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ENGAGING MARKETING MINDS

JULY 2018

GOING DARK

DIVING
INTO THE
DEPTHS OF
THE UNKNOWN



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ABOVE & BEYOND

We need to go beyond ourselves to sustain—well—ourselves over the course of time. In other words, we can only achieve success by stepping out and going beyond our selfish needs and serving others.

Being a safe choice for your clients and elevating the lives of others is the purest form of enrichment. Our businesses must do the same. The world is scary and unsettled, but it's critical we don't push ourselves onto people out of our need to make a buck.

We must pull rather than push because being pushy cannot work in this world. Being pushy adds to the noise in our lives. Pull is gentler and more helpful. We push people into harm's way and pull them out of their problems. A heavy dose of self-promotion or product-centric content only annoys and clouds our minds.

For decades, marketers trumpeted the features and benefits of offerings. But most customers have learned to ignore these details—at least at the beginning of the process. In fact, your ideal client may not even realize he could benefit from your product or service. In turn, he goes through a great deal of self-discovery to determine what help he may need and, ultimately, will only engage with companies that focus on his concerns.

The most thoughtful marketers put themselves in a position to support those needs when they come to light. Put another way, the client doesn't care about your solution until he realizes the problem you solve for him. And while he goes through that process by himself today, the messaging from marketers must shift to the problems they solve instead of the features.

In this issue, we aim to make you feel comfortable with a couple of emerging issues. Our cover story, "Going Dark," is about the dark side of communications. While many executives want a specific guarantee on their marketing investments, we examine why the most critical part of the sales and marketing cycle may actually be creating awareness for your brand.

In our second feature, "Recharging Brands," we touch upon why it's important for today's brands to reevaluate themselves. The piece outlines why you shouldn't rest on your pedestal and hope that customers come to you simply because of who you are and what you stand for.

Remember, a brand is far beyond a logo and a color scheme. It's more like a fingerprint, which is unique to you and you alone. This magazine is just one way that we reach out to our clients to promote our brand.

Warmest regards,

Denny Shorett
President and CEO



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SOCIAL MEDIA BECAME A DIGITAL VERSION OF WORD-OF-MOUTH. THERE'S THAT QUALITATIVE VALUE OF A FRIEND TELLING YOU ABOUT IT. THAT'S THE ORIGINAL FORM OF INFLUENCER MARKETING."

— CORRI SMITH,
OWNER OF BLACK WEDNESDAY

IT'S DARK. It's unknown. It's scary. If you're not familiar with the term, "dark social" conjures images of shady individuals wading through the black market of social media buying and creating followers (bots) and cheating the social system. While this behavior is something social media marketers should be aware of, it's not what the industry calls "dark social."

So, what is dark social? Sarah Mannone explains it like this. Say your mom is in the market for a new dining table. You see the perfect table on Instagram, but rather than sharing it—which would contain a trackable link, you text your mom the name of the company. She'll likely Google it and wind up on the company's site as part of the search traffic.

This person-to-person sharing of information via untrackable links is the essence of dark social. Basically, it's "dark" because you can't see it happening, says Mannone, executive VP of Trekk, a tech-driven creative services firm with offices in Brooklyn and Rockford, Illinois. Sure, dark social can look like Manonne's

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**GO
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By
**ALYSSA
RUANE**

ROI WOES

example. It can also be screenshotting a brand's meme and texting it to your friend; Direct Messaging (DMing) a company on Instagram, Twitter or Facebook; or emailing a quick funny video to everyone in your department.

Corri Smith, owner of Charlotte-based creative marketing and PR company Black Wednesday, compares dark social to an age-old marketing term. "Social media became a digital version of word-of-mouth. Lead generation is really hard to track. There's that qualitative value of a friend telling you about it. That's the original form of influencer marketing."

Mannone says it was just as difficult to track the source of a word-of-mouth conversion that happened face-to-face in the 1980s as it's difficult today to track what's going on in your audience's DMs. "Purchases that come from interactions like this are nearly impossible to untangle, let alone measure, and it's probably a higher percentage of conversions than most brands think."

