CONTENT CREATION

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Content Creation

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LESSON 1: CONTENT PLANNING
CONTENT MARKETING

Benefits of content marketing

Content marketing is defined as any pieces of content that we can use to convince and convert a potential audience into a fully-fledged customer. We’ve determined this based on a number of factors: by your content personas, by the channels that you’re using, and by what your intended business aims are. We’re going to look at various forms of content marketing and how you can apply it to achieve your goals.

In terms of the benefits of content marketing, content marketing:

 sands
  Helps you grow your brand or increase business awareness
  Helps you recruit new brand advocates
  Helps to increase your search engine optimization and traffic to your website
  Enhances understanding of exactly what it is that your business has to offer and its unique sales perspective
  Helps you generate new business leads and recruit new business interests

HOW TO PLAN

Social media landscape

The sheer amount of content that is generated every day is enormous. Brands have to compete, not only with other competitor brands, but with influencer content, and also digital publishers.

Creating content that audiences consume most

We’re going to look at various ways of how you can create content that will help you stand out with the newsfeeds. Cutting through the noise is a real challenge for brands and businesses. We break successful content planning into five key stages:

Listen. When we talk about listening, we’re talking about identifying conversations that are already occurring within the social media space; being able to figure out pinpoints for your intended audience, what they’re already engaging with in terms of content; and also, trying to determine any preconceptions about your brand or business that already exist and using your content to alleviate those problems.

Plan. In terms of actual planning, understanding your goals and being able to align your business objectives with your content will help deliver the best return on investment.

Implement. This is the actual creation of your content. So we’re going to explore this in depth and talk about the different content formats that you can utilize to achieve your content marketing objectives.

Measure. We’re going to explain how you can measure the effectiveness of your content, and actually see if it’s delivering on your goals.

Amend. We’re going to go through ways in which you can amend and improve your plan.
Choosing the right content for your customers

With your content, it’s particularly important to determine what audience you’re speaking to. We can broadly group it into two sets: what we call B2C, which is Business to Consumer, and B2B, which is Business to Business. We’re going to consider how you should tailor and adapt your content based on your audience’s needs.

Target market

Generally speaking, a business-to-consumer audience is broad. When we recommend pushing content at a business-to-business audience, being focused on a particular vertical, being quite specialist, and a little bit more niche than a business-to-consumer audience is generally recommended.

Purchaser

When we talk about the individual purchaser in a business-to-consumer situation, largely, the purchaser is a single person. For example, somebody who buys a single ice cream goes to the shop and makes a purchase; whereas with a business-to-business relationship, if a shop is ordering an ice cream from a wholesaler, there might be multiple factors influencing their purchase decision, based on shelf space, based on the retailer, and based on logistics. So being cognizant of the purchase behavior in that individual relationship is key.

Buying process

The buying process for a business-to-consumer audience is very much a single-step process. Generally speaking, these are individual purchases that are carried out and completed quite fast. Within a business-to-business realm, a multi-step process can be in place.

Sales cycle

With a business-to-consumer audience, as a result of the single-step buying process, the sales cycle is short. With the business-to-business audience, essentially, services are retained and are kept on for a lot longer. So be aware of this when you’re generating your content, as you may need to invest in a long-term relationship with the business-to-business-audience.

Sales driver

Considering the sales drivers, a lot of business to consumers make their purchases based on recognition and the reputation of brands and businesses. Business to businesses are a lot more rationalized around the professional relationship and often require detailed information based on whatever your business or brand is offering.

Sales factor

Consumer audiences often buy into more impulsive or emotionally targeted advertising or marketing. On the other side, business to business is a lot more rational, thought out, fact-based.
Being able to create content that talks to each of these individual markets will be key to securing the right content marketing strategy for you.

The various formats available

There are myriad of different content types available, from infographics to long-form videos, static graphics to eBooks. Being able to determine exactly what content will help you achieve your goals is key. Taking the time to identify exactly what content works with your audience, what content they are consuming on a day-to-day basis, and what content will help you achieve your goals will help you deliver the best content strategy possible.

How content feeds the sales funnel

When we talk about content, it’s incredibly important to recognize how this feeds the sales funnel. Literally speaking, we can break the sales funnel into three key sections: awareness, consideration, and eventual conversion:

- **Awareness**. When we talk about awareness, the content here should be general content that can excite interest, but also identify a need of our target audience. Being broad with this content will help get more people into the funnel at that particular moment in time. Entertaining and educational content works really well in this section.

- **Consideration**. In terms of consideration, we're trying to build an ongoing moment of trust with our individual audience. Being able to create content that is useful to the individual really helps build up trust and credibility in this section.

- **Conversion**. In terms of conversion, ultimately we need to include calls-to-action. We need our intended audience to know exactly what it is that we would like them to do.

When we overlay the audience journey with the content that best serves their needs, we can start to build a clear picture of exactly how we're going to get consumers to convert. When we talk about the awareness section, creative content suggestions here would be stuff like eBooks, whitepapers, blogs, podcasts, or even video content.

In terms of the consideration phase, again this is about building the relationship. So, answering questions, building a community that you interact with on an ongoing basis, replying to any emails that you get, and being able to build up an element of trust with a new intended audience is key in this section.

And finally, in the conversion section, adding additional value, looking to see where you can make further discounts, and being quite clear and direct with your call-to-actions are key.

