

CONTENT IS KING

BY ANNE DRUMMOND | ADVANCE 360

**TODAY'S CONSUMERS
ARE SAVVY. THEY
KNOW JUST WHERE
AND HOW TO FIND
INFORMATION ABOUT
YOUR BUSINESS,
WHEN THEY WANT
IT. BUT EQUALLY
IMPORTANT, THEY
KNOW HOW TO AVOID
YOUR MARKETING.**

With a DVR to blast through commercials, the value of the traditional marketing spend in television has plummeted. From the movement of radio to Spotify, Pandora and Sirius/XM, consumers are subscribing their way into commercial free environments; leaving your audio ad spend in their wake. We've become so accustomed to being pummeled with marketing messages wherever we go that we have become bitter about an interstitial or popup ad unit, and nearly desensitized in other banner and ad-heavy environments. How then can we reach the users, viewers, listeners?

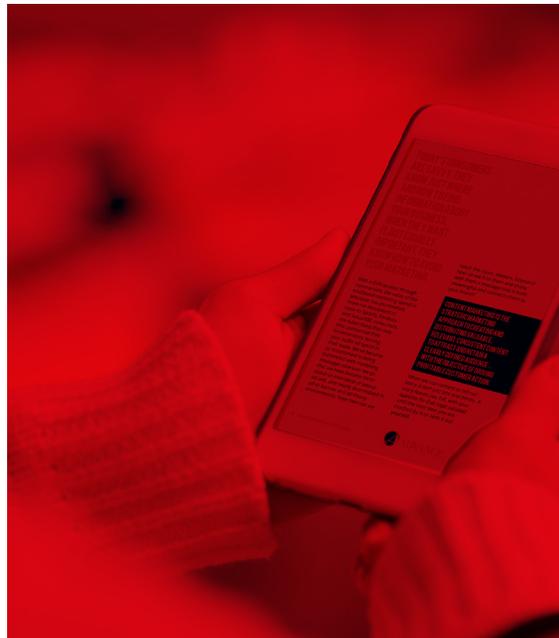
How do we find them and share with them a message that is both meaningful and connects them to your brand?

CONTENT MARKETING IS THE STRATEGIC MARKETING APPROACH TO CREATING AND DISTRIBUTING VALUABLE, RELEVANT, CONSISTENT CONTENT TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN A CLEARLY DEFINED AUDIENCE — WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF DRIVING PROFITABLE CUSTOMER ACTION.

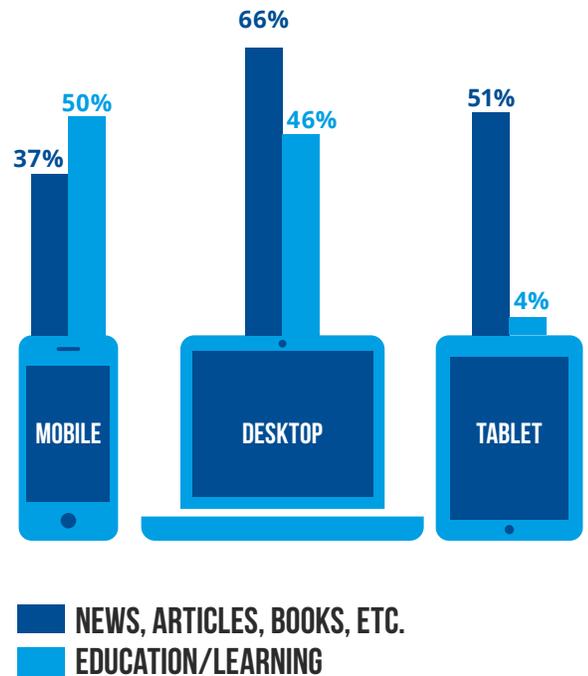
When we use content to tell our story, it isn't just bits and pieces. A story leaves you full, with your appetite for that topic satiated until the next time you are touched by it or seek it out yourself.

CONTENT MUST BE VALUABLE

What does your clientele need? If you sell rain boots, wouldn't it be important to tell your customers why they should own them? In your area of the United States, the average rainfall is X, and the declining humidity after a storm has a half-life of three days. That means wet, muddy yards just right for rain boots. Gardeners that wear rain boots consistently have fewer bug infestations in the home, as the eggs of insects that live in the tilled soil and attach to shoes or other garments, are left outdoors when rain boots are shed before entering the house. Value is in the eye of the beholder, but it needs to be intelligent and presented in such a way that the viewer will learn or at a minimum, better understand.



DAILY CONTENT CONSUMPTION BY DEVICE



IT MUST BE RELEVANT

I care that my rain boots were purchased from my neighborhood shop, owned and operated by someone I know. I also care that the rain boot company wants to support local businesses, by limiting their revenue streams to only single-location ventures. That same consumer might also desire to support a philanthropic or economic development initiative supported by a company. Rain boots for school kids in at risk areas? Relevant.