TRACKING THE UNTRACKABLE

If Mannone is right, and people-to-people interactions are yielding more conversions than brands realize, how can marketers wrangle this untrackable information? Surely, with all the technology out there, there must be a solution... Right?

Kind of.

"There are ways to encourage people to share publicly instead of privately," Black Wednesday's Smith says. Her three-year-old company's been successful at creating memorable social media sharing campaigns, some without even trying. One of the most recent was a play off the popular 'Mean Girls' movie quote, "On Wednesdays, we wear pink," to fit in with the company's brand color.

Smith's small staff wears black on Wednesdays. She is the embodiment of the brand, sporting black hair and black clothes every day. Thus, fans or supporters on social media began wearing black on

With tough-to-track lead behavior, questions about ROI and your company's bottom line tend to arise. However, that's no reason to ditch your social strategy—you just need to keep testing, gathering data where you can, and remaining flexible to a constantly-changing landscape.

The team at BusinessOnline use a variety of Key Performance Indicators to measure a plethora of statistics: ROI volume to leads, conversion rates of leads in various stages of the sales funnel, the velocity of the leads moving through the funnel, and the performance of programs, channels, or campaigns. It is working to move past the vanity metrics and into the value metrics.

"Some people are so concerned with driving leads to a page and getting a high volume of leads—which can become the gray area of marketing—but we really

want to focus on quality leads and quality traffic to provide valuable ROI," says Thad Kahlow, CEO of the B2B digital marketing firm.

Some campaigns are about awareness. And, while awareness may eventually result in a sale, it usually doesn't right away. Mannone says that while it might take six, 12 or 18 months to see that conversion, you have to get awareness if you want to see any ROI. "If we focus every campaign purely on ROI, we're going to miss the boat on what the customer actually needs to hear—because I can guarantee they don't want a sales pitch every time they hear from you."

ANALYZING AWARENESS

While there are still some gray areas in marketing, valuable components of ROI remain to track, even within the elusive world of dark social.



Mannone says Trekk provides a ton of analytics, even for awareness campaigns. She sets short-term and long-term milestones, and objectives for every campaign so she can track crucial long-term factors such as brand equity. “Even if I can’t show that something’s working just yet, I can show that it’s not working.”

Kahlow says that no company is exempt from needing to run awareness campaigns—even Coca-Cola and Apple still strive to stay top-of-mind. According to Pew Research Center’s “2018 Social Media Fact Sheet,” seven-in-10 Americans use social media to connect with one another, engage with news content, share information and entertain themselves.

The key is to get people to share, share, and share some more.

“Marketing will never be 100 percent science,” Mannone says. “It will always be at least a little bit art. We’ll never know about the one-on-one conversations that take place between people. And yet, we need to keep designing and writing and creating with those interactions in mind, because that’s where the magic of marketing is—when a brand resonates with someone so deeply, they can’t help but share it with the people they love.”

“SOME PEOPLE ARE SO CONCERNED WITH DRIVING LEADS TO A PAGE AND GETTING A HIGH VOLUME OF LEADS, BUT WE REALLY WANT TO FOCUS ON QUALITY LEADS AND QUALITY TRAFFIC TO PROVIDE VALUABLE ROI.”

—THAD KAHLOW,
CEO, BUSINESSONLINE



Wednesdays (either purposefully or not), snapping a photo, posting it to Instagram Stories or Twitter, and tagging Black Wednesday’s handle.

Of course, Instagram Stories are ephemeral and based off of Snapchat’s 24-hour lifespan. While you cannot track the exact success of this social media behavior, it’s safe to assume some users saw it. Producing shareable content is something all modern marketers must remember when seeking social engagement and results.

Speaking of results, you won’t get an itemized insight report from social media and dark social, but you’ll get something to show for your efforts. For example, Smith says she can customize trackable links and “I’ll be able to know that it happened, but I won’t be able to see who does it.”