Pay to play

In terms of amplifying content, this has never been more important for social media marketers. Essentially, what was before seen as a free launch by a lot of marketers has now become pay-to-play. Understandably, content channels like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have now got business cases to support. So they are leveraging reach in exchange for payment by brands. Brands can no longer rely on organic reach for getting their content on to their intended audiences, but must also be familiar with social media advertising and how to boost content to newsfeeds.
Getting your content seen

Let’s look at some of the larger social media channels you can use to get your content to your audience.

Facebook

Facebook as a channel has an incredibly low reach. Facebook was the first channel to introduce what we call algorithm-based newsfeed filtering. This means that essentially, brands can pay to be up higher in the newsfeed and also appear in more newsfeeds based on that algorithm. Facebook has become the largest earner of paid social advertising in the world. Through the paid formats, you can activate a number of ad types, which generate engagement on individual pieces of content.

Twitter

When we look at Twitter, they have also introduced an algorithmic newsfeed for their platform. There are nice paid formats on Twitter to help your content be seen by individual audiences. These include Twitter Cards. Twitter Cards are largely aligned, much like Facebook ads, to clear objectives, whether that be click to install, content promotion, click to engage, or click to website. Being able to align your ad type with your business objective for each piece of content will help you receive the best return on investment.

Instagram

Instagram have also introduced an algorithmic newsfeed for organic content, and have introduced new ad formats as well. Their targeting and their intent is aligned with business objectives and it’s a very powerful tool. Individual objectives for Instagram advertising could be click to app and install, click to website, and also view video content.

YouTube

With YouTube, there is no such thing as an algorithmic newsfeed. However, the platform doesn’t really function on a newsfeed basis. It is more about video discovery. However, low organic reach is suffered by brands who activate on the platform. For your content to be seen, you need to be using Google Ads for video formats. These are placed through the Google Ads platform.

Tumblr

Tumblr doesn’t currently have an algorithmic newsfeed, and there’s an array of paid formats that can be used by brands to get their content seen by larger audiences. These include sponsored posts and sponsored videos.

Snapchat

Snapchat doesn’t currently have an algorithmic newsfeed. However, it offers some really innovative platform features for brands to use. A great example of this is the Cadbury’s Creme Egg Easter Snapchat filter, which ran across the UK and Ireland for two days and achieved over 4.5 million views and usages of the filter on the platform. Other innovative advertising formats on the platform are sponsored stories.
Considering content by demographic

When it comes to content, there is no one size fits all. We strongly recommend that, in your research and planning phase, you establish content personas. To do this, there are number of key questions you should ask yourself about your intended audience:

- What life stage are they at?
- Are they married?
- Do they have kids?
- Are they still in college?
- What age are they?
- Where are they located?
- What makes them buy?
- Why do they buy?
- What are their passion points, interests, or challenges on a day-to-day basis?

Creating content that resonates with each of these audiences should be a number-one objective for you. We recommend not trying to make too many content personas, but ultimately identifying what the ideal consumer looks like for you and then generating halo content around that individual.

Audience motivations

Gaining shares and positive amplification of your content is great. We’re going to look at three reasons why people share content online.

**Incentives.** Usually, some form of tactic in terms of a discount, a promotion, or even a competition that you run through your social media channel can help your content get shared across different platforms by different consumers.

**Fame.** People often share content with their peers to look good within their social circles. Being able to tap into that aspect of vanity for users within their individual social networks will help you achieve great brand kudos.

**Utility.** People often share content that they believe their peer groups or social circles will find useful, valuable, or insightful. This can lead to emotional connections being established between audiences and brands.

**SOCIAL LISTENING**

Definition of social listening

Social listening is the process of identifying overall conversation about a brand, a business, or an individual on social media. This can help your content cut through the clutter by being hyper-relevant to your individual audience’s conversation points. It helps you identify what competitors are doing in the market, and can also help you obtain information or insight based on any issues that individuals are having with your brand or your business.

Importance of social listening

Social listening is a very powerful tool and should be implemented by all brands and businesses. When we talk about the importance of social listening, we can break it into five key areas.
**Sentiment**

Social listening helps you to accurately assess sentiment toward your brand or business. When we talk about sentiment, we talk about either positive mentions or negative mentions. Being able to categorize these into individual segments and analyze the percentage of positive versus negative will help you see whether your brand is in a good position or needs attention.

**Opinion**

Social listening helps to inform the opinion of your business versus your competitors. Being able to look at your overall brand mentions versus any mentions of competitors’ brands, to see what they’re doing in social media can really help you tailor your message appropriately.

**Opportunities**

Social listening also helps you identify business opportunities that you may not be aware of that are occurring in the marketplace right now. For example, if somebody’s talking about how much they love tea and that they would love tea to be a fundraising sponsor of an event, that’s really relevant with your target market. But maybe they haven’t mentioned your particular brand or business related to tea. Conducting social listening helps you identify the opportunity and complete that sponsorship, if it’s relevant to your objectives, that you would have otherwise missed out on.

**Plans**

Social listening will help you plan social media campaigns to fit with your audience interests. For example, if you were a software company and you were targeting gamers who were very interested in football, being able to monitor and analyze which popular football teams were doing well, or were relevant to your particular audience, would help you determine what sponsorship opportunities you might pursue; or what content you might seed out through your social media content strategy that would be hyper-relevant to your audience.

**Crisis points**

Social listening helps you to determine any underlying crisis points. Often, consumers will complain or talk about your brand or business without directly tagging or mentioning you in individual posts or comments. Using social listening to determine key phrases around a crisis or something that may be coming down the line for your business, watching out for these key phrases, and also measuring any traction that they develop will help you identify crisis points well in advance and form a strategy in order to deal with them.

