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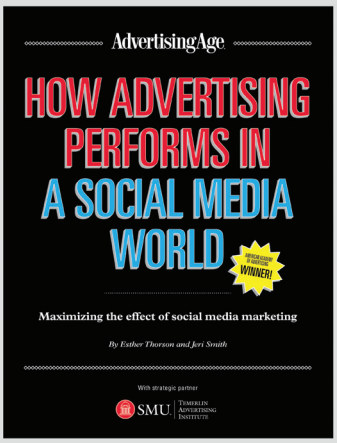

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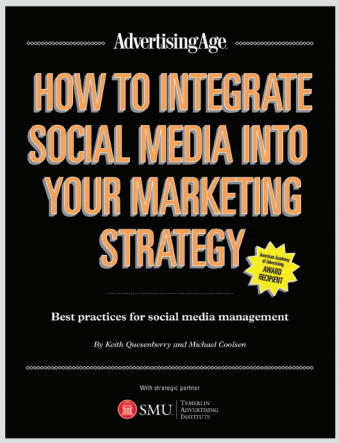

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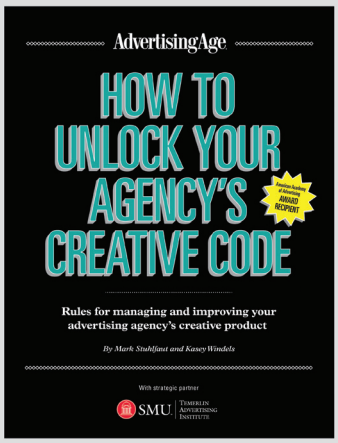

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WHAT'S NEWS TO WHAT'S NEXT

INTRODUCTION: FINDING YOUR BRAND'S STORY

If the 30-second commercial is no longer preferred content, why not create content that is?

By Beth Snyder Bulik — bbulik@adage.com

Consumers today are more connected than ever. We all know that. But what has "always on" connectivity done to the marketing and media industries?

Consumer behavior, and the balance of power between consumers and media, has shifted dramatically in the past decade. Connected consumers are now in charge of what, when and where they consume their individually preferred content. They are just as likely to tune in to content they enjoy on prime-time TV as they are to web-surf on a smartphone in the morning, even before getting out of bed. And let's face it, most 30-second ads are not the preferred content they're tapping into.

That means the once-powerful media companies are no longer the sole gatekeepers and arbiters of what people get to watch. Constantly pushing disruptive messages in front of consumers is no longer a viable strategy. Marketers today have to shift from what they want to say about the brand to what their audience wants to hear.

For more and more in the marketing industry, the answer, at least in part, is content marketing. Creating a cohesive brand strategy that tells the story of the brand, relays useful information and entertains consumers in and around the products and services offered makes sense in this new world. If the 30-second commercials, print ads and radio spots churned out for decades aren't preferred content, why not create useful and entertaining content that is?

"There is not a new business pitch that goes on today where brands are not asking agencies what are their capabilities and point of view in content," said Scott Donaton, CEO of Ensemble, the content arm of IPG Mediabrands. Donaton is also a content pioneer, the

"BRANDS ARE REALIZING THAT CONTENT IS CURRENCY AND SOCIAL ACTIONS ARE TRANSACTIONS IN THIS MARKETPLACE FOR EYEBALLS AND ATTENTION."

— Bryan Rhoads, Global content head, Intel

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PowerPoint slides of charts and infographics featured in this report are available for buyers to download by clicking the button above, which will deliver the link.

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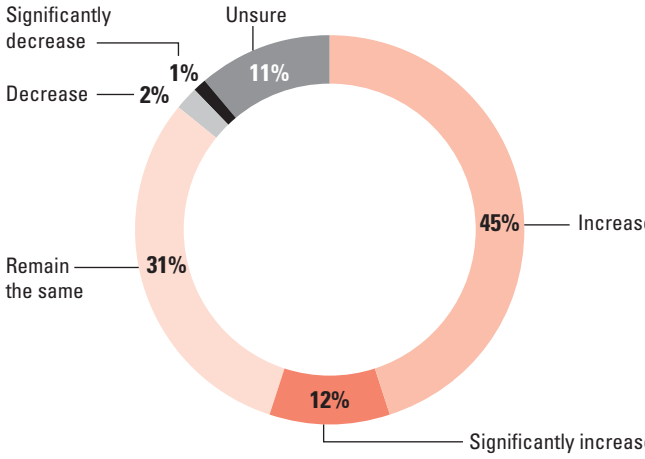
CONTENT MARKETING SPENDING PLANS

More than half of the B2C marketers plan to increase their content marketing budget over the next 12 months.



SOURCE: 2013 B2C CONTENT MARKETING BENCHMARKS - NORTH AMERICA: CONTENT MARKETING INSTITUTE/MARKETINGPROFS

former editor of Advertising Age who coined the term "Madison & Vine" and authored a book in 2004 of the same name about the intersection and convergence of the ad and entertainment industries.

"It's not a 'get me one of those' mentalities this time. I do think it comes from a much more strategic place now," he said. The motivation "has gone from fear-based to a business imperative."

The branded-entertainment industry was estimated at about $26 billion in 2010 by PQ Media, while the Custom Content Council pegged custom content at $44 billion in 2012. However, each of those measurements looks at different parts of the content industry, so while it is safe to say the content marketing industry is large, exactly how large is unclear. That's not to say that content marketing measurement doesn't work or isn't effective, but rather that overall agreements on standards have yet to be developed.

Still, marketers' interest alone in content points to a rapidly growing market. Almost 80% of marketers surveyed in a 2012 study from the Custom Content Council and Contentwise reported a moderate or aggressive pace in moving to branded content, and that 39% of total marketing communications budgets are now spent on content, vs. just 27% in 2011. The 2013 B2C benchmark study by the Content Marketing Institute and MarketingProfs also found that a majority (55%) of marketers said they plan to increase or significantly increase content spending. **(See Content Marketing Spending Plans, above.)**

They're experimenting, too. More than 30 brands uploaded their own versions of the recent "Harlem Shake" craze on YouTube, according to unMetric, with ones from Pepsi, Red Bull and Topshop officially going viral.

Consumer interest in new kinds of content from brands points upward as well. YouTube's top 20 ads for brands with combined paid and organic promotions racked up 200 million combined views, and while some of those were indeed extended Super Bowl commercial riffs, others including Nos. 1 and 2, Nike's "My Time Is Now" homage to soccer, complete with secret tunnels, and "Pepsi Max and Kyrie Irving Present Uncle Drew," were short films created for the internet.

The other major change in marketing communications is quantity and cost. Social media and digital interactions with consumers require a level of content that was not necessary before. Websites need information, blogs need engaging columns, YouTube pages require videos, Instagram and Pinterest boards need photos, and Facebook and Twitter require pithy prose and provocative short-form ideas–all churned out in daily cycles of engagement. And the cost of most of those when compared with media-placement costs of traditional advertising is much less. Costs are discussed more in-depth later in this report, but it is important to remember that lower media and even creation costs do not automatically mean content marketing is cheap. It comes with new expenses, such as staff, software and systems, to create content and monitor interactions.

There is a payoff, of course. Consumers value "earned" media much more than paid media. Recent Nielsen Co. research found that 92% of consumers said they trust earned media, such as word-of-mouth and recommendations from friends and family. And although 47% said they still trust paid TV, magazine and newspaper advertising, that confidence is in decline–down 25% since 2009.

As Bryan Rhoads, head of global content at Intel, said, "Today's web is a 24/7, endless cycle fed by content and social actions. In this cycle, brands are realizing that content is currency and social actions are transactions in this marketplace for eyeballs and attention. To remain relevant, not only do brands need to produce more interesting, useful and more timely content, they also need to adapt to a new social publishing model to best feed the social graph and this hungry cycle."

And although it makes for entertaining TV fodder, the advertising model born in the "Mad Men" era is finished. People have too many choices: Online videos are often just as entertaining as prime-time programming, Netflix or TV apps can stream favorite movies and TV shows anytime consumers want and "radio" stations are personalized compilations of their favorite artists and songs.

That means TV commercials are optional, print ads are boring and static compared with the interactive digital possibilities and online display ads go unnoticed by the human eye, now conditioned to not even see them. However, there is a silver lining. Usability expert Jakob Nielsen–the first to recognize that users rarely look at banner ads–has also noted that whether users are scanning, partially reading or thoroughly reading something, they rarely take their eyes off the content.

The power of content has, in fact, not changed at all.

HOW WE GOT HERE FROM THERE

How BMW's lack of new models one year led to a breakthrough in marketing

In 2000, German automaker BMW had a business problem: With no new models to market and increased competition, how could it assure its future in North America? The suggestion by its ad agency Fallon was simple in intent, but radical in mindset and execution. To appeal to young consumers, Fallon proposed creating a feature film for the internet in which a James Bond-like hero drove several BMW models in his exploits.

They took the idea to Hollywood producer David Fincher, who suggested breaking the film into five shorter ones. He then convinced five top directors, including Ang Lee and Guy Ritchie, to direct the films, with no brand guidelines or stipulations. Actor Clive Owen was recruited as the hero and connecting thread for all five. The idea upended traditional marketing campaigns—certainly most car advertising at the time was long on product shots and short on imagination. Also radical was the ratio change BMW made, pouring the greatest amount of its budget into production and far less into media placement, in this case, a 90:10 split of the estimated $15 million budget. The five films were a huge hit with consumers and the Hollywood creative community, even spurring controversy over whether the works should be considered as films for festival judging or relegated to advertising-only status. During the four months of initial airing online, BMW got 11 million total views, and eventually won numerous awards for creativity and effectiveness. BMW sales increased by 12.5% in 2001 and by 17% the next year.