Mannone says the advice is simple. Focus on what you can control and don’t worry about what you can’t. “Understand what happens on dark social for what it is—word-of-mouth marketing—and spend your resources on things you can measure, like brand sentiment. Don’t stop at tracking engagement on social media; dig in and find out what your customers are actually saying about you. Are they sharing your post because it resonates, or because they think it’s silly? Is your message working or isn’t it?”

“IF WE FOCUS EVERY CAMPAIGN PURELY ON ROI, WE’RE GOING TO MISS THE BOAT ON WHAT THE CUSTOMER ACTUALLY NEEDS TO HEAR—BECAUSE I CAN GUARANTEE THEY DON’T WANT A SALES PITCH EVERY TIME THEY HEAR FROM YOU.”

— SARAH MANNONE,
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT OF TREKK

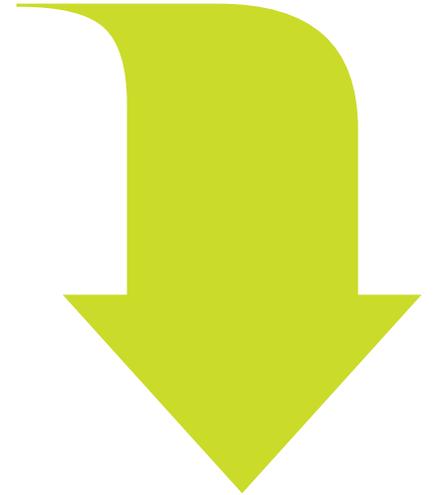
To measure brand sentiment, it’s all about using social media to listen to your audience. Your competitors. Your potential leads. The national conversation. People are dialing into their devices to share themselves with the world, and it’s up to brands to listen to what they’re saying, especially if they’re talking about your brand.

“This is what smart brands are doing,” Smith says. “Look for keywords in a targeted area within a range. Listen to the conversation. You can chime in.”

BE CHIA RGE YOUR BRAND

By Michael J. Pallerino

**WHY IT'S
IMPORTANT
TO CREATE
A NEW YOU**



NOT ALL CHICKENS ARE ALIKE.

If you don't think there's a lesson there, well, you're not listening. You have your chicken on the bone. Your chicken sandwiches. Tenders. Nuggets. Boneless. You can have it as a meal or a snack. The choices, it seems, are endless.

It was a situation that became the source of scores of internal studies for Yum Brands' KFC team. Whether anybody wanted to admit it or not, consumer preferences about their chicken were changing.

If you think this is another song about millennial tastes and behaviors, you're half right. The other half is a tune about how important it is for a brand to recharge itself. Being able to evolve—be it a menu, a logo, a brand personality, whatever—is critical to staying relevant. For the KFC brand, just having the chicken wasn't enough.

So, to get aligned with ever-changing millennial tastes (and everyone else), the quick-

A person in a blue shirt is holding a glowing lightbulb. The lightbulb is the central focus, emitting a warm, golden light. In the foreground, there are several stacks of coins on a wooden surface, suggesting financial matters or investment. The background is softly blurred, showing the person's torso and arms.

“One of the biggest challenges our clients face—and honestly we face—is that it’s so hard to differentiate today.”

— **BO BOTHE**,
PRESIDENT AND CEO OF BRANDEXTRACT

service giant went on an epic rebranding campaign in 2015. The first step was reviving the face of KFC, Colonel Harland David Sanders, the real-life honorary Kentucky Colonel (the title that was bestowed upon him in 1935 by the governor). The savvy entrepreneur built his chicken empire into a national force by the 1960s before cashing out in 1964 and into semi-retirement. And while his image drove the brand, introducing a new one into the mix would take some doing.

How about 13 of them? That's how many Colonel Sanders rolled out since 2015, including personalities like Rob Lowe, George Hamilton, Ray Liotta, Rob Riggle, Reba McEntire, Billy Zane, Norm Macdonald, Jim Gaffigan and Darrell Hammond.