**Identifying a potential brand crisis**

You can use social listening to identify a real brand crisis. Use social listening to:

- **Set up tracking for keywords or phrases around your particular crisis.** Look to see where these keywords are coming up, where the conversation is happening, and if there are any extenuating circumstances around this particular crisis that you weren’t aware of.

- **Monitor the volume, consistency, and sentiment around brand mentions to do with your crisis.** This is a key step that social listening can help you with.
Identify key contributors to conversation around the crisis. Look at their full profiles, their backgrounds; maybe they are former disgruntled employees, maybe they work for a competitor.

Consider creating a Twitter list of these contributors. But always be aware that if using a tool like Twitter Lists to determine contributors to a particular brand crisis, when somebody is added to a Twitter list they get a notification. So, labeling a list “Troublemakers,” and then adding these individuals to it, will reveal that you are tracking them as troublemakers.

Set up Google Alerts for crisis keyword/phrase. Making sure you have a full and consistent view of your entire crisis, from online to social, is key for establishing a very clear picture.

Spotting a social media crisis

So, how do we spot a social media crisis? There are three key things to look for:

Informational asymmetry. Informational asymmetry is when a business doesn’t know any more than the public about what’s happening. For example, if you’re a business and you see a consumer tweet that, “I can’t believe XYZ business is on fire down the road.” This is something that you’re not aware of and you need to act fast, obviously, to contact the emergency services. But also, to calm and to reassure your potential social audiences that the issue is being looked after, being looked into, and is under control.

Consistent difference. Audiences often make flippant remarks on social media and these aren’t necessarily crises. However, if 50 individual consumers all tweet or Facebook post or Instagram a product issue or a business problem that they have with your individual brand, then you need to consider that this could potentially be a crisis and not just a once-off complaint.

Scale. Look to see just how far this particular crisis has spread. You need to determine if this is purely social or if it’s reached online news publications. You also need to determine the reach and the influence of the contributors of any negative sentiment toward your brand, to work out how much this is actually going to influence consumers and what fallout you need to prepare for.

For example, a customer walking into a bar and having service from a rude barman and posting a complaint on social media, is very different from somebody posting a Facebook status identifying that a gunman has wandered into a restaurant. One of these is obviously a lot more serious than the other and being able to determine the scale, the reach, and the fallout from each of these particular social media moments will be key for determining a successful crisis management program for your social media.

Managing a social media crisis

So, how do you prepare for and manage a social media crisis?

Prepare for all eventualities. Get all of the skeletons out of the cupboard and be prepared for anything that anybody could dig up about your brand, your business, or any of your employees online. Be prepared for worst-case scenarios and keep these documents quite confidential.

Draft a response document. A response document should be in line with exactly what it is you want to say as a brand or a business, should any of these particular skeletons in the closet ever come to light. Make sure all of your key stakeholders are involved in the drafting of this response document. Being aware of every single aspect of how you could be vulnerable to an online audience will help you be prepared in the best way possible.
Use social listening. Use social listening to identify any potential crises, but also to monitor any existing crises and report on them regularly.

Monitor conversations. Be aware that conversations don't just happen within your channels and that you're not always tagged in conversations. So search proactively for brand mentions that are untagged through social channels.

Be honest and open. Be honest and open where possible when responding to consumers. Apologize for delay times if customers are feeling infuriated and ignored. Always try to offer a human solution. Consider signing off your messages with your name. When consumers see a name at the end of a response, they see a human behind the brand and not just a faceless corporation.

Take conversations into the private space. Move any public spats into an enclosed, controlled, and non-public space. Nothing looks worse than when a brand interacts in a back-and-forth exchange that looks like a petty and bitter squabble. Move any conversations that you feel might be fruitless into a private phone call, a private message, or an email.

What makes a great content marketing campaign?

Let's look at some key determining factors of a good content marketing campaign.

Awareness

A good content marketing campaign generates awareness with your intended audience and makes sure that your content is reaching them on a consistent basis. A bad content marketing campaign results in low reach and a low volume of traffic to your site.

Engagement

A good content marketing campaign ensures that consumers are engaging with your content on a regular basis. It means your content is adding value to their lives, and that you're helping move them along the conversion funnel. A bad content marketing campaign results in engagement that is largely negative in its sentiment - or perhaps in consumers who aren't engaging with your content at all.

Understanding

In terms of your content marketing strategy, a great example of this would be when your audiences don't just understand the content, but they actually engage with it, and add something to it. That way, if there is a lively debate or discussion, you can identify that your audiences have benefitted from your content, and are also keen to contribute to it. A bad example of this for a brand content marketing campaign would be confusing content, where users are asking questions and just don't understand the piece of content that's been seeded.

Tone

Tone is another important element to consider in your content marketing campaign: whether it's right for a business-to-consumer audience or a business-to-business audience. A bad content marketing campaign might contain slang or language that alienates the intended audience. So make sure that the tone of your content is right.

Consistency
Consistency is crucial. Make sure that your content mirrors any other marketing efforts that you’ve got happening for your brand or your business. A bad example of a content marketing campaign would be to have a social style that is only consistent with your social platform, and doesn’t recognize the other elements of your marketing intentions.