And that was the beginning of the new content-marketing era.

Of course, content marketing can be traced back much further, to the turn of the century. The Michelin Guide was created in 1900 by the tire maker to help consumers find gas or new tires, as well as restaurants along the way. In 1904, the Jell-O recipe book sought to help homemakers entertain creatively with the jiggly food. In the 1930s, Procter & Gamble began experimenting with radio and eventually TV dramas backed by its line of household products, the now infamous "soap operas." Texaco Star Theater was another content vehicle on radio in the late '30s and '40s, which moved to TV in 1948 and aired through the '50s.

BMW — *Five top directors created films for the series*

Shows opened each week with the "Men of Texaco" brand song and often featured appearances by Texaco workers throughout the variety show, hosted by Milton Berle. In the '80s, toys and TV shows began to play off each other as deregulation in children's

CONTENT PLAYS

Marketers early experiments in creating content for consumers

2000 Being Girl—P&G

Forrester found this online effort for teen girls was four times more effective than similarly priced media.

2003 "Unboring"—Ikea

The campaign used a short film, "Lamp" by director Spike Jonze, which won the Cannes best film award in 2003.

2004 "Real Beauty"—Dove

Viral hit "Evolution" revealed a woman transformed into a supermodel with makeup and digital manipulation.

2007 Bud.TV—Anheuser-Busch The costly ($30 million for first year) original-content venture shuttered in two years after failing to deliver significant viewership.

2007 Honeyshed

A home-shopping site for the digital generation was accused of faking coolness, and only attracted 7,000 viewers per month.

2004 "Subservient Chicken"—Burger King

Let consumers "command" a guy in a chicken suit, a clever take on its "Have It Your Way" tagline.

television led to a trend of toys becoming storylines for TV shows and TV shows launching new toys.

Lately there has been a backlash about the "rush" to content marketing, with critics loudly proclaiming it as "nothing new." And while that is true to an extent, labeling it a fad or craze, or even "nothing more than the emperor's new clothes," as one critic put it, is not accurate. The truth is that the last decade and a half of content marketing is indeed different from what preceded it because technology has radically changed consumer behavior. That, in turn, has changed marketers and agencies.

"Content marketing is still everything that you do to communicate for your brand," said Paul Keister. "It's distribution that's so crazy now, with so many channels, it can create paralysis by analysis. ... Even a Google search is content. For the few words that you type, what you get back is content."

IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY

Technology—whether cable distribution or DVRs or broadband connectivity or tablets or mobile phones—has changed content consumption radically. Viewers are no longer limited to only a few prime-time Texaco- or P&G-sponsored TV show choices. They also don't have to watch 30-second intrusive ads during "Must-See TV" Thursdays anymore. And if consumers want to know where to stop for gas or find some new recipes, they can call up any number of free apps on a smartphone or tablet to tell them so.

Technology also allows content to come from anywhere. Anyone can be a publisher or director. A 12-year-old with a smartphone can record a YouTube video or tweet content to followers. And that's a big distribution shift. Forget traditional TV, print and radio placements—content distributed digitally can go anywhere, show up anywhere and thrive anywhere.

"Producing content is the easiest part. Getting the right audience to engage and interact with it is the hardest," said Bill Davenport, president, Wieden & Kennedy Entertainment

Forward-thinking marketers like BMW and others including Ikea, Nike, P&G and Red Bull, along with a handful of agencies, figured out quickly around the turn of the century that the coming technological changes were going to require not only strategy shifts, but also organizational changes. Agencies needed to not only change their thinking, but also do things like hire different kinds of talent and work with the entertainment industry in ways they hadn't before.

Brent Poer, executive VP and executive creative director, Liquid Thread, said, "When I first started, I didn't really know I was working in entertainment. We worked with Gin Miller who was at Reebok and created Step Reebok step aerobics. Once it was out there, we had to support it, so we did home videos and TV. But I didn't think of it as branded content."

Whether it was labeled or not, much of the earliest content marketing in this new era was driven by a brand's notion that it had to get in early on the coming technology changes.

"From early 2000s, what you find happening was the rise of the DVR as well as the web, and while there was no broadband then, you knew it was coming. It was a fear-driven mentality that gave birth to the idea that eventually new technology would put the end user in control of what they wanted to watch, and when and how, including commercials. So if they can skip past commercials, let's hide content in what they're watching," Ensemble's Donaton said.

That first wave led to a hard rush for product placement, whether brands had a strategic need to be there or not. And that led to generally disappointing results and a drop-off of interest in content marketing.

It took BMW and other marketers and agencies that kept trying to make breakthroughs.

"The idea then emerged that brands didn't have to hide the message inside stories other people were creating, they could create their own stories. That was the big swing that brought about the content market we're seeing today," Donaton said.

Indeed, what came before BMW Films, and even after to some extent, was a freewheeling Wild West of ideas and concepts that attempted to marry advertising and entertainment. There were more hits like P&G's Being Girl website, launched in 2000; Ikea's "Unboring" campaign and famous "Lamp" commercial/short film, directed by Spike Jonze in 2003; and Dove's "Real Beauty" in 2004.

But there were failures, too. Sony's "All I Want for Christmas Is a PSP" fake blog drew ire in 2006; Anheuser-Busch's original online-programming venture Bud.tv failed to catch on in 2007; and the Honeyshed online content and shopping site from Publicis Groupe, Droga5 and Smuggler made Ad Age critic Bob Garfield cringe in 2008.

Meanwhile, brands like Red Bull built a media house, ad agencies hired content gurus and set up dedicated practices and many other marketers worked on constructing content-marketing strategies.

Then in 2004, along came "Subservient Chicken." Burger King's online overnight sensation created a stir in content marketing not only for its storyline that neatly tied its "Have It Your Way" to its chicken offerings, but also for the campaign's combined low-budget production, viral success and high engagement. For $50,000, the fast-food chain got 15 million unique visitors within a week who spent an average of six minutes interacting with the giant creepy chicken.

STUNT OR CAMPAIGN?

It also stirred controversy. Some marketing advocates criticized "Subservient Chicken" as a stunt, a made-up story about the brand that was not branded well enough (Ad Age's Garfield) nor tied closely enough to the products. The campaign also took criticism for not being able to directly tie to sales–a challenge many content marketing efforts face–and Burger King executives said sales did go up immediately after and company insiders were quoted as glad to get the chain's cool back via the chicken.

> "IT FELT LIKE BRANDED CONTENT WAS THE WILD WEST, WHERE WE DIDN'T KNOW EXACTLY WHAT WE WANTED, JUST WE WANTED TO DO SOMETHING LIKE BMW DID. THEN EVERYONE REALIZED THAT IT'S A PROCESS."
>
> **— Mike Wiese,**
> director-branded entertainment, JWT Entertainment

No matter what effectiveness opinion ultimately prevailed, "Subservient Chicken" was an undeniable viral hit, and maybe even steered the branded-content discussion too far in that direction for a while. Ad agency content executives' stories are rife with clients who ask them to create viral videos as part of a campaign.

"It felt like branded content was the Wild West, where we didn't know exactly what we wanted, just that we wanted to do something like BMW did. Then everyone realized that it's a process with procedure and strategy and working with parties outside the ad industry. It has spiked and plateaued and now it's spiking again," said Mike Wiese, director-branded entertainment, JWT Entertainment. "Brands also understand now that the content has to be good, not just anything thrown out there."

The opportunity is then perhaps as it's always been in content marketing: Use creative communications to solve a business problem. Texaco wanted to keep its brand relevant with gas buyers using the association with entertainment and fun in the '40s, just as BMW did to keep its relevancy by creating its films in the 2000s.

"Really smart marketers always talk about the problem," said BBDO chairman and chief creative director David Lubars. "They come in and say, 'Here's the problem, help us figure it out.'"

He added, "What's happened now is everything is constantly new. We're marketing in a world where the cement never hardens, and it used to be concrete. ... My job is to keep the stick in the cement and keep stirring it."

WHAT EXACTLY IS CONTENT MARKETING?

Coca-Cola's "Content 2020" influencing many other marketers to adopt content marketing

Jonathan Mildenhall is a rock star in the new content industry. But he's not a big-shot Hollywood director or the techie founder of a new content-focused shop. He's a content guy. Not just any content guy, though. He's the content guy at global beverage giant Coca-Cola.

In late 2011, he wrote a manifesto that got the industry buzzing and watching. Called "Coca-Cola Content 2020," the 10-chapter flip-board document was transformed into an animated video that has now garnered almost 300,000 views, as well as near-unanimous industry praise for its bold but concise content thinking.

"'Coca-Cola's Content 2020' plan is being shown in almost every marketing boardroom in the world," said the Content Marketing Institute's Joe Pulizzi.

Mildenhall, whose formal title is VP-global advertising strategy and creative excellence, is quick to point out that "Content 2020" was not his idea alone. He tasked a team of 40 Coca-Cola members of the "creative excellence team" with a variety of "homework" projects relating to content, creativity and technology more than a month before a scheduled one-week meeting in Atlanta. They brought the ideas and presented them to the group, while team leader Mildenhall listened and questioned. After the fourth day, he stayed up all night synthesizing it all into a document for their approval. That document became flip charts that eventually became production house Creative Media's hand-drawn animated video.

Mildenhall narrates the video and since its debut, has toured the world dispatching the meaning and purpose of the manifesto to Coca-Cola employees, agencies and partners, and just about anyone else who is interested. And they are definitely interested. By his own count, Mildenhall has presented at least 35 sessions in 25 countries in the two years since the "Content 2020" video was created.