It also unveiled a unique strategy that turned every occasion into a chicken-selling holiday, with ads boasting events like "National Kale Day" and "Mother's Day" — the best-selling day of the year for the company.

"The only constant we can count on is change," says Michael Solomon, Ph.D., professor of Marketing at Saint Joseph's University, whose textbook on consumer behavior, "Consumer Behavior: Buying, Having, and Being" is the most widely used in the world and has been translated into more than 10 languages. "A brand strategy that works well now may not work tomorrow. Consumers' needs change, and of course, so does our ability to meet those needs."

If there is anybody who knows how brands think, it's Solomon, who has spent decades working with companies like BMW, Campbell's, Intel, Progressive, Levi Strauss, Under Armour, Calvin Klein and DuPont, among others. In his latest book, "Marketers, Tear Down These Walls! Liberating the Postmodern Consumer," Solomon examines how today's postmodern revolution requires marketers to revisit the walls they've erected over many years—an effort he says is not an easy thing to do.

"You start by doing a little soul-searching," Solomon says. "Who are you, and who do you want to be? How do you define what you sell? You don't sell attributes, you sell benefits. Reimagining who you are should involve everyone, from your most senior to your most junior



ways to get the recharging process started

Look at the numbers

The numbers don't lie. Shrinking margins, constant discussion about pricing pressures, market shifts, slow sales, shrinking product categories, etc., are all signs you should examine your brand.

Talk to employees

The key is to reach across the organization and look for common threads. Ask sales and the answer is pricing. Operations is quality; customer service is responsiveness, etc. When you start to hear the same things across functions, you'll see a branding or positioning issue.

Talk to customers

Regularly ask the hard questions about what you do well, why your

customers are with you and what you can do better. Ask them if they had a magic wand, what would they fix? Understand their problems and you can position your firm more effectively.

Look at your competitors

While it's nice to know your customer, it's better to understand your marketplace. If you see that everyone looks and says the same thing, you may need to reassess your positioning.

Look at your products

Are you innovating? Changing? Improving? If you're not growing, you're going. If there's not something "next" for your business, your competition will move by you quickly.

Understanding the change you want to make

When it comes to examining where your brand is and where it needs to go, Bo Bothe believes that the ethos of a company shouldn't change unless there's a seismic shift in the market or huge change in customer needs.

We are a multi-disciplined group of experts building brands that resonate. Whether you're looking to overcome a marketing challenge or maximize a business opportunity, we help create, transform or grow your brand—and bottom line.

Bothe says your approach to your business may need to shift as the sands under them do, which means it's critical you understand your place in the world and how you're going to take advantage of it.

"The business is the brand," says Bothe, president and CEO of BrandExtract. "Today, everything is amplified—your service delivery, culture, quality, safety. All of it is amplified by the way people communicate and the speed of change. Now with AI, mobile and other technologies, it is even more important you understand and define your place in the market."

One of the biggest challenges he and his clients face is that it's so hard to differentiate today. It's even more difficult to differentiate based upon what you believe. "People forget that

employee and, of course, your customers." When you get to the point of recharging your brand, remember that people don't buy brands because of what they do, they buy them because of what they mean. "The sad truth is that in many cases consumers believe that almost every brand in a category is comparable in terms of function," Solomon says.

Yet market leaders typically attract exponentially higher market share than also-rans. The reason is they provide a narrative that enables buyers to know if the brand fits into their own life stories.



your business exists because you say it does and it exists the way you believe it should," Bothe says. "While your customers are who you serve, how you serve them is much more important. The key is to find the ones who want to be served the way you want to serve them. If you know who you are, it's easier to find those who buy in, not just buy."

If you're looking for the critical factor on why it's important for brands to constantly be rethinking their approach to business, Jeanne Bliss believes you should think about it like this: Think of your own life, as a customer and as a person; your needs are constantly changing and shifting. The brands that do the best adapt and change as their customers' lives change.

"Building your operation with this

level of purpose and design clarity gives people's work meaning," says Bliss, founder and president of CustomerBliss, the customer-centric leadership building company that works with clients such as AAA, Brooks Brothers, Kaiser Permanente, Johnson & Johnson and the U.S. Postal System.

