

Gaining content intelligence

By [Lani Carstens](#)

12 Jan 2017

Pivotal to the success of any content marketing programme is an investment in the best editorial talent one can afford. At John Brown we hire the very best editors and designers who translate a single-minded brand message into engaging editorial content that creates a deeper emotional connection with the customer regardless of platform.



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Crafted storytelling remains pivotal to capturing the hearts and minds of readers. In fact I prefer to think of what we do as branded journalism, which differentiates what we do at John Brown, from other content marketers.

Everyone is a potential customer

Google analytics may in fact be inhibiting great content marketing. Of course it's an important tool, but by leaving a junior analyst to determine 'audience usage', aren't we missing the bigger picture or indeed the conversations happening around the dinner table?

We need to be getting into the hearts and minds of customers, and there is a danger in not seeing everybody as a potential

customer. For example, that wedding gift registry mailer might not apply to happily married you, but you could and will share it with your newly engaged bestie.

Or that article about the importance of mammograms for breast health in a customer health magazine might not apply to your 92-year-old gran, but she will share it with her daughter, inspiring her to take up the service offering. Ignoring 95% of your userscape is dangerous – everyone is a potential customer and great content will be shared.

Silo thinking inhibits great thinking

Silo thinking remains alive and well in organisations. We often find that the ‘Head of Social, Head of Sales and Head of Brand’ operate in silos and there is not much sharing going on, with no single-minded overarching strategy or approach.

We are often called in, not just to implement a content plan, but to audit their content marketing processes too. Here, with strategic editorial resources, we are able to ensure a consistent brand message is delivered appropriately – playing the role of Chief Content Officer, an enabler of thinking about content marketing.

Having this role outsourced to a reputable agency means that we are able to challenge internal thinking and bring a fresh approach.

Live and real time

Brands can now determine your whereabouts when you are using geolocation on your mobile, to serve you relevant content wherever you are.

In the UK, it’s a common story that 75% of traffic to a brand site will come from mobile. In South Africa, 85% of Facebook’s 14 million users access social media from a mobile device. From being in broadcast mode, brands can now, using your social links, serve you content and have a real-time chat in the moment.

The real-time ‘war-room’ approach – in which specialists, from content creators to production, social distribution execs, risk and compliance and audience insight specialists, gather in a single space to drive the conversation around an event or need – was just a couple of years ago the preserve of Big Media. Today, it’s one of the key ways in which content agencies and brands work together to achieve meaningful cut-through at key points.

As familiarity with these ways of working becomes more generalised, we can expect to see them become more common, more mobile and more swiftly deployed.

Attribution modeling through the customer journey

Imagine a customer being inspired by our content, who then perhaps goes somewhere else (for further research) and then comes back to us – we are now able to track users through time, doing whatever it is that customers do. This enables us to

have an on-going process of intimate communication, which is non-linear. Gone are the days where the customer journey starts with awareness and ends with purchase – it's a continual customer party and a crowd of experience that marketers can dip in and out of.

Rebirth of Augmented Reality (AR)

We predict a huge year for AR, boosted recently by the Pokémon phenomenon, which is simply a technological dry run for what's coming next. AR will first of all take up where QR codes failed, releasing additional content and information across all types of media. We then expect to see it as the Internet ON Things as glasses and phone lenses interact directly with it. It could have rather dystopian or threatening applications such as facial recognition software (think of the data shadow we all leave behind every time we interact online), but towards the end of 2017 imagine holding your phone up to that new talked-about restaurant and data appears on your phone such as how many trip advisor stars they have, their signature dish – or even a customer review.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

It all started with Siri, but 40 acquisitions of AI companies took place in the first half of 2016. Google, IBM, Yahoo, Intel, Apple and Salesforce are all now competing in the race to acquire private AI companies. Stephen Hawking thinks it could be the end of us as a species, but in the meantime it will mean more personalisation and plug into existing technology to help us get to the right people.

Programmatic content

Programmatic is merely a data-driven technology platform but by using it to intrude on people's lives with poorly executed ads, it has endangered the online advertising industry. Audiences rebelled and switched the ads off using ad-blocking technology. As a result, advertising is again returning to useful messaging for consumers. However, the use of the technology to do so will remain, but the messaging will be more akin to content marketing.

Personalisation

On the back of Big Data, we're starting to see more companies use their data to improve customer experiences. It's no accident that Marketing Heads are now being called Customer Directors. By understanding what customers want as individuals and communicating in that nth degree, large businesses can tailor communications, offers and products completely at individual level. For example, by understanding what our customers have purchased either online or in-store, we can send them relevant information such as recipes or health tips and continue the conversation with them.

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