**Business objectives**

Make sure that the content you’re mapping into your content strategy is linked back to, and is defined by, your business objectives. Whether they be generating new leads, generating new sales, being able to expose an audience to a new product or to a new sales launch, ultimately at the end of the day the reason why we’re creating this content is to convince and convert audiences. So, making sure that your content is aligned to your business objectives will help you achieve a great content marketing campaign.
LESSON 2: CONTENT FORMATS
**SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS**

**Ever-changing platforms**

When we talk about content by platform, it’s important to understand that each platform not only has its benefits, but its pitfalls. Being able to strategize and plan for each individual platform will help you achieve not only the best return on investment, but also maximum engagement with your individual target audience.

The social media space, as a business, is constantly evolving. Be sure, as a social media marketer, to read the latest social media tech blogs, for example, Mashable or TechCrunch, so that you’re aware of innovations and platform changes that are relevant to your business or industry.

**Choosing the right platform**

Facebook and Twitter support the widest array of content types. Also, they could be seen as the most innovative in terms of the new features they roll out on a consistent basis.

However, it’s important to note that platforms like LinkedIn and Snapchat have their own benefits and very dedicated audiences, very much in contrast to mass-audience platforms like Facebook and Twitter. Being able to determine the content you want to use, and the channels it works best on, will help you optimize your content in the best way possible.

**CONTENT BY AUDIENCE**

**B2C content versus B2B content**

A business-to-consumer audience and a business-to-business audience consume content in very different ways. A business-to-business audience relies more heavily on eBooks, whitepapers, and factual and educational data-driven content formats. Business-to-consumer audiences rely more heavily on entertainment, emotional content, and mass awareness formats. Be cognizant of exactly which market segment your brand or business is aiming to convert, and align your content formats accordingly.

**What are articles and blogs?**

Articles and blogs are essentially pieces of writing that are concise and have a key theme or topic. The aim of these pieces of content are to convince audiences of your credibility, your knowledge, and your in-depth understanding of a particular topic. This could be related to an industry innovation or could identify a challenge or a pain point for your particular intended audience. The overall goal of these pieces of content is to convert readers into potential business leads.

Blogs and articles can also be used to help improve your search engine ranking, or SEO. Search engine optimization essentially means that the pieces of content that you put up onto your site contain a number of keywords. These keywords relate back to user behaviors when users search for individual topics or themes. Being aligned to the topics or themes that your audience is searching for, and making content around those particular topics and themes, will help improve your search engine results when your intended audience searches for those items.
Example

If I’m a hardware shop owner, then the articles and blogs I would put up on my site might be around DIY tips. They might be about new industry innovations in hardware production facilities. Or they might be around what’s happening in our store this week. So, when our intended audience searches for industry innovations or for DIY tips, they may naturally find my site as a result of the content that I’ve pushed out through my articles and blogs.

BLOGGING

Characteristics of good blogs

Characteristics of high-quality blog content include the following:

Consistent writing style and voice

Always write with a voice that is consistent and reflective of your brand. Don’t switch between ‘we’, ‘us’, ‘me’, and ‘I’ in terms of the prepositions you use.

Written for particular audiences/demographics

A high-quality blog post will be written for a particular demographic and touch on a particular challenge, pain point, or interest. Consider your content personas, especially when writing blog content pieces. User attention spans are up to about 15 seconds. So, you really need to capture somebody’s imagination in the first two paragraphs. Make sure to test, analyze, measure, and then implement any learnings you get from your individual blog posts by looking at your Google Analytics on the back-end of your website or by tracking any CMS-installed analytics panels.

Optimized for a specific keyword

Make sure you optimize for your keywords, which means including whatever the theme or topic is consistently within your blog post.

Updated regularly

Update your blog regularly. There’s no point in having a blog on your website gather dust for months on end, when you could be using it as a very powerful tool for generating new leads for your brand or business.

Optimizing for search engines

In terms of optimizing your blog, here are some guidelines:

- Focus on a keyword or a theme, making sure to repeat it a number of times throughout the blog post or article
- Include that keyword in the opening paragraph - this makes it clear to readers exactly what they will be reading about
- Use h2 tags on your blog post and include your keywords in these
- Include your keywords in any ALT tags for images
- Ensure your search snippet is defined to feature exactly what this particular piece of content is about, and that it also features your relevant keyword
**Benefits and limitations**

When considering the benefits and limitations of blog posts and articles, there are a number of key considerations.

**SEO**

Improved SEO is a very obvious benefit to blogging for your brand or business. However, there is a considerable amount of time and resource investment needed in terms of achieving a really good search engine ranking as a result of blogging. This is not something that just happens overnight.

**Linking back to site**

Forming a link strategy, where you can earn backlinks, will help add additional traffic to your site. It is very important though, as a limitation, to mention that any paid placements of blog posts or linking back to your site will usually use what Google calls a ‘non-follow link.’ This means the link will exist on another site, but ultimately will not benefit search engine ranking.

**Message control**

Message control is achieved very well by using your own blog post. Essentially, you control everything that goes out from your individual blog. But make sure to involve internal stakeholders, so the blog is representative of your entire business. It should also be checked for legality, for typos, and for consistency across all marketing materials. Controlling your message is harder to do with guest blog posts. So, for example, if you invite a similar business to blog on your website, being able to censor them or determine some house rules in advance would be key.

**Content**

Blogs offer a great platform for including all forms of creative content, from creative writing to videos to polls. You’ll be able to use your blog as a blank canvas for getting your brand message out there. Be sure that you have appropriate rights and permissions to use all content that is put out through your blog.

