



WHAT'S CONTENT GOT TO DO WITH IT?

HIGHLIGHTS FROM CMWORLD 2017



MANIFEST



CONTENT, THE ONCE AND FUTURE KING

Brands today are the sum of what their consumers think of them, and how the brand behaves in the world. To stay relevant, brands must create clear and unmistakable content that defies conventions and inspires customers to action.

Manifest believes in the power of connections built through brilliant content. The right content deepens experiences and delivers results. Our heritage in custom publishing, digital platform development, performance marketing and audience-driven strategies gives us the strength of experience to help brands connect with their audiences through great content.

This trend report features insights, wisdom and perspectives from the Manifest team as reported from Content Marketing World 2017. Over 4,000 marketers gathered this year in Cleveland to celebrate and learn. When GE, Coca-Cola, IBM and Marriott attend to present the keynotes, you know the event is world-class.

CMWorld celebrates best in class content marketing. We congratulate our clients at CDW for winning the 2017 Integrated Content Program of the Year and for being named finalist for Project of the Year. We celebrate our collaboration with Michigan Medicine as finalist in the Agency/Client Partnership category.

Manifest hopes that your content marketing programs benefit from this knowledge and insight. After all, great content is made even better when it is shared.

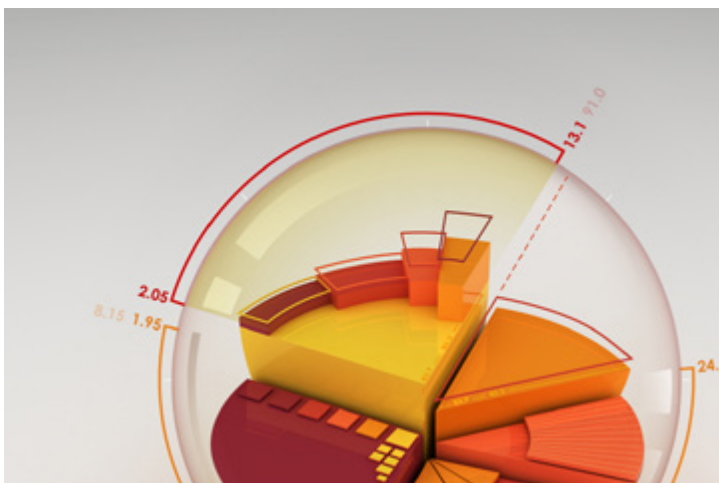


1

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE AUDIENCE

2

CONTENT STRATEGY SMARTS



3

DATA + CREATIVE = PERFORMANCE

4

WHY IS EVERYTHING AT #CMWORLD ORANGE?





1

If you're measuring your content marketing solely on the number of leads generated, you're doing it wrong. Provide value, build trust and plan for the long haul.

Why We Love This:

- Everyone can become a publisher, and brands can stop renting audiences from traditional media outlets and own them outright.
- A successful content marketing program should contribute to an uptick in sales and company growth, but that should be the byproduct of creating and feeding an engaged audience.
- Shift your perspective on what is measured, how it's measured and why it's measured to truly unlock the value of content marketing

“ *Business to business is now human to human.* ”

- Eric Biener,
VP, Business Development
@bakedbean

GET ON BOARD WITH THE AUDIENCE-FIRST MINDSET

The media model is flattening, thanks to the democratizing effects of the internet. Historically, brands had to rely on established media outlets like *The Washington Post*, *Rolling Stone*, *MTV* and *Vogue* magazine for access to valuable, engaged consumers who could potentially be converted into customers.

But brands no longer have to rent audiences through advertising: They can develop and own their own audiences outright and cut out the middleman.

While speaking at Content Marketing World, Content Marketing Institute Chief Strategy Officer Robert Rose homed in on this shift from prioritizing brand, products or services first, to focusing on the audience first and letting the sales flow afterward.

“We’re all in the audience business,” said Rose. “The addressable audience is the new product.”

Trust and authenticity are the name of the game, and that means brands have to put the audience’s passions, concerns and desires first.

In fact, 90 percent of the most successful organizations in content marketing are focused on building audiences, Rose said, which came from research done by CMI.



2

The best content strategies cover both the creation of outstanding content and optimizing its effect.

Why We Love This:

- Establishing empathy not only creates an emotional connection, but it also builds credibility, an essential element of content marketing success.
- Optimizing content with tactics such as updating or promoting it reduces the need to create new content.
- Building in new links within established content drives readers to newer content that is relevant to their interests.

“ People expect creativity, serendipity and utility from brands. Content marketing has to deliver on that.”

- Ricky Ribeiro,
VP, Creative
[@ricktagious](#)

