

How to tap into fandoms

By  Sindy Peters

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While we might traditionally only associate fandoms with Beliebers or Directioners, everybody is a fan of something. My dad won't be first in line (or last for that matter) to a J-Biebs concert, but he has pledged a life-long allegiance to Man U...



Matt Locke, founder of Storythings (UK)

The thing that separates a fan from the audience is that fans take action – they express their fanaticism by doing something about it. This is according to Matt Locke of Storythings ([@storythings](https://twitter.com/storythings)) (UK), who was first on the [#FRO16](https://twitter.com/FRO16) lineup – the free virtual conference focused on digital fundraising.

Identity and performance

Locke explained that fandom is ultimately about identity. “The difference between something that you enjoy as a story and something you become a fan of is this core idea of identity and performance.”

Fans use the stories brands or organisations tell to express their identities to others, but it isn't about the stories, stressed Locke, it's about building social capital and connecting with others through the expression of that identity - stories are merely the vehicle for this.

Reaching the mini fandoms

Another important point to note, particularly in spreading your story, is that fandoms are made up of micro-communities and how you target those smaller networks is important.

“When stories get shared among fandoms they get shared by jumping between these communities - each group will have a couple of people in them who might be particularly good at spotting stories and bringing them to the local version of that fandom. It's in those kinds of connecting points that you get scale, the stories actually get spread among millions of people around the world,” explained Locke.

Triggering participation

How do you convert awareness into participation? The trigger, said Locke, is universal: “People participate when they hear

a story or a call to action and they understand that they can convert that trigger or that story into something that is either a threat or an opportunity for their micro-community.” Participation is triggered when people perceive an opportunity that could result in a good experience shared with their friends.

Locke concluded his session by emphasising that stories need to be designed for two people – the stories brands or organisations tell need to spark interactions within micro-communities. The Ice Bucket Challenge, he mentioned, is a good example of a story that helps people build on their existing social capital.



Image source: [Wikipedia](#)

"If you can design your experience to be something which people can share," said Locke, "and with people they already have social capital, if you can design it for two people, then you can potentially make real change."

[Register and watch Locke's session at #FRO16](#). For more info, go to www.resource-alliance.org/fundraising-online.

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