Simply stated ideas in the video, such as "Through the stories we tell, we provoke conversations and earn a disproportionate share of popular culture" and "We need to move from one-way storytelling to dynamic storytelling," along with examples, explanations and how-to steps have found favor with marketers and agencies who either already believe it or are trying to create their own plans.

"CONTENT 2020" — *The presentation seen round the world*

"A brand that doesn't inspire consumer participation but says it is committed to content marketing, I would argue, is just creating noise," Mildenhall said. "Something like 80% of all the content created around Coca-Cola is user-generated. Shame on us if we're not leaning into all that goodness."

And if Mildenhall is the young guru of content marketing, Red Bull creator Dietrich Mateschitz is the low profile "just do it" guy. Almost every one of the two dozen people interviewed for this report, including Mildenhall, mentioned Red Bull as one of the best brands at work today in content marketing. The privately held Red Bull did not respond to requests for interviews, but its work

speaks in its stead. Red Bull Media House is the company's own in-house production company and content arm, and one of the largest producers of action-sports content in the world. The media house spends an estimated 15% of Red Bull beverage revenue on sponsorships and content creation. Mateschitz has said he intends for it to eventually turn a profit, though he has also said that he is willing to wait and is pleased with the media and exposure value the content already provides. The recent October 2012 "Red Bull Stratos" jump by Felix Baumgartner from the edge of space garnered 8 million live views on YouTube and an estimated tens of millions of dollars in media exposure.

Still it's not just Coca-Cola's big stake in the ground or Red Bull's amped-up and oversize stunts that are spurring marketers interest in content.

"While content will continue to define itself, in my mind it's anything that a brand produces that has the potential to be interacted with by their customers or potential customers. That's where having an incredible idea that can possibly work in any media opportunity, paired with a tight content strategy, will help the content that brands create have a chance to reach the right people," said Paul Keister of Goodness Manufacturing. He was one of the original creatives on early content projects, including Ikea's "Lamp" film in 2003 and Miller Lite's "Men of the Square Table" in 2006.

Pulizzi agreed. "Content is the means. ... The end goal is creating passionate subscribers, very similar to what media companies have been doing for years. The more value we can deliver to our customers in the form of compelling content, the more we can trade against it for sales."

The industry at large has been inundated with content-marketing news. Innumerable stories decry the "rise of content marketing," with many pundits calling it a top trend for 2013. Even the awards shows have given it a nod. The Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity added its first Branded Content and Entertainment award in 2012 (Chipotle won) and the CLIO Awards have added a similar-sounding Branded Entertainment and Content for 2013.

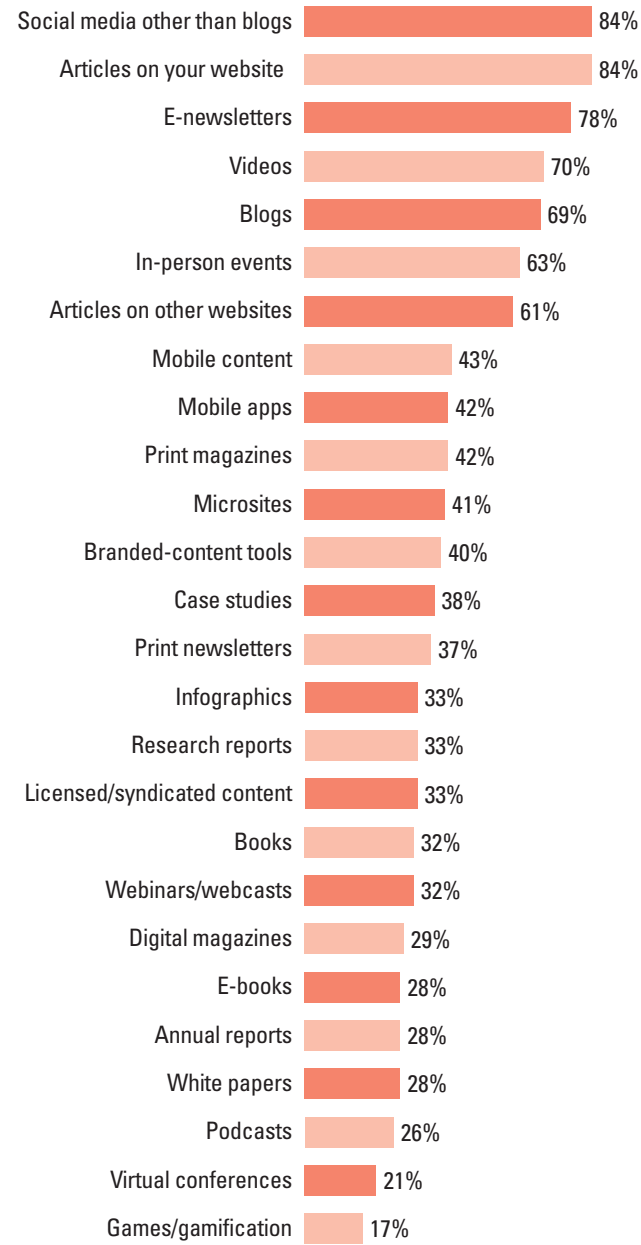
"What people are moved by, and this has not changed since the beginning of time or people, is storytelling. Greek legends are stories, the Bible is full of stories and movies are stories. Every brand has a story," BBDO's Lubars said. "I think even as technology gets more and more sophisticated and there is more active participation by the viewer and the audience, it's still about a great story. ... The distribution [methods] we have today are timely, but the stories are timeless." **(See Content-Marketing Usage by Tactic, right.)**

PRINT

Custom publishing–traditionally the creation of print magazines and newsletters–is the grandfather of content marketing. The earliest custom publication made its debut in 1895, when John Deere put out The Furrow magazine to provide customers with the

CONTENT-MARKETING USAGE BY TACTIC

Social media, website content, e-newsletters, videos, blogs and events are most widely-used content marketing tactics.



SOURCE: 2013 B2C CONTENT MARKETING BENCHMARKS - NORTH AMERICA: CONTENT MARKETING INSTITUTE/MARKETINGPROFS

PRINT HAS GROWN SLIGHTLY, BUT THE REST HAS GROWN MUCH MORE. ... TO BE TRULY STRATEGIC, CONTENT NEEDS TO TRAVEL ACROSS AS MANY CHANNELS AS POSSIBLE.

— David Brown,
executive VP, Meredith Xcelerated Marketing

latest farming information. Since then, hundreds of other brands have done the same. However, with the rise of digital and social media, traditional custom-publishing companies have transformed into content creators for brands across print, digital, social, retail, mobile and other new channels.

"Eight years ago, our business was entirely print-based. Today it represents 30% of our business and our business has quadrupled in size. So print has grown slightly, but the rest has grown much more," said David Brown, executive VP of Meredith Xcelerated Marketing, the evolved custom-publishing arm of Meredith started in 1969.

One of MXM's clients is Lowe's and while the home-improvement retailer publishes custom magazine Creative Ideas every six to eight weeks, MXM also creates content for its website, mobile app and social channels as its "enterprise content partner."

Brown said, "To be truly strategic, content needs to travel across as many channels as possible."

The Custom Publishing Council (which has become the Custom Content Council) was created in 1998 to educate marketers on the value of content, said Lori Rosen, CCC executive director. Today the group has 80 members.

Part of the reason for banding together was that custom publishing initially started in cities outside of the traditional publishing industry in New York, in places like Des Moines, Iowa (Meredith), and Dallas (American Airlines Custom Publishing), and marketers were not always aware of what custom publishing was.

"Years ago, when we first started having annual meetings, in order to get speakers, we had to first explain what custom media was and then literally send lengthy descriptions and even plead to get people to come and speak," Rosen said. "Now this year in April in Chicago, we have brands including McDonald's, Coca-Cola, General Motors, United and Allstate, and we didn't have to explain anything."

DIGITAL

While traditional custom publishing extends to websites, the social-media boom has added another layer, another content beast to feed. Digital technology has created the ability and the necessity to make "a lot more stuff without a lot more dollars," Mildenhall said.

To help create more quality stuff, and to help guide brands, a new breed of online content provider has entered the scene. Content writers working for sites like BuzzFeed or Contently mix newsroom style and brand messaging, whether blog posts, Twitter feeds, conference news coverage or newsletter copy, that brands as publishers now need.

Shane Snow, chief content officer at Contently, said, "We started out pitching media companies, CBS or Time Inc., and offering to do their freelancer database. But then we stumbled into brands that were willing to, and wanted to, pay for freelance content. In 2010, we were already in the water when the content wave began."

He added that this kind of professional writing is needed because "really good content accomplishes goals. It isn't generic and it isn't automatic."

Contently's writing is now about 90% brand-focused, with 900 companies who use its tools and more than 70 paying subscription fees to interact with its journos on a regular basis.

Certainly, some big brands can do this kind of writing in-house. Intel's iQ, Coca-Cola's Journey and American Express's Open Forum already do. But for brands just starting out, or with smaller staffs, partnering with content specialists with tech savvy makes more sense.

BuzzFeed's backstory is different than Contently's, as it's a "social publisher" that also employs writers–currently 80 to 90–with 20 of them creating content for brand partners including GE, Samsung, Coca-Cola and Virgin Mobile.

Jon Steinberg, BuzzFeed president, said in the mid-'80s and '90s, "Advertising went off a cliff. It was all calls-to-action in a vacuum."