**Reach**

Consider gaining extra reach by leveraging influencers to get your content out on their channels as part of your blog strategy. However, with all paid placements, there should be a clear declaration of whether the content is sponsored or not. Make sure to be transparent and if in doubt, always declare.

**How blogging can help sales**

In addition to great SEO, including blogging in your content strategy will help bring traffic and users to your website, which ultimately can convert into leads. Companies that blog generate, on average, 67% more leads per month than those that don’t. That’s a very impressive statistic. And 37% of marketers say blogs are actually the most useful and valuable tool of content marketing. Make sure that your blogging strategy is aligned to a business objective and consider it as part of your wider content marketing strategy.
INFLUENCER MARKETING

Why use influencer marketing?

Influencers on social media are now getting more traction than even some of the longer-established traditional media outlets. Take for example, Zoella, a famous YouTuber from the UK, who now has 10.2 million YouTube subscribers. The BBC, a long-standing stalwart of the media industry, pales in comparison with three million YouTube subscribers. So it makes sense to consider influencer marketing through individual influencer channels as part of your content strategy.

Ensuring compliance

Influencer marketing requires businesses or brands to be transparent with audiences and not mislead consumers.

- **Disclosure.** Disclose early and disclose often. Any paid or sponsored influencer program that’s done through your brand or business must be disclosed. It is your responsibility to ensure that the influencer discloses the nature of the relationship that they have with your business. Whether it’s, “I was gratefully paid in return for my contribution to this blog,” or “X business gave me product in order to review it.”

- **Honesty.** Make sure that the message that’s being delivered through your influencer channels or through any influencer marketing is honest. You don’t want to mislead users in any way, as this could damage an audience’s perception of your brand or business.

- **Monitor.** Monitor the influencers that you use to seed your content through. Make sure that they’re complying with any regulations that you’ve set out. Also, make sure to include these regulations in any contractual negotiations that you have with these influencers.

Choosing the right influencer

Influencer channel marketing is becoming one of the most popular ways a brand can communicate with a very relevant audience and make sure the brand is given a strong peer-to-peer connection. Also consider that just because somebody has 10 million Twitter followers or 20 million YouTube subscribers, that doesn’t necessarily mean that they have the right intended audience for your brand or product. Conducting social listening around the individual influencers will help you identify exactly the audiences that are speaking about them, engaging with them, and viewing or watching their content.

Staying relevant

Always remember that relevancy is more important than reach. Reaching 1,000 people who are purely irrelevant is less impactful than reaching 500 people who are really relevant to your brand or business. Ultimately, it’s about filling that sales funnel with as many relevant consumers and targets as possible, with the aim of converting them at the end. So, make sure that your message is delivered to the right, most relevant audience.

Case study

Mondelez, the parent company of Oreo, conducted a YouTube influencer campaign called, The Lick Race. They challenged some very top-ranking influencers on YouTube to see how fast they could lick an Oreo to completion. The reach was over four million UK YouTube users. However, these
influencers did not declare that they had been paid by Oreo to feature these videos on their channels. Complaints were received by the UK Watchdog, the Advertising Standards Authority, who instructed Mondelez to remove all of their YouTube videos in their current form from influencer channels and to declare the nature of their relationship with these individual influencers. Ultimately, the brand was left embarrassed in a situation they could have easily avoided.

They could have avoided this situation by:

- contractually obliging influencers to declare the nature of their relationship
- insisting all declarations were made on the content
- housing the content on an owned channel to control the message and annotate appropriately

**VIDEO**

**Consumer trends**

Video content is the most popular form of content consumed on the internet today. Brands and businesses are clamoring to create as much video content as possible to keep up with the innovations being introduced by the big social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. As such, these platforms are now competing with each other for video dominance.

**Characteristics, benefits, and challenges**

We’re going to look at some characteristics, benefits, and challenges of video content creation in the content marketing space.

**Characteristics**

In terms of characteristics, audience attention spans have shortened greatly. So if you create short, snackable content you will make your audiences very happy because you’re meeting their consumer behavior needs. Make sure that your video content is also relevant to your consumer personas. Include strong call to actions, whether it’s a link back to a website, to download an app, or to avail of something in store. Create high-quality video content. Making sure that your content is premium, top-notch, and reflects your business in the best possible light will help resonate your brand with target audiences.

**Benefits**

With video content, you’re capitalizing on an audience need because it’s their number one form of content. Video content also benefits from additional organic reach, which is ultimately cheaper for you to seed in the long run. Also, video content helps to capture the attention and the imagination of audiences in a way that static or text-based content doesn’t necessarily always achieve.

**Challenges**

In terms of challenges for businesses, video content is not cheap to produce. Being able to do this dynamically is a real undertaking, considering that video content often requires planning, preproduction, production, and post-production editing. It can be an expensive undertaking for businesses. Also, most video content that’s seeded out in the social web suffers from, and is subject to, silent autoplay: video content that plays within social media newsfeeds with no sound. This is
largely due to mobile. On mobile, there needs to be a click into the individual video for you to actually hear the sound. As a result, the consumer behavior is to swipe through story after story without landing on a particular video that interests them. All the time, these videos may start playing in the newsfeed as they scroll by them, but consumers are not necessarily hearing them. So optimizing your content for silent autoplay is key when it comes to seeding any social media video content through your channels.