CONSISTENCY COUNTS

The stream of consciousness is impacted by frequency of message. We'll recall something after having seen it several times, so the look, layout, and word choice matter. But most important is the consistent delivery of content. If you can develop a consistent flow of interesting content that speaks to your audience, the understanding of your brand by your audience will be palpable. As they find your content throughout their Internet travels*, you'll be the voice they seek out for advice, understanding, or clarity. While these elements that represent credibility and logic in the sales funnel are important, let's not forget the role that emotion plays.

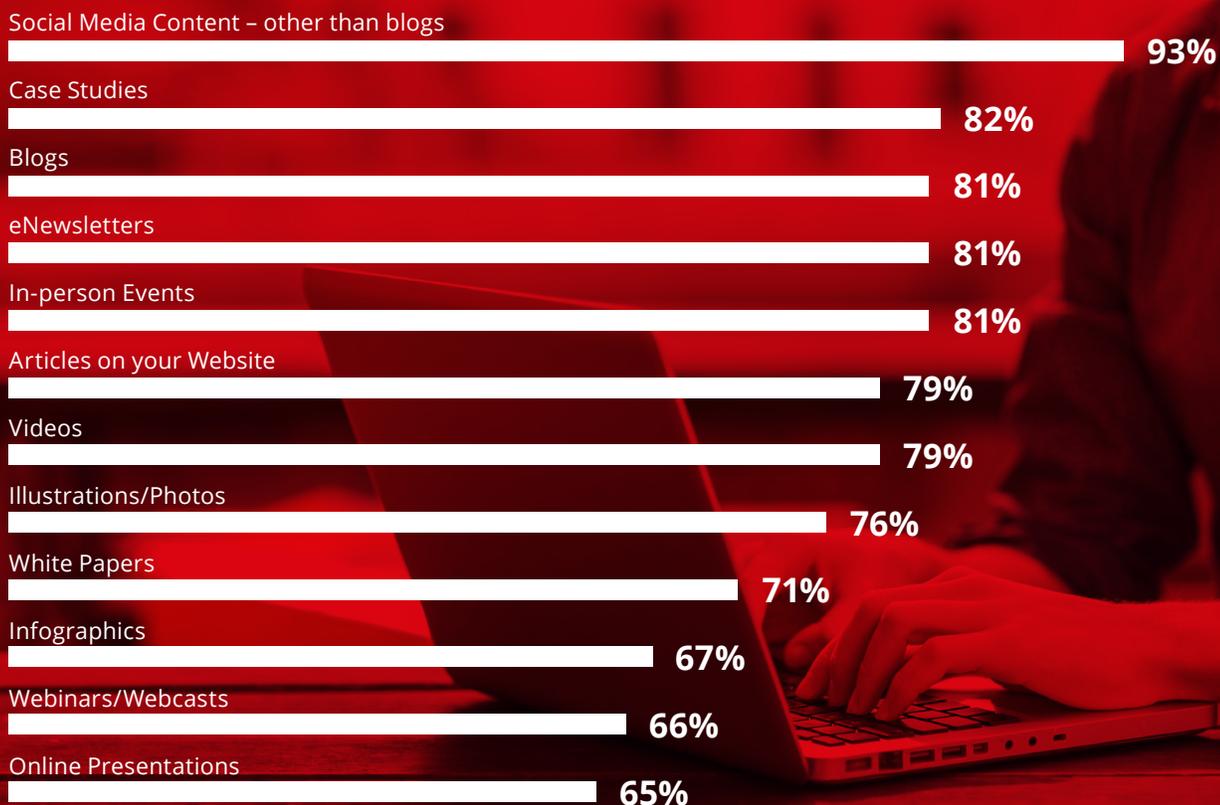
WHICH CONTENT MARKETING TACTICS DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION USE? **93% USE SOCIAL MEDIA**

The average business with a mature content marketing strategy uses 13 delivery methods.

*For more info, see Google's Micro-Moments
▶ www.thinkwithgoogle.com/collections/micromoments.html

B2B CONTENT MARKETING TACTIC USAGE

2016 B2B Content Marketing Trends—North America:
Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs



THE RICHEST OF REPRESENTATIONS OF A BRAND INCLUDE ITS PERSONALITY. CONSUMERS ANTHROPOMORPHIZE BRANDS, WHICH IS TO SAY THEY ASSIGN HUMAN CHARACTERISTICS TO THE BRAND AS THEY WOULD TO OTHER PEOPLE. JUST LIKE WITH PEOPLE, THEY ARE ATTRACTED TO SOME PERSONALITIES OVER OTHERS. PACKAGE DESIGN, VISUAL IMAGERY, AND THE WORDS USED TO DESCRIBE THE PRODUCT ALL PLAY A PART.