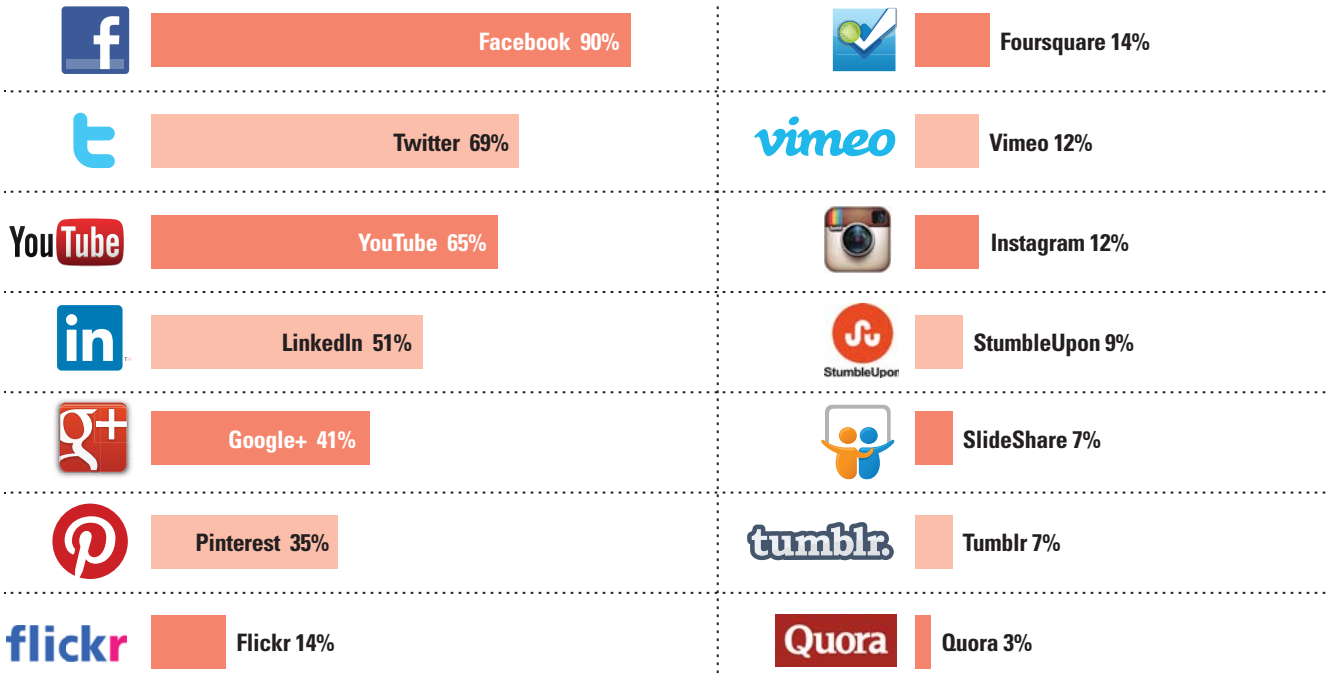
He believes that a media company in a social world that curates original news and political coverage along with funny cat videos and trending pop culture is the content-marketing answer. Social is the digital word-of-mouth, and publishers like BuzzFeed can spread that word far, wide and loudly.

"The legacy publishers have been slow to get it," he said, pointing out that on the day we spoke The Washington Post had just done its first native advertising. "If you asked me two-and-a-half years ago, I wouldn't have believed it would happen this fast."

(See Social-Media and Content-Marketing Growth Trends, P.11.)

SOCIAL-MEDIA AND CONTENT-MARKETING GROWTH TRENDS

Percentage of marketers who use various social-media sites to distribute content



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TV

But don't think that TV networks are ceding ground to either the traditional print players or the new digital dudes. Networks have long dabbled with brands in sponsorships and product placement–like Coca-Cola six-pack prizes to "Survivor" challenge winners–but real integration of brands into shows or even brands suggesting ideas for shows has been a more recent phenomenon.

Kevin McAuliffe, VP of NBCUniversal Cable's Branded Entertainment Group, oversees content partnerships across USA, Syfy, E!, Bravo, Oxygen and Style, and remembers that his first job in network TV years ago included telling brands they couldn't be put into the content they asked for.

Today, however, he said program meetings often include discussions of ideas or shows that could fall under budget and creators who would "love to have discussions with some brands."

Bravo's "Around the World in 80 Plates," for instance, wouldn't have been possible without branded integrations because of its high production costs of crisscrossing the globe to 10 countries in 44 days.

But it goes both ways. McAuliffe also often sees requests for proposals from marketers asking to start a content discussion about shows or storylines that might work for their brands.

As the content industry has evolved beyond those obvious product placements and brands that demand their product is shown for a certain number of seconds or facing forward, the proper balance of transparency, subtlety and both sides' needs is more important than ever.

"I don't think 'content is king' has ever been more important or more relevant than now. Certainly not in my lifetime," McAuliffe said.

HOLLYWOOD

Another set of not-so-new players in the content scene comes from Hollywood. Not-so-new because ad agencies have long gone to Hollywood for directors and celebrity talent. What is different now, though, is that Hollywood agents and producers are working directly with brands. Just like Mildenhall's mandate that brands work with technology companies, brands are also working directly with Hollywood production companies.

"ALWAYS OPEN" — *A web video series from Denny's featured top comedians chatting and eating the chain's menu items*

"Brands have mostly been sponsors or promoters of content. Our supposition is that they can be creators of content, or at least be closer to the creator than ever before," said Jae Goodman, chief creative officer and co-head, with David Messinger, of CAA Marketing.

Creative Artists Agency, the world's leading entertainment and sports talent agency, recognized this almost two decades ago and formed CAA Marketing in 1998 to offer a "range of strategic marketing and consulting services to corporate clients."

One of the great assets of CAA is its access to talent. When Chipotle Chief Marketing Officer Mark Crumpacker suggested using a Willie Nelson song for the short film CAA Marketing was creating, the team literally took the elevator to the seventh floor to talk to Nelson's agent, who immediately called him and worked out a deal. Currently, CAA Marketing counts a dozen or so clients in its portfolio including Coca-Cola, General Motors, Diageo, QVC, Southwest Airlines, Mattel and Chipotle.

"We look at the world through a particular lens because of our entertainment ties," Messinger said. "There's an incredible collaborative culture in this place."

But they're not looking to oust agencies. Far from it. In fact, the two remember the big stir in 1991 when Coca-Cola hired CAA alongside its traditional ad agencies to create advertising.

"That was the Ovitz era and what CAA Creative Edge did then was create traditional advertising," Messinger said, adding that today CAA Marketing complements what ad agencies do: helping solve business problems by creating entertaining content that people want to consume.

Goodman said, "All our corporate clients also have advertising agencies. They haven't forsaken that, just added our expertise."

Along with talent specialists like CAA, production specialists are also entering the new content-marketing area. They include companies such as Electus, started by former NBC executive Ben Silverman, who is also a former William Morris talent agent, which calls itself a "next-generation studio." That means, not only is it producing reality shows and pop culture fare like "Mob Wives" and "Chopped," but also content production that brings brands into the marketing process.

It created the Denny's "Always Open" campaign, along with IPG's Mediabrand's Ensemble, featuring comedians including Jason Bateman, Sarah Silverman and Will Arnett sitting down at Denny's with comedic actor David Koechner to talk about anything and everything in three-minute interviews. Bateman and Arnett's DumbDumb studio was also involved, as was IPG Mediabrand's Ensemble. "Always Open" won a Cannes Bronze award and industry kudos for creativity and effectiveness.

"Electus came out of sitting on the other side of the table repping brands involved in these productions," said Laura Caraccioli-Davis, Electus president of advertising, who came from Mindshare entertainment unit Liquid Thread. "What was missing was putting brands at the center of the content creation. Not just coming in at the end of the process."

It has created a way for brands to circumvent the networks by going straight to a production company. Electus's big content-marketing hit to date is NBC reality series "Fashion Star." Style celebrities mentor more than a dozen designers, while buyers from Macy's, H&M and Saks Fifth Avenue bid on each week's fashions in real-time. The products are then immediately available for purchase on the stores' websites. The host is supermodel Elle Macpherson.

"ROI is so important, and so when we created 'Fashion Star,' we baked that in. By the end of the night, we know if it worked well or not for those brands," Caraccioli-Davis said.

And while "Fashion Star" is obviously brand-driven, consumers don't seem to care. Many executives agreed that because of the changes in content delivery and consumption, and the level of astuteness most consumers have today about marketing, as long as the co-branding is transparent, good content is good content.

"Most of us have become blind to what is entertainment and what is branded content," said Brent Poer, exec VP and executive creative director at Liquid Thread.

CASE STUDIES: WHAT WORKED

If you've looked at any advertising lately, it's not surprising to see that brand stories and engaging interactive content are part of many of the premises. But it doesn't always work. Whether it's a strategic misfire, data misinterpretation or just a lack of search engine optimization, not every content play finds favor with consumers. We take a deeper look here at some that did, and a few that didn't.

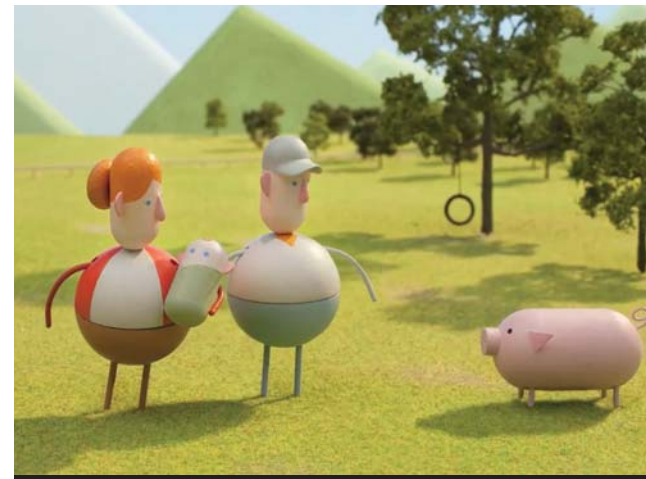
WHAT WORKED:

Chipotle's 'Cultivate'

THE IDEA: : From its very beginning, Chipotle worked to make sure its ingredients, from meat to produce, are raised respectfully and sustainably. But while the concept was in its DNA, the company had never really talked about it. When CMO Mark Crumpacker joined four years ago, he realized that what would eventually become "Cultivate" was not only about Chipotle's mission, but was also a great story to share with customers.