**Different lengths and playback functions**

Video consumption habits have changed quite considerably. In 2015, Microsoft reported that we now have an attention span of eight seconds. That said, some marketing communications will require longer forms of video. These videos, however, should be one minute and 30 seconds long at the very most. Shortform video content can be broken up into three distinct varieties:

**Shortform narrative**

The video is no more than 30 seconds long, but tells a continuous story with a beginning, middle, and end.

**Shortform looping**

This is a style of content where the narrative is less important and is secondary to the looping nature of the content. An example of a shortform looping piece of video content might be a GIF file. GIFs essentially capture the shortform video file and loop it consistently.

**Shortform stop motion**

Users can record video by tapping on the screen to hit record, and taking their finger off the screen to press stop. This start/stop fashion is really conducive to special effects, magic tricks, and being able to move quickly from one situation or scenario to another. Largely, the stop motion forms of social video content are captured on mobile as well, so the quality isn’t always up to premium standards.

**Shortform versus longform video**

We can break video content up into two key formats: longform and shortform. These two content types serve very different needs for social media audiences.

**Device**

Always consider how the social media audience is viewing the video content. Long viewing usually means that a user is on laptop or a desktop computer. Shortform content is a lot more conducive to on-the-go snackable content that is largely consumed through a mobile device or through a tablet.

**Data restrictions**

Data restrictions around longform video are high. In terms of shortform content, data requirements are a lot lower.

**Retention rates**
Retention rates are a lot higher for shortform video because there are less requirements for a user to watch all the way through to the end.

**Themes**

Common themes for shortform might be around humor or educational pieces; whereas longform content is well suited to emotive, compelling pieces where the audience feels required to watch all the way through to the end.

**Reach**

Ultimately, what we find with longform versus shortform video is that the reach for longform video is a lot lower than for shortform.

Consider taking a piece of longform content and serializing it into a number of different segments that you can seed out at different moments in time, thereby converting the longform content into snackable chunks of shortform content. This will help extend your reach and also the longevity of your piece of longform video content.

**Longform video best practices**

In terms of best practice around longform video, there are a few key rules:

- Make sure your video is no longer than one minute and 30 seconds long.
- Make sure that you are aware of autoplay in silent mode.
- Include subtitles.
- Include a call to action.
- Make sure that you have permission and usage rights for everyone that features in your video.

**Shortform video best practices**

What are best practices for shortform video?

- Make sure that your videos are kept to about 30 seconds maximum.
- Ensure your videos have square dimensions. Square dimensions work particularly well with shortform videos. For example, Facebook and Instagram work really well with shortform videos that have square dimensions. But do consider landscape for platforms like YouTube or Twitter.
- Be aware of any text overlay that features in your video content in terms of promotion. This is particularly important for Facebook. Reach for your content can be limited based on the amount of text overlays that you have, not only in image content, but in video content.
- Make sure that you’re not trying to overcrowd the videos with complex, cluttered themes. Keep to one consistent strong idea at the very most.

**Challenges by platform**

Each individual platform comes with its own challenges when it comes to video content:

- Facebook’s challenge is that there’s a high concentration of video content on the newsfeed, which makes it difficult for brands to cut through the noise. Predominantly, video content
here is also viewed through silent autoplay, which means subtitles should always be considered.

- On Twitter, half-life within the newsfeed is so fleeting that video content should be promoted where possible to achieve maximum reach. Also consider the silent autoplay feature and the need for subtitles.
- Instagram has a 60-second limit on any videos being uploaded to the platform. So, if you create a piece of content that's one minute and 30 seconds long, be aware that you will have to trim 30 seconds out of this content before seeding it on Instagram.
- YouTube doesn't have a newsfeed, so getting discovery of your content here can be challenging. Looking towards a content promotion strategy around some paid advertising with the platform is key to driving your brand message.
- A real challenge with Snapchat's native video feature is that the content is recorded live and on the go. This prevents any high-end production, so make sure you are adept at mobile capture.
- On Tumblr, the content consumed is very short. The platform is largely focused on short video content, like GIFs.

Make sure that you're aware of the challenges you may face when seeding video content out onto these individual platforms.

**Facebook versus YouTube**

Every month, Facebook and YouTube compete with each other for video dominance. The two platforms battle very closely, with only a few thousand video views in the difference each month for first place.

Being aware that each of the social media platforms are now competing with each other for video dominance should be at the forefront of your marketing strategy. Look towards utilizing the native video features on each platform to help you receive the best return on investment and also the greatest reach. For example, if you have a nice piece of video content, best practice would be to seed it out through the native Facebook player rather than to upload it onto YouTube and seed out the link on Facebook. The two platforms are in competition with each other so, natively, Facebook will penalize you for using a YouTube link.

**Distribution**

Consider the brand and business objectives of the individual social media platforms and play to their strengths. In terms of video content, great innovations from the individual platforms are quite frequent.

You can see on this slide (see slide ‘Distribution’) a great example of 360 video that was used as a video of the day for GoPro. 360 video enables users to click and drag and see a full 360 perspective of the entire video capture process. It's a really nice feature and it's paving the way in terms of video consumption and innovation, moving video almost into virtual reality.

In the center of the slide, you can see an example of Twitter's innovative video card that autoplays video within the newsfeed, another example of native video streaming from social media platform.

Then, on the right of the slide, you find YouTube's own native advertising format, Pre-rolls. Pre-rolls are when YouTube shows you a piece of highly targeted leader content that plays before the piece of content that you want to see. This can be highly targeted towards your particular moment in time.
and what you're consuming. For example, if you're watching funny cat videos, then a brand of cat food that advertises as a YouTube pre-roll in advance of the cat video would make a lot of sense. It has identified that you are interested in animals and specifically that you have an interest in cats.

