

Harness the power of content co-creation

 By [Desiree Gullan](#)

9 Nov 2013

Consumers becoming content creators is nothing new. In the digital age, we encourage consumers to contribute through comments, blogs and sharing.

We ask consumers to create their own content with a reward for the most exciting contribution, and yet, very few marketers have successfully embraced the opportunity content co-creation presents.

Allowing consumers to create their own content is a great way to establish two-way communication and establish your consumers' perception of the brand. For centuries, great storytellers have relied on their audiences' imaginations for stories to be truly great - it's about time we harnessed this for brand stories and marketing in the digital age.

While co-creating content will vary from brand to brand, here are three key tips for starting the process:

1. Know the brand story

Before you can expect your audience to get involved you need to understand the brand story first. This goes beyond key messages and delves deeper than branded content.

Although you are co-creating content you need to give your audience a point of departure to steer the content in the right direction. Define the messages that need to be created, link them to co-creation opportunities and decide on the most appropriate channel.

2. Make it fun and accessible

Co-creation should be engaging and exciting - allowing your audience to use their imagination and get creative. Disney's Toy Story 3 did a great job at this a few years ago through their Build Your Own Toy app on Facebook.

The app gave fans tools to build their own toys and share them on Facebook. Fans didn't have to create their own content from scratch and could instead, with little effort and lots of fun, co-create brand content.

Brands often make the mistake of relying solely on the audience to create content such as uploading photos or videos, but this asks a lot from the consumer and leaves little control for the brand. Rather than making consumers go out of their way to create content, give them the tools to make the process easier and try to tap into existing consumer behaviour.

3. Don't be a control freak

Although co-creating content allows for more control over the conversation, brands need to loosen up and remember that you are tapping into the creativity and imagination of your audience - giving them an opportunity to interweave their story into your brand story.

If there are too many parameters the audience will lose interest, so it's vital to keep the balance between flexibility and control when allowing your audience to co-create content.

ABOUT DESIREE GULLAN

Having worked at the 'Big Three' advertising agencies in SA and proving her creative mettle abroad, Desirée has won multiple local and international awards for her work - including Cannes Lions and Clio. She believes in the importance of craftsmanship - that it's not in the designing, but in the redesigning. Not in the writing, but in the rewriting.

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