THE IMPLEMENTATION: "Cultivate" began with the goal to tell the backstory of Chipotle's sustainable and responsible farming practices. It wanted to get people to not only care about where its food was coming from, but also strike up a two-way dialogue. Crumpacker remembered a Chevron campaign from 2007 that used a powerful two-and-a-half-minute film called "Power of Human Energy" to draw people into its brand story. He thought if an oil and gas giant could create powerful storytelling connections, so could Chipotle. He sought out CAA Marketing, which had created the Chevron work, and asked it to do the same for Chipotle.

The idea began as a short film, now well known in the marketing world as the animated, award-winning "Back to the Start," featuring a Willie Nelson cover of Coldplay's "The Scientist" as its soundtrack. However, it quickly grew beyond a one-hit-wonder moment. Crumpacker and his team, with the input and blessing of founder Steve Ells, started to build out a content- and entertainment-marketing strategy around "Cultivate." The end of the film, in fact, was changed from a simple one-word message of "Integrity" to the new tagline for the overall effort, "Cultivate a Better World." More than a year later, there are "Cultivate" events, from outdoor festivals in major cities to small chef-driven dinners and fund-raisers. "Cultivate" also became Chipotle's first organized philanthropic foundation. The short film's success, and ensuing sales of Nelson's song (60 cents of the 99 cent price went back to the foundation) and fund-raisers like the annual Boorito day, demonstrated that Chipotle could raise millions in donations from customers and fans to help advance sustainable and humane farming methods. Today it hands out those millions in grants, much of it in education



CULTIVATE — *Featuring "Back to the Start"*

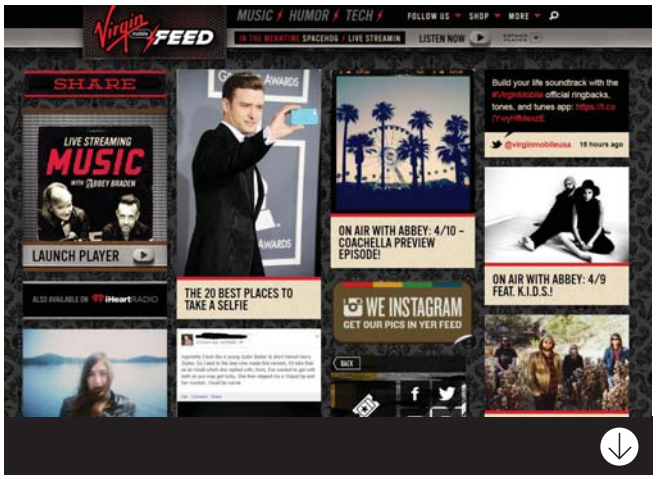
for working farmers through groups like Farm Aid and university research. While Chipotle's Ells credits Alice Waters and her Chez Panisse restaurant for starting the fresh, local and sustainable food movement, there is no doubt that Chipotle's "Cultivate" story has added a perspective from the quick-service food world.

THE OUTCOME: After the film aired during the Grammys in 2012, Nelson's song immediately went to the No. 1 selling spot on iTunes. Widely acclaimed, "Back to the Start" was one of the top-rated "commercials" of the year and won the 2012 Grand Prix at Cannes for the first-ever Branded Content and Entertainment Award. The film has garnered 7.2 million views on YouTube. And if imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, Chipotle should be very flattered. A handful of imitators have emerged–Panera's latest TV spot feels quite familiar–with missions to support humane and best-practice meat and produce suppliers. As Crumpacker said, "If we're successful, we're going to change an industry, and everyone will do what we do and we'll be less unique. But we will continue on this journey of food with integrity and continue to evolve and challenge ourselves." Already the company has moved on to figuring out how to source chickens that can survive outdoors, as today's chickens

have had such hardiness bred out of them.

WHY IT WORKED: This is Chipotle's story, for real. In fact, the company was challenged by the Better Business Bureau to back its claims, which it did. Authenticity, and a unique story, drew customers and fans into a relationship with Chipotle in a way previous product pitches for giant tasty burritos never could.

LESSON: Find the brand story your company isn't talking about. You may live it every day, but do consumers know it?



Virgin Mobile USA

THE IDEA: Virgin Mobile's parent, Virgin, had hipness down as a result of its cutting-edge music-upstart beginnings. The parent has handed the cool aesthetic down to spinoffs from Virgin Atlantic Airways to Virgin Mobile. However, hipness alone doesn't make money. Virgin Mobile's marketing budget is dwarfed by competitors AT&T, Verizon and T-Mobile. Ron Faris, head of brand marketing for Virgin Mobile, realized it had to draw Virgin Mobile customers in–and stand out from the crowd–using its hipster connections and vibe to create its own unique original content.

THE IMPLEMENTATION: Virgin Mobile Live (virginmobilelive.com) is ground zero for that unique content, streaming live music and posting stories, memes, links and interviews from across pop culture. Its tagline, "actively stalking your cultural obsessions," describes its mission, which has included setting up a house at SXSW and inviting dozens of recording artists for interviews and jam sessions to a successful content co-hosting deal with BuzzFeed. The Virgin BuzzFeed team meets every week–three Virgin staffers, four from its agency, One Trick Pony, and another four from BuzzFeed–to discuss the previous week's results and draft content for the current one. Four sponsored posts, so-called native advertising, go up throughout the week, although Faris points out that the BuzzFeed content is only one part of its "newsroom marketing" strategy. Virgin Mobile's own team posts 12 to 14 original pieces of content each week along with content from its brand ambassador's Virgin 25 bloggers. The result is a curated Virgin Mobile voice consistently engaging millions of potential customers.

THE OUTCOME: In Nielsen studies, Virgin Mobile has seen "brand lifts" of 150% in people who have seen at least one piece of content vs. those who hadn't seen any. If a person has seen five to seven pieces of content, that lift in measurements such as "Virgin Mobile understands me" and consideration of the brand for next phone purchase, jumped almost 280%. For a recent "National Breakup Day" content push–encouraging people to break up with a boyfriend or girlfriend, and their contract phone provider, on the day before Valentine's Day to save money–the brand saw a 95% lift in sales, Faris said. Through the BuzzFeed deal, Virgin Mobile tracked 9.7 million engagements in the nine months of the deal in 2012.

WHY IT WORKED: By curating and creating content around what's cool in entertainment and pop culture, Virgin Mobile USA connects with its young target where they live.

LESSON: Budget isn't everything. Target potential customers with a focused and streamlined content strategy and save the extra money for carefully selected bigger-budget advertising that drives to that content.

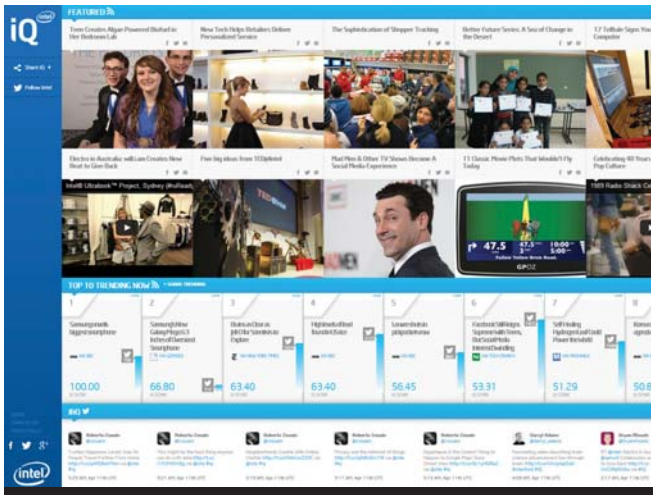
iQ by Intel

THE IDEA: As a successful ingredient brand for decades, Intel understood the power of creating its own voice to stand out from behind the scenes. However, Intel wanted to reach new consumers who didn't know them yet, younger consumers who were tuning out traditional marketing and turning to their social networks for news, information and product recommendations.

THE IMPLEMENTATION: Intel's iQ magazine was born out of the company's overall content strategy built on four simple tenants. Make complex simple. Celebrate smart. Be an entertaining resource on technology. And ensure that the content makes the audience smarter. Bryan Rhoads, head of global content at Intel, calls the iQ by Intel digital magazine a new social-publishing model. It includes content written by freelance and Intel staff–some 200 contributors–as well as staff-picked interesting content. The magazine works to move Intel digital media from a static-banner publisher kind of role to promoter and co-creator of content that includes a wide variety of brand partners such as MTV and Adidas and media partners including PSFK and BuzzFeed.

THE OUTCOME: While iQ is not long out of beta, it has already established itself in the technology-trend news media. In January for instance, Rhoads said its partnered and curated real-time Consumer Electronics Show coverage resulted in its biggest month ever. He claimed about 200,000 unique views, which he acknowledged is not earthshattering, but pass-arounds and

COCA-COLA 'CONTENT 2020' — *A manifesto for excellence*



IQ BY INTEL — *Technology-trend news media*

shares are even more important. "It's really allowing us to be part of the media and conversation," Rhoads said.

WHY IT WORKED: Intel took its geek-chic brand and extended it to the next generation in a way that group understands and enjoys. Sticking to the company's technology know-how, iQ by Intel content shows young people how and why technology matters to things they care about, from fashion and gadgets to global energy and nutrition needs.