"It's the glue that unites a team and enables everyone to look beyond their individual tasks to see how it all fits together," she continues. "Companies must put in the work to clarify why they exist. Then, they need to do the heavy lifting to embed that purpose into the way they behave and operate the business. They link their purpose with whom they hire, how they conduct themselves, and what they will and will not do to grow."

"There's no longer a wall between the consumer's body and his important possessions," he adds. "We rely upon the

deep meanings in the brands we choose to help us define who we are to ourselves and others."

“Companies must put in the work to clarify why they exist. Then, they need to do the heavy lifting to embed that purpose into the way they behave and operate the business.”

— JEANNE BLISS,
FOUNDER & PRESIDENT, CUSTOMERBLISS

INSIGHTS

“The fundamental truth—and challenge—is people buy experiences, not products. Products used to differentiate businesses, but now companies have to compete for the hearts and minds of their customers. They have to exceed their expectations and always operate with a subscription mindset. Customers can renew or go to a competitor with every click.”

— Adobe CEO Shantanu Narayen

on why customer engagement is so critical for today's brands

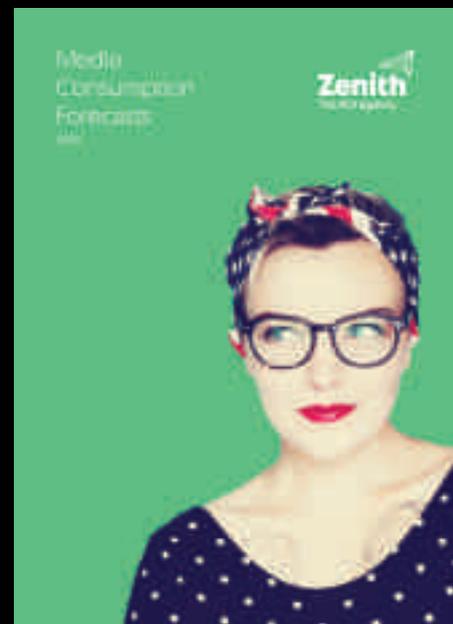
TALK TO ME

REPORT SHOWS WHEN BUYERS WANT TO TALK TO SELLERS

If you were looking for someone to crack the code on what works in prospecting today, the RAIN Group has you covered. According to its “Top Performance in Sales Prospecting” report, 71 percent of B2B buyers want to be contacted by marketers when they're actively seeking solutions and 82 percent will meet with companies that reach out to them. The data was compiled from insights from 488 B2B buyers and 489 sellers. In addition, 62 percent of buyers want to hear from sellers when they are actively looking for solutions.

479

The number of minutes a day (nearly eight hours) people spend consuming media, according to Zenith's “Media Consumption Forecast.” By 2020, that number will climb to 492 minutes a day—plugged in, the report says. One of the biggest time allotments goes to mobile device usage, with 24 percent spending their days on the phone, so to speak. That number is projected to jump to 28 percent by 2020.

