach. Invariably this boils down to the challenges of rolling out or publishing the content and then accurately measuring ROI.

Email based articles, blogs, YouTube clips, landing pages and whitepapers are all commonplace from a publishing perspective. In fact, Aberdeen group discovered that pages with rich and valuable content are six times more likely to convert as compared to more generic content. Probably the most exciting and cost effective method of content deployment is via the e-mail Journey, which enables brands to communicate and connect with their database of customers in an authentic and engaging way. According to Majestic3.com, pioneers of the communication journey process, Journeys communicated as a series of episodes receive at least a 1,200% higher response as compared to more conventional direct marketing approaches. And what better way to achieve this than through a content driven culture?

The most progressive and successful brands have learned that an effective way to build loyalty and trust is to portray their businesses as teachers or trusted advisors and industry leaders. Interestingly, we can learn from players in tightly regulated industries such as pharmaceuticals. When their power to advertise is legally restricted, they work wonders through niche content marketing channels in order to educate their market.

In order to survive a competitive economy driven by immediacy, value and relevance - businesses will be forced to stop traditional push marketing tactics and start channelling great content to build trust and nurture prospects. Establishing a culture of content will be a necessity together with embracing new roles as educators and industry experts. The media, who are content natives will also have a significant role to play in this utopia.

ABOUT SCOTT CUNDILL

With 18 years of personal experience in the internet communications field, Cundill researches and pioneers communication and technology solutions that have proven potential to change the face of business. Fiercely authentic with a drive - he is passionate about empowering any kind of business with the technology to inspire and cultivate sincerity and relevance through original 'Communication Journeys'...

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