LESSON: Don't be afraid to make content utilitarian and even geeky, if that's in your brand DNA. Content that informs can boost a brand as much as content that entertains—maybe even more if your consumers find practical value they can't get anywhere else.

Coca-Cola 'Content 2020'

THE IDEA: No one will dispute that Coca-Cola knows content. Its 1971 "Hilltop" commercial (which included the landmark song "I'd Like to Buy the World a Coke") stands as a testament to that, being born out of the idea that, more than just a drink, Coke is a common connection for people around the world. However, the company in 2011, was ready to move from just producing great creative to creating and managing conversations around that work, or as the Content 2020 manifesto lays out "move from creative excellence to content excellence."

THE IMPLEMENTATION: Jonathan Mildenhall, VP-global advertising strategy and creative excellence, gathered the ideas of 40 Coca-Cola "creative excellence" employees from around the world. He assigned each one a different content task and "ambitious homework assignments" two-months in advance of a one-week workshop. The delegates met in Atlanta and presented their ideas, followed by "very brutal discussions" over four days while Mildenhall oversaw, interrupted and took notes. On the fourth night, he stayed up all night and wrote the manifesto. The next day, he presented it and the group signed off on it. The finished project, seen on YouTube hundreds of thousands of times, took Cognitive Media three months to produce the intentionally "messy" and "scrappy" animated video. Coca-Cola then sent it out to its agencies with the directive that this is important and should be studied. And as Mendenhall said, the idea was not only that the agencies could follow its ideas, but that the agency world, in turn, hold Coca-Cola to its content mission.

THE OUTCOME: Instructed and inspired, Coca-Cola agencies in 200-plus markets around the world took the content lessons and suggestions to heart. What resulted was some of the best creative the company had in years. Case in point, in 2011, Coca-Cola won 11 Cannes Lions. Just one year later, after "Content 2020" went out, it won 31 Cannes Lions. Mendenhall pointed out specific examples of that excellence, including Wieden & Kennedy's Polar Bowl Super Bowl execution and Ogilvy Australia's "Share a Coke" with personalized Coke bottles and cans. The video has received almost 300,000 views on YouTube and universal praise in the agency world, even outside Coke's agencies. And while the following outcome hasn't happened yet, within "Content 2020" Coca-Cola expresses its intent to use the strategy to "double the size of its business" by that year.

WHY IT WORKED: Coca-Cola took the creative culture it already had and amplified it by not only emphasizing storytelling, but by incorporating technology and consumer relationships into those stories. As Mendenhall points out, the content is both liquid and linked, and in fact every piece of digital content—both its own and others—is linked to Coca-Cola's mainframe.

LESSON: Put content goals in writing. Make those goals clear to internal and external marketing people involved in your brand. And make sure everyone sticks to them.

INAUTHENTIC — *Wal-Mart (l.) and Scientology (r.) efforts*

WHAT DIDN'T WORK

Wal-Marting Across America

THE IDEA: In the mid-2000s, Walmart needed some Middle American love. Politicians, unions and the press were pounding the company over issues like employee pay and benefits, and over expansion. So when a couple of bloggers who wanted to make their way across America in an RV and park for free at Walmart–a great untold story, in fact–asked for permission to write about it from Working Families for Walmart, the company saw an opportunity that could generate some positive buzz. Working Families set up the couple with an RV and paid expenses, helped them craft an itinerary, and called the journey blog "Wal-Marting Across America." However, the Working Families organization had been created by Walmart public-relations firm Edelman to shore up the giant retailer's image, although that was not widely known at the time.

THE IMPLEMENTATION: Jim and Laura, who were real people, began their travels in September 2006 in Las Vegas, where Working Families flew them, and ended a month later in Georgia. All along the way, the couple stopped and stayed in Walmart parking lots, with Laura posting write-ups about the friendly and happy employees they met. The only problem was that every employee seemed to be happy and successful, inspiring suspicion by many and public outcry about the veracity and intent behind the blog.

THE OUTCOME: The blog, and Working Families for Walmart, ended up creating more derision than anything else, and was an official PR nightmare for both the brand and Edelman. A New Yorker article later revealed that Laura was the sibling of a Walmart public-relations employee, and Jim was a Washington Post photographer, and the couple ended up repaying the money given to them. Edelman executives apologized repeatedly for not being transparent and blamed themselves entirely, not Walmart, and the PR firm was placed under a 90-day review by the Word of Mouth Marketing Association. The entire incident was the source for a new term on the internet: "flog," or fake blog.

WHY IT DIDN'T WORK: Transparency is to social media as location is to real estate. It is the all-important underpinning to success.

LESSON: Be transparent. If you don't trust that consumers will believe the message you are putting out there if they know it comes from your brand, you need to rethink your message

Atlantic.com's Scientology-sponsored content

THE IDEA: The Atlantic, like many publishing outlets, sometimes sells sponsored content or so-called advertorials–basically advertising written in the same format as a news article. More recently, this kind of marketing is being called "native advertising." In this case, it was written by the Church of Scientology. General speculation is that the church wanted to put positive content out ahead of an exposé by New Yorker writer Lawrence Wright that was set to hit bookstores a few days later.

THE IMPLEMENTATION: An article, clearly labeled at the top as "sponsor content," went live around noon on Jan. 14, 2013, with the headline "David Miscavige Leads Scientology to Milestone Year." The celebratory headline and glowing "article" quickly raised eyebrows and internet comments. Adding to the damage was the fact that the comments were apparently being moderated by The Atlantic's marketing staff, which was said to have been "messing with them." Indeed, the majority of the original comments were congratulatory and pro-Scientology.

THE OUTCOME: The article was pulled down the same day before midnight, and The Atlantic apologized for mishandling the advertorial. Social-media pundits hammered the magazine for damaging its credibility. While media pundits agreed it never should have happened in the first place, many also gave The Atlantic props for apologizing and taking down the offending article quickly.

WHY IT DIDN'T WORK: The Atlantic bills itself as "America's leading destination for brave thinking and bold ideas that matter," and the Scientology advertorial clearly did not measure up to that standard. Putting up ad content that mimicked or was too hard to distinguish from its own "brave and bold" news content crossed a line that even ad-savvy consumers easily recognized.

LESSON: Not only should a brand be transparent when content is paid for or placed, it should also be vigilant about labeling such content and handling it separately as paid advertising. Even if labeled clearly as "sponsor" content, a message that is too discordant with the media brand's usual product will produce a negative reaction from readers. Where your content is placed matters, and should dictate how you frame your message.

TACTICAL PLANNING

Whether you have multiple brands like Unilever or just one, here's how to get started

So is content marketing the future of advertising? Or is it just another "arrow in the quiver" for marketing professionals?

Opinions vary from expert to expert, of course, and this report focused on industry experts who have a vested interest in its continuation. However, it seems fairly certain that whether a brand adopts a comprehensive strategy with short films, a charitable foundation and events à la Chipotle or simply sets up a goal to publish fresh and informative digital content in social media and on the web like Skittles or Johnson & Johnson's BabyCenter, content marketing is here to stay.

"Content is absolutely a necessary element in marketing, although whether it leads or is incorporated into a campaign is a question to be asked," said Doug Scott, president of Ogilvy Entertainment and international director of the Branded Content Marketing Association.

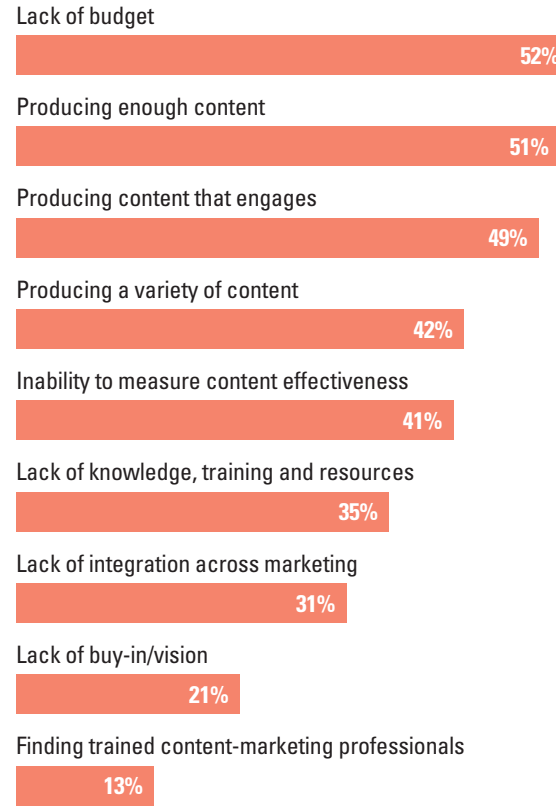
Luis Di Como, Unilever senior VP-global media said, "Over the course of the last 10 years, the average attention span has dropped from 12 minutes to just five minutes. Reasons suggested are multitasking, social interactions and an inability to focus. In order to hold people's attention, you need outstanding content. ... It cuts through the clutter of messages people receive every day, and it has to be 'always on,' so we engage with these new consumers on their playing field. The challenge is juggling the always on, cost-effective, quality content."

At Unilever, that translates to a new way of organizing and categorizing content. It creates, curates and co-creates across four categories: people (its own employees and customers), platforms (including music, gaming and sports), purpose (to make sure the content has a mission) and partnerships (for co-creating engaging content and driving scale).

Recognizing that it is one of the largest packaged goods producers in the world with more than 400 brands in its portfolio, every marketer's content plan will likely not be as comprehensive or replete as Unilever's. However, every marketer does need a plan. **(See Challenges That Content Marketers Face, right.)**

CHALLENGES THAT CONTENT MARKETERS FACE

Budgeting resources for content marketing and producing enough content that's engaging are top three concerns.