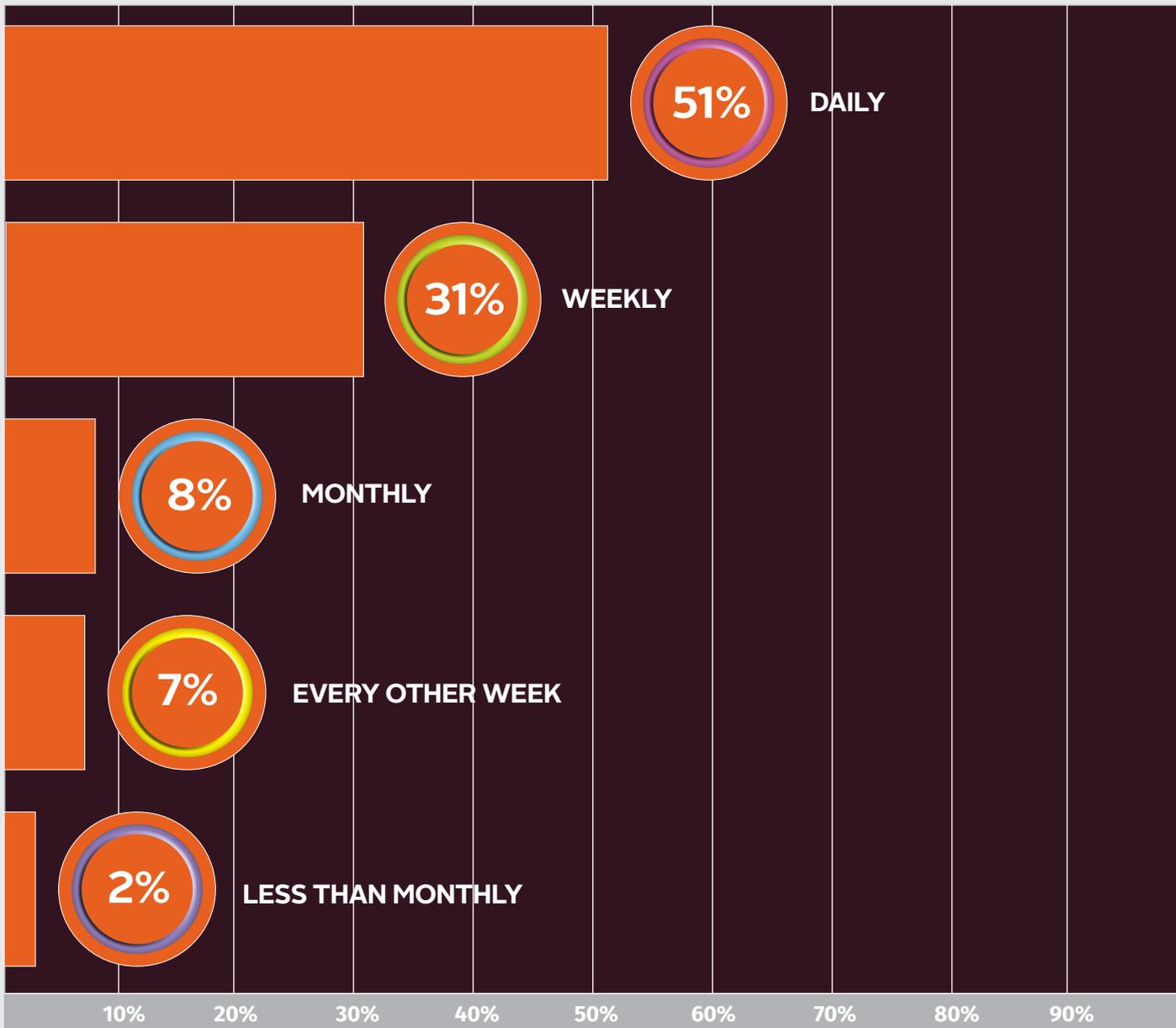


PUMP IT OUT

HOW OFTEN DOES YOUR COMPANY PUBLISH CONTENT?

Do you think you know content marketing? Go ahead, be honest. With content and the art of storytelling dominating the marketing headlines, taking a quick look at how often you publish content is important. According to The Manifest's "2018 Content Marketing

Survey," 51 percent of digital marketers publish content daily. The report was based on data from a survey of 501 digital marketers—73 percent from B2C firms and 27 percent from B2B firms. Here's a look at how often businesses publish content:



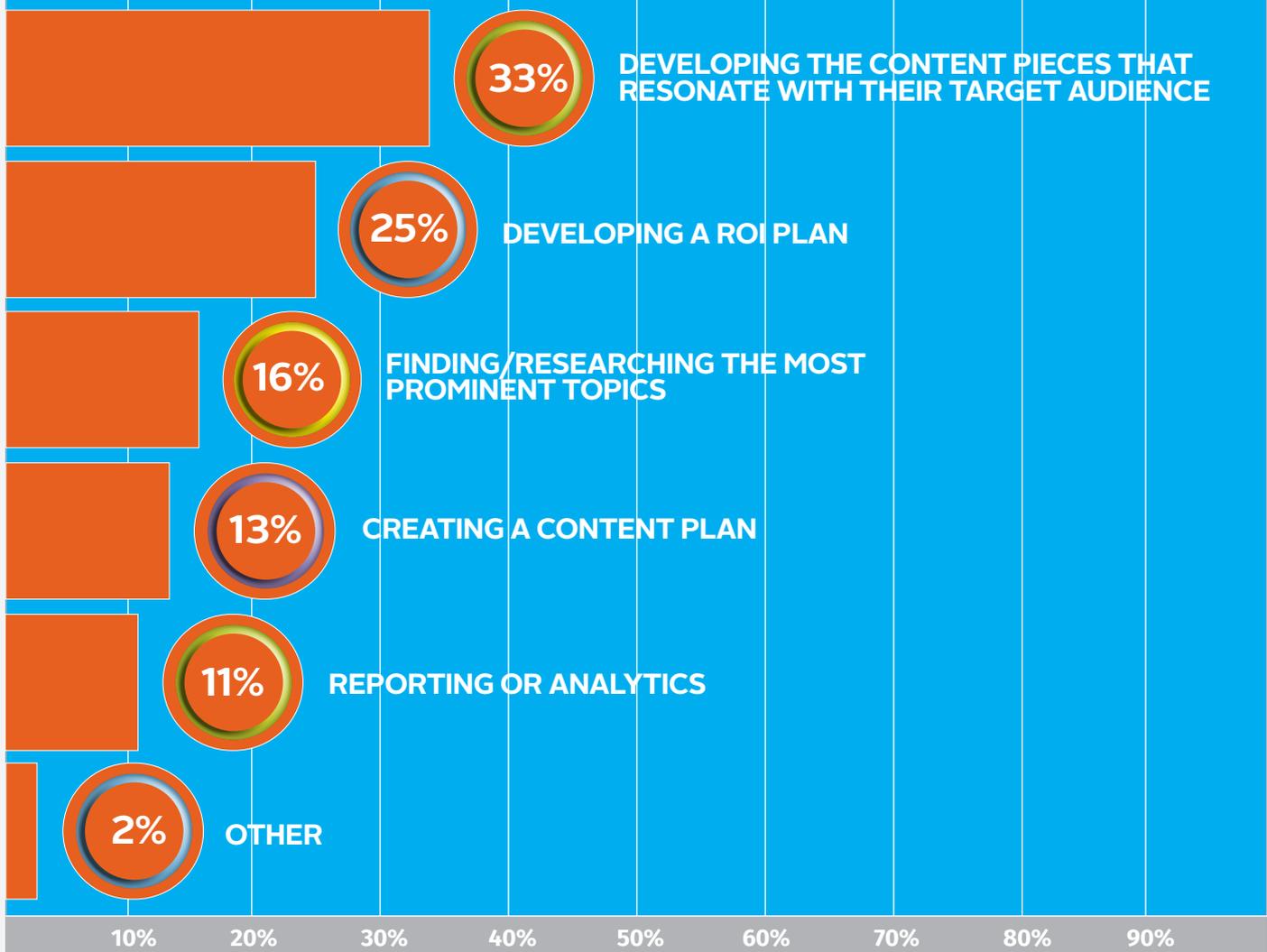
TAKE A NOTE

THE INS AND OUTS OF BEING A CONTENT STRATEGIST

So, you want to be a content strategist? Creating. Planning. Managing. Writing. Each step is as challenging as it is time-consuming. As content continues to be one of the most powerful marketing tools, the pressure to meet and exceed expectations grows. According to “The Invisible Key to Content Success—The Importance of Data Consolidation, Collaboration & Workflow” by the Content Marketing Institute and Semrush, only 53 percent of marketers have any kind of “formal workflow process” for planning, creating and delivering content.