“Over time, marketers have developed theories about why consumers buy. Most of these err by viewing the consumer through the lens of the product. Marketers start with the features and benefits of a product and conduct consumer research to find matching needs and motivations,” Psychology Today reported. “Consumers do not have a Pavlovian response to products and to their marketing programs. Nor do the fundamentals of consumer behavior change to accommodate the latest innovation in digital technology. An understanding of consumer purchase behavior must be based on knowledge of human emotion

and include the paramount influence that emotions have on decision-making.

Another important component of the emotional connection with a brand lies in the narrative. This collection of phrases, stories, or artifacts describe the story of that brand to the consumer, and provide the context for why that consumer should care. “This narrative is the basis for brand advertising and promotion.”
~ Psychology Today

VOICE

Brands that are most successful with content are those that speak in a voice that is instantly recognized by their consumers. The word choice, spokesperson, and use of humor can also drive authenticity. At all costs, do not abandon the voice of your organization. Consumers are instantly apathetic to something that feels disingenuous.

Some examples of voice used well:

The Luna Bar, made just for women. Luna's use of friendly, approachable language that speaks to their female audience positions them more like an acquaintance than a product. "LUNA believes life is an adventure of personal progress, where we're constantly evolving and defining our own course. We invite you to join us!"

It feels forgiving—as though one's tiny effort made a difference today. It feels permissive, as though the dishes in the sink won't hurt anyone, as long as family and health are part of one's focus. Being forgiven for not having a dramatic health regimen by a company that is opening its arms to its female consumers at all stages of personal fitness feels, well, satisfying.

Content topics, all written in this voice, range from correcting the nation's shortage of farmers, IRONMAN's official sports nutrition sponsorship, and choosing whole grains over processed ones.



Adidas, who teamed with KICKTV to publish up to date content on their YouTube channel during the 2014 FIFA World Cup, did it better than any before and most after. Using the backdrop of the World Cup and all of its goings on, the series of hosts—all of which were recognizable to Adidas' core audience--posted individually, in groups, with athletes or attendees. Every angle of the games was hosted in video format, using the voice of the brand in a real time and easily embraceable social space.

Now featuring progressive athletes and sports shoes of all kinds on their site, Adidas uses a powerful and emotional draw. People feel ready to take on the world when they lace into these shoes. But it doesn't remove their individualism to be part of a team, and the brand does a great job of calling this out in their variety of headlines scrolling through the site.

Another example of marketing done well, using philosophies that make a difference is **American Express**. Read this great interview with Amex's CMO here. He does it for the people that use American Express, not for other reasons. It shows.

▶ www.psfk.com/2014/01/americanexpress-marketing-prowess.html

SO WHERE DOES YOUR CONTENT STRATEGY BEGIN?

Developing a strategy for a steady stream of content that takes many shapes, and is released across multiple platforms is no small feat. Begin with the end in mind: the end user. What is the path that this user will take to convert on your site, or in your ecosystem? Examine where your story should be inserted in this process, and then craft messaging around those touchpoints. Remember that at different phases in the buying cycle, the consumer will need to hear different things from you.

73% OF CONSUMERS ARE MORE LIKELY TO MAKE A PURCHASE AFTER WATCHING A VIDEO ON THE PRODUCT.

PREMARKET

In the premarket phase, your brand needs to connect emotionally with the customer. Does it resonate? The customer should ask, "Can I see myself in those rain boots?"

AWARENESS

In the Awareness phase, the customer might be vacillating between brands, searching for the "right" choice. We all know it is your brand that is the right choice, in the awareness phase we need to describe why that is. Enter logic, enter credibility of the brand, enter the reason your brand is the right one. There are hundreds of reasons to choose a product. Its philosophy, its design, its fair trade beliefs. Each could be a separate piece of content. Don't forget video and how-to style articles and artifacts!

ENGAGEMENT

The engagement phase, or the moment of conversion, is strong in the logic category. Craft content that describes what must be overcome in order to purchase or act.

ADVOCATE

In this phase, emotion makes its re-entry. Content could concentrate on feel good experiences from previous customers, and after-purchase feel good stories.

CONTENT MARKETING ISN'T DIFFICULT

but it is a science. It requires the discipline of a steady hand—the kind of effort that will crush a weak writer or group of writers under its stream of never ending responsibility. But when crafted to be consistent, embrace the brand voice, and pull in the emotion around the organization's identity, content will elevate the connections with a brand, amplifying the understanding of the business and those it serves.



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A self-proclaimed type-A artist, Anne has a host of marketing and public relations experience, alongside an ability to harness the power of the design process for creative execution. She leads a team of multi-disciplined creatives to best serve the visual and branding needs of clients. Her certain sensibility for detail and urgency are key components in her visioning efforts.