SOURCE: 2013 B2C CONTENT MARKETING BENCHMARKS - NORTH AMERICA: CONTENT MARKETING INSTITUTE/MARKETINGPROFS

Once the decision to explore the content path is made, industry experts advise taking some time to think about what that means.

"Start with baby steps," advised W&K's Bill Davenport. "Figure out what the objectives are and what value is to be gained by it."

Another piece of advice is to start to think like a publisher. That doesn't necessarily mean hiring journalists and setting up a newsroom—although brands like Oreo and Coca-Cola have done projects that did just that. But it does mean that marketers need to start thinking about things like what will the overall tone or voice of the brand be, what content can or should it own and what content can or will its users and fans create? Define what will be built, what will be borrowed and what will be bought.

"Draw a dividing line. Ask. 'Did this start with the audience? What are they interested in and can I provide it?' I don't think many people really want to know that a particular laundry detergent washes whiter," said Jonah Bloom, chief strategy officer and co-founder of KBS+ Content Labs. "It's almost about an approach to marketing. Content is a surrogate for giving people something of value. Increasingly that leads to the development of products people say they want."

Thinking like a publisher also means figuring out the content capabilities of the organization. Can a staff be hired to create and curate content? Can the budget be stretched or shifted to properly fund a content group? "There may not be the upfront media costs, but it takes a lot of man-hours to create great content," Bloom said. "That can be expensive, and some marketers will feel the cost outweighs the benefit."

Another tip is to talk to an adviser, a trusted agency partner or someone admired in the content industry already. And when the decision is made to commit, do it. Marketers have to be willing to ignore the defensiveness and status quo protectors. "Until they begin to change the processes they live and die by—and many do live and die by those—it won't change the model," Donaton said.

TALENT

The new content marketing requires new kinds of talent. But because so many different skill sets are important, it's unlikely they will exist in just one person—or in one discipline. And of course, different perspectives weight those talents and where they will come from quite differently.

"If the creative director was the hero in the old world, the analytics leader will be the next generation. The ability to manage a lot of data and interpret it to make good decisions [is key]," said David Brown of MXM.

Brent Poer of Liquid Thread said, "I think most successful people have come from the marketing side, having spent time at a network or in the promo department. They're fast, nimble and they're OK with a little bit of gray space."

CAA's David Messinger agrees. "CAA is great at teaching people entertainment, so we tend to look for marketing people we can teach," he said.

However, no matter what is most important to specific bosses, there are some skills and job descriptions that most agree are necessary to pull together a content team. Here are some of those:

- **Storytellers.** Those who can weave a good tale, or just spot one, are in demand in the content world. Job-wanted postings for "content writers" to work for brands have sprung up across the web. The key, though, is the ability to blend the art and the science, said Electus's Laura Caraccioli-Davis. "Someone who can look at all that data and say this is the way to tell the story," she said. "And you need somebody who can call the audible about what's authentic content that the brand can own."

- **Analysts.** These are people who live on the science or data side of the house. "They are the ones who can identify the opportunities for content and even create that information. They straddle both the social and brand strategy," Bloom said.

- **Journalists.** Not everyone agreed that "real" journalists are needed to create content, but most say that being able to write well, in a non-copywriting way is important. Journalists used to telling all sides of the story without hyperbole can make brand stories sound authentic, without any PR hype. They could be bloggers or other kinds of writers as well, but they should also be able to do things like create videos and podcasts or take photographs.

- **Channel distribution experts.** Content can be as simple as posting to Facebook, but the more difficult part is that the post has to be followed and monitored for the audience. Channel specialists can figure out what content is appropriate and what is not, how and where content is spreading, and how, if possible, content can be connected to a visit or purchase.

- **Technologists.** In the "Content 2020" video, Mildenhall advocates that a brand's own marketing team must integrate "technologists into the core creative team. And we must develop direct relationships with technology companies." (A Google animated icon appears in the video.) Skills like search engine optimization are important in content marketing. The way to get to No. 1 on the page—besides buying it—is through building content.

- **Ambiguous-friendly multitaskers.** Not that content employees should be ambiguous, but rather that they should be comfortable with ambiguity. Time and again, industry experts pointed out that content marketing is fluid and dynamic and changes every day. Staffers have to be able to go with the flow. In the advertising world, even on the creative side, there is comfort in the media brief that states X number of TV spots, print, digital, outdoor and radio, said CAA's Jae Goodman, adding, "As challenging as it is in coming up with the big idea, there is comfort in knowing how to play it out. That's not always the case here."

TIPS: WHAT TO DO AND WHAT NOT TO DO

Advice from marketers who have been there, done that

Be transparent. Nothing invites consumer contempt like hidden agendas in brand-created content. Digital natives and social-media mavens can sniff out insincerity and disingenuous moves faster than you can say, "General Motors deleted negative ChevyApprentice.com user-created ads and called it a success."

Don't interupt. People are annoyed by 30-second commercial and pop-up digital ads—or anything that looks like one. And not only will they click away, they'll tell their friends—all 500 of them on Facebook and 5,000 on Twitter. NBCUniversal's McAuliffe said, "It's a very delicate balance and one that we, first and foremost, for us and the brand—that we make it clear we are not making a 30-second commercial inside our show."

Be timely. It's not only important to put out good content, but also to be able to react quickly. If news is happening in a related industry, put out some related content. Tide did just that last year during the Daytona 500 when the brand's detergent cleaned up a crash and jet-fuel spill, tweeting out messages as large boxes were displayed while the track was scrubbed: "It's true. You can use Tide to clean anything. Including jet fuel on a racetrack."

Create a strategy, then confirm that strategy, then stick to that strategy. "If we want search to work, if we want to drive demand online, if we want our social programs to work, we first need a clear content strategy," Pulizzi said. "Think of Oreo's newsroom strategy that worked so well for their anniversary and during the Super Bowl. That didn't just happen; it was a planned part of their content strategy."

Save the hard sell for direct mail. It can't be said often enough—interruptive and disruptive advertising to raise brand awareness and interest doesn't work anymore. Don't try to shoehorn it into your content strategy.

Be prepared for failure. That is, do a company gut-check and make sure you're all willing to take a risk. As Laura Caraccioli-Davis of Electus said, "When people create content, you can't always guarantee it will be a success right off the bat. But brands are starting to understand that."

CAA's Jae Goodman added, "One thing you can't quantify or predict is popularity. ... We set up brands for success, and we try not to use the word 'hope' out loud," he joked. "But certainly, as we're doing something new, sure, we get butterflies and the client gets butterflies."

Work with new partners. New kinds of marketing call for new partnerships. Technology companies, media companies, TV and cable networks, production companies, digital agencies, content agencies and traditional brand agencies are all playing in this world. Unilever, for example, "has entered into multimillion[-dollar] partnerships with some of the world's major media companies, including Viacom and News Corp., to explore innovative ways to collaborate in content development and distribution at scale," Di Como said.

Start early. Don't wait until the last minute to consult the brand agency. Get it involved early on, so the content strategy can be integrated into the overall brand strategy. "Even as a content specialist myself, I can tell you that it's not going to be successful unless it's integrated," Donaton said.

MEASUREMENT

Almost as important as talent when creating successful content is the way success, or failure, is measured. Nobody wants to adopt something that doesn't work, after all, and everyone is keen to make sure marketers understand that content marketing really does work. However, ROI and measurement are still emerging in this area.

"We're not where we need to be," Ensemble's Donaton said. "It needs some agreed-upon terms and standards still to be developed. But we're also not talking about one thing. If it's social content, digital always-on programming or TV, each of those media have a way to measure ROI and success." He also dismissed, like many others, the idea of impressions as good measurement.

"So you got 1 billion impressions, what does that even mean? I think in the end it will be around brand attributes and how perceptions change. And everything in marketing today has to be tied back to sales goals," he said.

To make those ROI arguments, individual metrics should first be laid out according to the campaign goals. Are you driving unique visitors or views? Getting sign-ups for a database? Changing brand perception or purchase intent? Driving online sales?

All of those goals can be measured today, but it takes discipline and forethought in place before the content is created and launched.

"I think we need to think about a return on idea vs. a return on investment," Mike Wiese of JWT said. "There are many things being built [in content marketing] that are franchise ideas. Like Disney, yes, there are upfront costs, but that content will play forever. Macy's 'Yes Virginia' animated show is another example. It runs every year, and every year we build more assets against it."

CONCLUSION

While content marketing is emerging as the new, new thing, it's good to remember that it's an old, old thing, too. Stories are something marketers, agencies and consumers already understand.

"Content is not new, it's been around a long time. Since storytelling began, stories have always been the key to engaging people, and brands have always told stories," Unilever's Di Como said. "Brands were powerful in influencing, but one-dimensional. Now the landscape has changed. Brands still tell stories, but they have to work much harder to generate a dialogue with consumers. In the old days, Hollywood and Madison Avenue had a monopoly on ideas, great stories and distribution. Today, technology is transforming everything. No one any longer has the monopoly."

As for what content marketing is today, well, it can be just about anything and everything.

"Content marketing is everything that people say it is. From a person who posts pictures and recipes for a food client targeting women and what to make for dinner to 'Red Bull Stratos,'" said Mike Wiese of JWT Entertainment. "There are just different levels and spectrums of it."

Whether content marketing is the Wild Wild West or a burgeoning industry already beginning to stabilize and coalesce, those involved in the industry are convinced it will continue to grow and evolve. Their camaraderie, respect and zeal is evident for both the subject itself and for each other.