HERE'S A LOOK AT THE MOST CHALLENGING TASKS RELATED TO CONTENT STRATEGY





What are three branding rules every marketer should follow?

Consistency, persistence and restraint. All of your marketing messages, materials and experiences must be consistent with your brand promise. Inconsistency causes confusion in consumers' minds, and confusion is the No. 1 brand killer. Brands aren't built overnight, so be persistent in getting your brand messages in front of consumers. It can be tempting to extend your brand far and wide to build it quickly, but don't follow every opportunity, or you could dilute your brand. If an opportunity doesn't match your brand promise or causes you to lose focus on it, don't pursue it. A focused brand is a strong brand.

Why is customer engagement so important today?

Because people have so much access to information. They can research a brand's claims and assign value to them instantaneously with a simple search or question posted to social media. In other words, brands must move beyond simply broadcasting messages to building relationships with consumers. That means being authentic.

Focus on entertaining and educating your audience and keep promotion to a minimum. People are good at ignoring ads and marketing messages, but they're far less likely to ignore useful, meaningful and entertaining messages. Brands that leverage social media marketing, content marketing, live events and experiential marketing, and even email marketing can build relationships based on trust. Those relationships lead to sales, brand loyalty and word-of-mouth marketing, which represent long-term, sustainable, organic growth.

Why is creating an emotional connection with your customers important?

Consumers are inundated with messages from businesses both online and offline

TRENDING WITH... SUSAN GUNELIUS

PRESIDENT & CEO, KEYSPLASH CREATIVE

When you've written 11 marketing-related books that have been translated into multiple languages, you might be on to something. Just ask Susan Gunelius, whose books remain vital resources in universities around the world. In the first half of her 25-year career, Gunelius was instrumental in directing marketing programs for the likes of AT&T and HSBC. Today, the president and CEO of KeySplash Creative spends her days offering strategic branding and content marketing expertise to a wide variety of clients, including Citigroup, Cox Communications, Intuit, and others. We sat down with her to get her thoughts on what it takes to be a marketing expert today.



today. As a result, it's more important than ever to build emotional connections between consumers and your brand. Trust matters more than ever.

Consumer emotional involvement theory tells us that as consumers experience a brand and begin to believe in a brand's promise, they'll develop an emotional attachment to it. A primary goal of brand building is developing customer loyalty, which comes directly from activities that drive emotional involvement—consistently and persistently delivering your brand message and meeting customer expectations for your brand.

Over time, a consumer's emotional involvement with a brand grows deeper and evolves into a strong personal connection to that brand. Emotionally involved consumers are the most effective brand ambassadors.

Why is content marketing so important in today's sales funnel?

It can be used to push consumers through the sales and marketing funnel by addressing needs and problems at different stages of the buying cycle. For example, at the top of the funnel, content can be used to acquire more leads who either don't know they're in the market for a product or service or just identified they have a problem.

In the middle of the funnel—the research stage—marketers can use content to

nurture them through the decision-making process. At the bottom of the funnel, when consumers are close to making a final decision, marketers can create targeted conversion campaigns filled with content that helps nudge those consumers to make a decision and buy.

By recognizing where a person is in the sales funnel and buying cycle, marketers can use content to answer questions, address needs, and prove that their product or service can solve the problem. Content marketing doesn't have to be expensive to strategize and execute effectively.

What is the most important piece of advice you'd offer today's marketing professional?

Stay knowledgeable about marketing and business theory as well as the psychology of consumer behavior. Tools will come and go, but the fundamental principles of marketing and human behavior don't change much. The challenge is learning how to apply those theories to the new tools and communication opportunities available. To stand out from the crowd, learn marketing and business first and tools second. I'd also recommend learning as much about data and analytics as possible. All companies are obsessed with data, so it's probably unavoidable that all marketers will need to be able to manipulate data and use it to tell specific stories.



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It starts with an IDEA

for how you can grow your brand, or get the word out, or boost sales. But you need help to bring this idea into reality. So, you do something really smart— you find a partner with the experience and talent to make it happen.

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