**Organic reach per format on Facebook**

On this chart (see slide ‘Organic reach per format on Facebook’), you can see how Facebook’s algorithm has now prioritized organic reach around video content above everything else. Facebook has done this intentionally, in order to compete with YouTube for the video-consuming audience and try and keep people within the singular Facebook experience.

**Optimizing per social media channel**

**Publishing video content**

When publishing your video content, it’s important to optimize per social media channel. You receive the best reach by publishing to one of the big five social media channels. These are Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, and Instagram. The only channel without a native upload function within these five is LinkedIn. However, YouTube embeds do automatically play in this channel. Many of the other social sites that allow for native video upload also allow for a very handy call to action button. These can be embedded or overlaid on the video content. Again, the exception to this will be LinkedIn, who rely solely on YouTube for those call to action embeds.

**Specialized video advertising platforms**

There are also specialized video advertising formats for each platform. One particularly useful feature, for example, is on Facebook, where you can build a target custom audience based on people who have viewed a video for later advertising re-targeting. For example, if you put out a really lovely piece of emotive content, you can re-target everybody who has viewed that piece of content with a follow-up, more hardline sales message, to drive them into the next stage of the conversion funnel.

**Sound**

Use sound to enhance content rather than relying on it. Again, be very cognizant of the autoplay in silent feature that a lot of consumers now use.

**Twitter’s video features**

**Video publisher**

Twitter has innovated its platform and now offers distinct video services as part of its stable. A great example of how it was used was for a big rebrand: a special two-minute narrative was put together to explain the processes, the understandings, and the undertakings of the rebrand. This was shared out through targeted key audiences on Twitter, with a promoted spend.

**SnappyTV**

Another neat feature of Twitter video innovation is a platform called SnappyTV. This works as a cloud-based digital video recorder and seeds out live TV snippets. It is exclusively by invitation only from Twitter, and is often utilized by TV broadcasters. For example, while live-Tweeting at a soccer
match, a broadcaster can use their SnappyTV subscription to seed out the moment when a serious
tackle was made or when a brilliant goal was scored.

Periscope

Periscope has innovated how we consume video content by allowing users around the world to seed live video directly from their mobile phones. This ties in with an auto-generated URL that is seeded out through a user’s Twitter account and offers brands, businesses, and individuals a great doorway into their day-to-day lives and also real, on-the-go, raw unedited video content.

Facebook’s video features

Native video

One of Facebook’s innovative features is native video. Native video achieves the best organic reach and the best return on views on the platform. In fact, no other social media channel presently can really challenge Facebook on its native video return with key audiences.

360 Video

360 video has been a really successful innovation for Facebook. A great example of this was when teasing out the new Star Wars film, an alien planet was shown in a full 360-degree view where users could explore every inch of this new and strange dimension using this very innovative feature.

Facebook Live

Facebook has launched its platform for live video streaming called Facebook Live. This platform, similar to Periscope, allows audiences to tap into live, unedited, raw content that shows behind-the-scenes footage. This has achieved great kudos from audiences and is best used for live or unique events.

Metrics

With video now autoplaying in newsfeeds, it’s important to consider how we accurately measure true views for pieces of video content.

You should consider a number of determining factors and metrics when measuring the success of video content:

- **Audience retention.** Audience retention will show you how long an audience actually stuck around to watch your content before clicking off elsewhere. The longer you retain an audience, the more of your message that they see. Consider this when including calls to action. Don’t just include them at the end because your audience may not actually get that far in the piece of video content.

- **Average duration of video view.** Average duration of video view will show you, on average, how much of your video content was consumed, up until what point, by your intended audience. It is also another important consideration when including your call to action.

- **Video views.** Total video views are ranked, ultimately, in different ways by different social media platforms. Facebook and Twitter both regard a video view as three seconds or more, whereas YouTube doesn’t regard a video view until somebody watches 30 seconds.
Repeat versus unique. Another really important factor to consider is repeat views versus unique views: the amount of times somebody went back to watch your video in a repeated fashion, rather than just seeing it for the first time. The higher that frequency of reach, the more engaged with your content your particular intended audience is. They haven’t got bored of it, and they’ve gone back to see it again.

Case study: Ice Bucket Challenge

The ALS Ice Bucket Challenge was a unique and viral nomination mechanic that saw audiences sharing pieces of video content natively on a variety of social media platforms for the first time, with the aim of recruiting people to donate to a charity. Audiences were challenged to pour a freezing cold bucket of ice cold water over their heads in order to generate awareness and donations for a motor neuron disease charity. This gained huge reach on social media, including videos from Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, and large global celebrities. Overall, 300,000 pieces of unique video content were created for this particular challenge as it went viral in the social media space. The charity received a 500% increase in donations and ultimately benefitted from this user-generated content.

Streaming from mobile

Live video streaming has its own benefits, but also challenges. Being able to prepare live video in advance isn’t easy. Ultimately, it will come down to planning to control the environment and any external factors. To gain the best reach and audience interaction with your live social channel views, be sure to pre-promote when your social video is going live. Making sure audiences know when to tune into your Periscope or to your Facebook Live, will make sure that they don’t miss these crucial moments before they disappear.