Electus's Caraccioli-Davis said, "We're at the very beginning of branded content and there are lots of different shingles being hung. We all have to raise this up in the marketplace together. I feel like we all are very familiar with each other, and when one succeeds, we all gain."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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WHO'S WHO: A GUIDE TO CONTENT CREATORS FOR HIRE

Here's a snapshot of some of the top talent working on content marketing inside the agency world, listed alphabetically:

JONAH BLOOM
Executive Director, Kb+p Content Lab
Key clients: BMW, American Express, Puma
Notable work: BMW i "Born Electric"; American Express "Social Media Show + Tell"

CLAUDIA CAHILL
Chief Content Officer, OMD's Content Collective
Key clients: Pepsico, JC Penney, Hershey's
Notable work: Pepsi "X Factor" partnership

ANGELA COURTIN
President, Aegis' Story Lab
Key clients: GM, Home Depot, Macy's
Notable work: Nokia "Shorts"; Swatch "From the Streets"

BILL DAVENPORT
President, Wieden & Kennedy Entertainment
Key clients: Coca-Cola, Nike, P&G
Notable work: Coke's "Polar Bowl"; Nike/Jordan Melo "Explosive Flight"

SCOTT DONATON
President-CEO, Ensemble (IPGMediabrands)
Key clients: L'Oreal, Snapple, J&J, Kia Motors
Notable work: Denny's "Always Open"; Garnier Fructis "Style Stage"

TOM DUNLAP
Chief Production Officer, 72&Sunny
Key clients: Kswiss, Samsung
Notable work: Kswiss "Kenny Powers MFCEO"; Activision's Black Ops II "The Future Is Black"

PAUL KEISTER
Executive Creative Director, Goodness Manufacturing
Key clients: Toshiba, Google
Notable work: Bolthouse Farms "Baby Carrot ShakeDowns"; BK "Subservient Chicken"; and Ikea "Unboring" (both done while at Crispin Porter & Bogusky)

DAVID LANG
President, Mindshare Entertainment
Key clients: Unilever, Royal Caribbean, AOL
Notable work: Degree Men "Masters of Movement"; Magnum ice cream campaign with Karl Lagerfeld

TEDDY LYNN AND DAVID LUBARS
Exec VP-Director of Content, and Chief Creative Officer, BBDO
Key clients: AT&T
Notable work: AT&T "Daybreak"; GE "Brilliant Machines"

JOHN MCCARUS
Senior VP-Brand Content, Digitas
Key clients: American Express, Sprint, Taco Bell
Notable work: American Express "Unstaged"

JARROD MOSES
Founder-CEO, United Entertainment Group
Key clients: P&G, Frito-Lay, General Mills, Darden
Notable work: "America's Next Top Model"; Covergirl campaigns with Ellen Degeneres, Taylor Swift and Queen Latifah

ADAM PINCUS
Head of Programming and Production, Group M Entertainment
Key clients: Audi, Volkswagon, Shell
Notable work: Audi "Untitled Jersey City Project"

BRENT POER
President, SMG LiquidThread
Key clients: P&G, Kraft, Walmart
Notable work: Wheat Thins and "Colbert"; P&G Secret "Mean Stinks"

DOUG SCOTT
President, OgilvyEntertainment
Key clients: American Express, Motorola, Unilever's Hellmann's
Notable work: IBM "Smarter Planet"; DuPont "Horizon's Project"

JIMMY SMITH
Chairman-CEO, Amusement Park Entertainment
Key clients: Gatorade, Nokia, Microsoft
Notable work: Gatorade "Replay" (while at TBWA); Intel "Discovered"

MIKE WIESE
Director-Branded Entertainment, JWT
Key clients: Macy's, Rolex, Johnson & Johnson
Notable work: Rolex "Deepest Dive"; Macy's "Yes, Virginia"

GLOSSARY

A rose by any other name? Maybe in Shakespeare. But when it comes to content marketing, too much jargon and double-meaning nomenclature can be confusing.

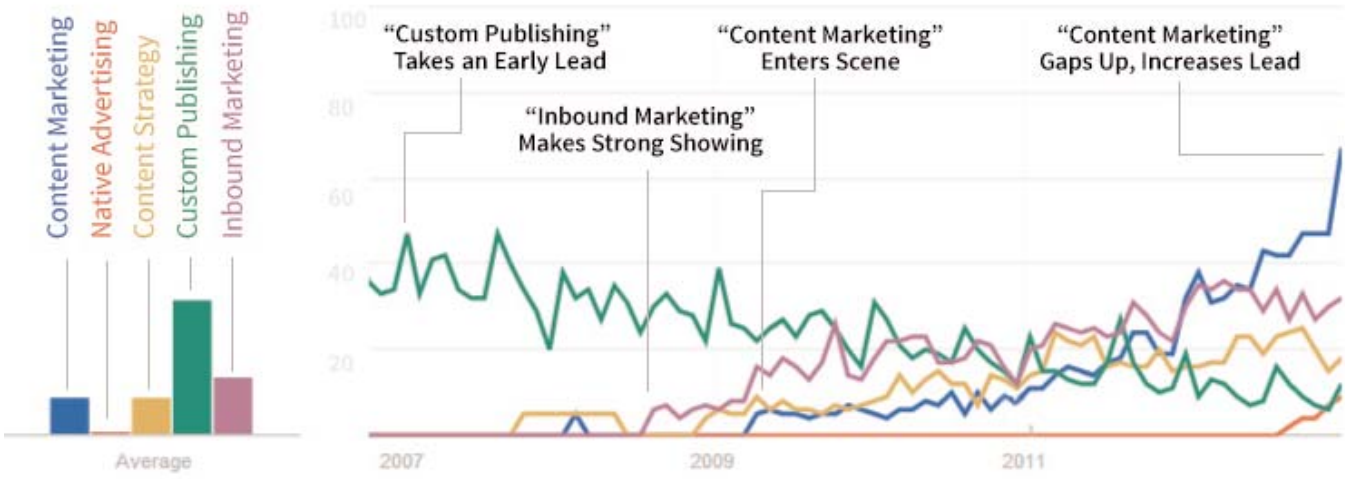
The term "content marketing" is currently the most agreed-upon moniker in the industry for the broad category of marketing that uses narrative to engage customers. But other terms with similar meaning include branded content, branded entertainment, custom publishing, experiential marketing, conversation marketing, post-advertising, the new advertising and, as one pitch recently described it, "shopping by story."

Some terminology, like "native advertising" and "product placement," for instance, are actually specific kinds of content marketing, while others are more synonymous or generalized terms for the category.

By the count of Joe Pulizzi at the Content Marketing Institute, there are at least 20 different names for the content-marketing industry. He recently tracked the rise and fall of five of the most common ones using Google Trends data. He found that from 2007 through early this year, the term "custom publishing" has been dropping steadily, while the term "content marketing," which surfaced in 2009, has been on a sharp upward trajectory, especially lately. **(See "Content Marketing" Dominates Search, below.)**

'CONTENT MARKETING' DOMINATES SEARCH IN UNITED STATES

How the various terms performed in Google Trends over the past few years.



SOURCE: CONTENT MARKETING INSTITUTE CHART USING GOOGLE TRENDS DATA 01/09/2013

As for some of the other terminology, we've outlined some of the most popular with definitions and examples below.

Advertainment: An early term to describe the merging of advertising and entertainment, with the brand employing usually traditional entertainment like TV or video to deliver its marketing message. Also called “branded entertainment.”

Branded Content: What content marketing was most often called, and sometimes still is, before the present day.

Branded Integration: A distinction to delineate the difference between simple brand product placement (actor holding or discussing the product or a scene in which the product is visible) and a deeper connection.

Conversation Marketing: A subset of content marketing in the word-of-mouth marketing lexicon meaning "interesting or fun advertising, email, catch phrases, entertainment or promotions designed to start word of mouth activity," according to the Word of Mouth Marketing Association (WOMMA).

Custom Publishing: Traditionally, printed publications produced by media companies specifically for brands. Many custom-publishing houses were originally created as separate entities at media companies, such as Meredith and Time Inc., to maintain the sacred editorial-advertiser divide, often dubbed the division of church and state.

Inbound Marketing: The antithesis of traditional, outbound marketing, in which marketers hunt for customers via lead generation and then bomb them with interruptive messages. “Inbound marketing” is a slightly dated term (popular in mid-2000s) for when marketers create content usually for digital distribution that is meant to draw consumers, who then ask, or opt in, for more information.

Influencer Marketing: Another word-of-mouth term defined as, according to WOMMA, "identifying key communities and opinion leaders who are likely to talk about products and have the ability to influence the opinions of others."

Native Advertising: A digital ad technique in which the advertising is part of the content. Examples include classic advertorials like the Scientology branded content on Atlantic.com (see “Case Studies”) as well as BuzzFeed's deal with brands like Virgin Mobile and Geico to co-create articles and content specifically for its news channel.

Product Placement: Brand pays X dollars for product to be used, held or otherwise displayed in independently produced content. Became a dirty word after gratuitous overuse. Examples include Transformer movies (pick a product, there are dozens), Microsoft's Bing in “Spiderman,” and pretty much any brand on TV's “Survivor,” “Celebrity Apprentice” or most reality-TV shows. Interestingly, Apple, whose products appeared in 891 TV shows in 2011, according to Nielsen data, does not pay for placement. (Although it does employ a staffer to work with Hollywood and give out free products.)

Social Content: Any content created for and published through social-media channels.

Storytelling: A very popular term in content marketing, it's exactly what writers have been doing for centuries: creating a tale. When applied here, it is the tale of the brand or some aspect of the brand. Chipotle's “Cultivate” is the storytelling of its commitment to sustainable farming and humane animal practices.

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