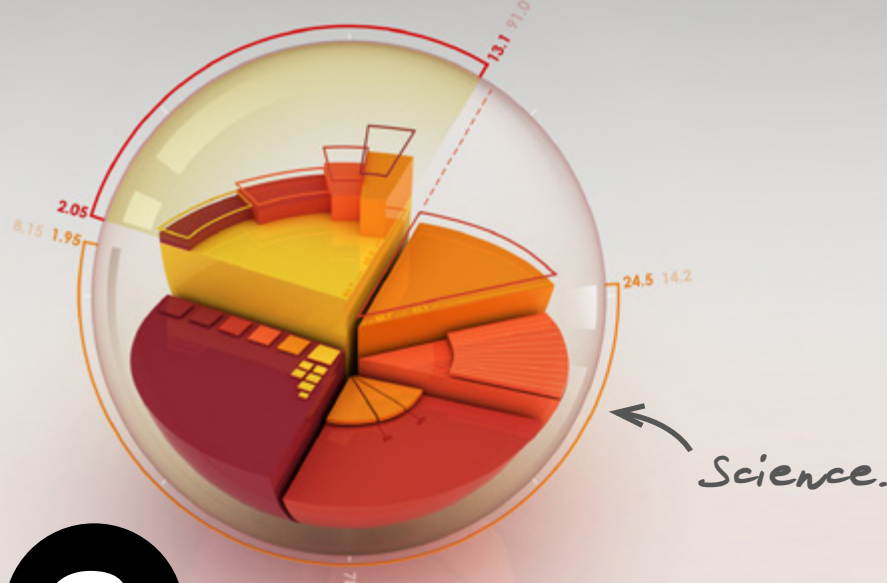
CREATING GREAT CONTENT IS ONLY **HALF THE BATTLE**

An effective content marketing program requires great content, but that's far from the only element. Brands must also optimize the way they use content to maximize its impact.

Numerous speakers at CMWorld focused on the need to make an emotional connection with the audience. If you want to influence someone, an appeal to their emotions has great power. Ahava Leibtag of Aha Media Group said it best: “The single most important thing we do as writers is think about who we're writing for. It really is about empathy.”

Carrie Hane of Tanzen recommended personalizing content for an individual target, which has a major impact with the audience. Personalization works best when it is extended across all channels and platforms, she advised. It takes a lot of work, but technology tools can reduce this burden.

Ian Cleary of RazorSocial described how updating established content can make it valuable for users who have already expressed interest in the topic. This works best if a piece of content still gets traffic.



3

Integrating content and performance marketing builds better products - benefiting people, businesses and the bottom line.

Why We Love This:

- Defines clear roles for different types of content (i.e., engagement vs. direct response).
- Future-proofs content for platform changes ahead, including voice search.
- Positions creative to perform, which helps demonstrate ROI.

“Brands have to earn attention by creating an experience the audience wants and then wants to share.”

- Sarah Ebert,
VP, Business Development
@SarahatManifest

DATA AND INSIGHTS ARE THE SECRET SAUCE

Today, smart marketers use contextual signals, such as digital behaviors and psychographic information, to craft content that delivers the right message in the right place at the right moment—helping audiences take action.

And positioning content to meet audience needs doesn't stop when brands hit “publish.” Content should be further optimized based on performance, and insights gleaned should inform future content ideation and development.

This approach—research, create, optimize, test, learn—was a major theme across CMWorld this year as speakers from GE, Coca-Cola, Cleveland Clinic and more focused on it.

Another thing not to overlook? Technical performance.

“Building great content is nice, but is it optimized?” said Kevin Bobowski, SVP of marketing for BrightEdge. “That means fast, mobile and Google AMP ready, or else the content being produced doesn't find the audience.”

4



*Doing the unexpected
vs. more of the same
isn't above and beyond
anymore, it's required.*

Why We Love This:

- Puts the audience where it should be: front and center.
- Challenges creative to push boundaries.
- Shifts the focus from "going viral" to genuine connection.

“ *Before creating anything ask, 'How does this tell our POV?' You have to be different to stand out.”*

- Annie Hauser,
Associate Creative Director
@anniehauser

UNCONVENTIONAL IS THE NEW BLACK

“It’s never been easier to be average,” said keynote speaker Jay Acunzo at CMWorld.

The challenge today is to be exceptional. To question conventional thinking. To learn more about your audience and what it needs, rather than spending your time learning a tired set of best practices. (“Because what happens when you tell a room full of marketers the best time to tweet is at 3 p.m.? It’s no longer the best time,” Acunzo said.)

Other dynamic CMWorld speakers hammered the point home: More is not better. Better is better. And no one can tell your story better than you. Your perspective and what you do differently.

Outside of convention center halls, brands have to work harder than ever to push past the pack and stand out in a hypercompetitive marketplace. The brands that will win are the ones that demonstrate a relentless understanding of their audiences, their goals and their voice.

A FEW PARTING WORDS

So I will have to admit. As a first-time CMWorld attendee, I was not altogether sure what the world's largest gathering of content marketers would look like. I knew there would be orange everywhere. But what else could this event offer?

Don't get me wrong. I love content. I love it in all of its delicious shapes and sizes. Our agency, Manifest, is built on creative energy that has produced decades of delightful content. And I love the creators of content, from the inspired communications of the first cave drawings to the sheer genius that is exploring the outer edges of virtual reality.

But still I wondered. Just how interested are the “mainstream marketers” in connecting with their customers through content?

Let me be clear. That page has turned. CMWorld 2017 proves that. Content marketing is now mission No. 1 for brands that seek relevance. Not just a social post here or a white paper there. I am talking about content that is the result of brands making things happen. From brands that stand for something in this world. Content that cuts through the noise of meaningless ads and exposures we all receive every day. Content that connects with audiences in personal and authentic ways. Content that treats us with respect.

Who knows what the definition of “Content Marketing” will be next September? One thing is certain, you will find Manifest deep in the thick of things at Content Marketing World 2018.



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WINNER:

Integrated Content Marketing Program
(Print/Digital Integration)

Client: CDW

Agency: Manifest



FINALIST:

Agency/Client Content Marketing
Partnership

Client: Michigan Medicine

Agency: Manifest

Want to know more?

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