Snapchat’s disappearing content

Ephemeral and unscripted content creation is rising amongst consumer audiences. Snapchat is now the fastest growing social media platform in the world. Ephemeral or disappearing content is the key USP or unique selling point for this platform. Essentially, it means that the content lives for a user-defined period of time and then just disappears. This is different to platforms like Facebook, YouTube, or Twitter, where your content lives on as an endless stream of your previous musings, posts, or content marketing campaigns.

Snapchat’s young audience

Some really interesting statistics around Snapchat include that there’s a slightly female skew of 51%. The age demographic is very young; essentially, from 16 to 19-year-olds. We’re seeing a huge increase in usage, from 13% in 2013 up to 41%. That number is continuing to increase day by day. The platform is so conducive to personalities that we’re now seeing influencers making names for themselves and creating large followings solely through the platform.

Case study: Dove’s ‘Self-esteem Snaps’

Dove used Snapchat to connect with their audiences in a really meaningful, credible, and trust-earning way. They created a campaign called the Dove Self-esteem Snaps. They drove their content around the concept of self-esteem week. They used real-time conversations between their audiences and a child psychologist and a teacher.
Being able to access the insights of the brand through these professionals allowed audiences to connect with Dove in a very meaningful way that built trust and credibility. The activation drove 7,500 new followers to Dove’s Snapchat account and the content was viewed 130,000 times.

Why did this work? Well, it leveraged the strongest element of Snapchat: personalities. It wasn’t overly complicated, wasn’t heavily branded, and focused on emotional connection with the brand. It was very genuine and it reacted in real time.

**EBOOKS AND WHITEPAPERS**

**What’s the difference?**

Whitepapers are long thought-out pieces of content that are based on fact and always include a logical link back to your business. For example, a study of a particular topic, such as how a new legal requirement could benefit your industry, is best delivered through a whitepaper. A lot more research and a lot more time go into providing whitepapers than necessarily go into eBook creation.

EBooks are essentially shorter, more snackable versions of this kind of content. Examples of great eBook content might be how-to guides or templates. They are a little bit more evergreen in terms of their content proposition. In other words, they won’t date too soon and are relevant for a longer period of time.

**Key characteristics of high quality eBooks**

- Identifies a challenge or pain point for your audience and provide a solution
- Has no rigid format, allowing you to be creative
- Includes your branding and a link back to your website
- Includes a strong call to action, so that your audiences know exactly what function you want them to perform after consuming the content

**Key characteristics of high quality whitepapers**

- Focus is on profiling yourself, establishing authority, credibility, and thought leadership
- Includes strong, clear visuals
- Includes calls to action
- Links strongly back to your website
- Adheres to consistent company branding
- Is published in PDF format
- Tone is appropriate to your industry
- Consider gating content

**Advantages and limitations**

- EBooks and whitepapers are cheap resources to create. However, an additional amount of time, research, and investment is needed to make sure that your brand or brand positioning is included and brought through on these pieces of content.
These formats will help you build credibility and trust with your audiences. However, it is difficult to build brand personality or emotional connection through them, which is why they’re best utilized for a B2B audience.

They travel well when shared. However, it’s important to make sure that you license the digital rights management of your eBook or whitepaper to allow for this.

They can be engaging, but can be boring if they are too word-heavy.

Gating the content can help you acquire leads, but can also limit readership.

**Trends**

Be aware of consumer trends within your industry.

- Distribution trends to be aware of are dominance of distribution by Amazon for eBooks and Apple’s introduction of News Stand
- The growth of these outlets mean better content distribution, but make it harder for independent eBooks to cut through when shared from non-outlet platforms
- Gating of whitepapers has the benefit of gaining extra data, but can be a barrier to getting your research out to a wider audience

**Opportunities to learn**

Keep up to date with whitepapers and eBooks in your business vertical and within the social media business vertical to make sure that you’re implementing best case practice into your individual marketing campaigns.

**INFOGRAPHICS**

**Information and graphics**

Infographics are a great way to show large volumes of data that might seem otherwise dull. By using infographics, marketers can get business-heavy stories into more visually appealing formats. There has been an increase in the use of infographics, particularly in the business-to-business space, with usage increasing from 51% up to 62% in the space of a year.

Infographics are now regularly published on online news sites. We’re seeing a great sway towards moving infographics and video-based infographic content.

**Characteristics of high-quality infographics**

Some key considerations when you’re putting together any infographic content for your brand or business are the following:

- Make sure that your data points are reliable, truthful, and up to date
- Make sure that you’re able to use this data to tell a story effectively
- Make sure that you’re not overloading your audiences with too many information points
- Make sure you are as concise as possible
- Include premium visuals
- Use easy-to-read fonts
Example: Coca-Cola

Here’s a great example of a corporate social responsibility, or CSR, infographic created by Coca-Cola (see slide ‘Coca-Cola’).

You can see this particular infographic strongly features the Coca-Cola branding icon of the bottle, and also the brand colors. Immediately, you know this piece of content, without reading any of the text, is from Coca-Cola. Make sure to include strong corporate branding in your infographics to get that same brand recognition.

Benefits and challenges

Infographics offer benefits as well as challenges. The benefits of infographics are that they can transform complex or dull data sets into an exciting and entertaining narrative. They help build thought leadership and they’re visually interesting to audiences.

Challenges include getting appropriate data sets, being able to weave the narrative, and also finding the right graphics to illustrate your particular data points.

IMAGES

Characteristics of high-quality image content

With imagery, it’s important to define a number of key characteristics of high quality image content:

- Make sure that photographs are shot at the highest possible resolution
- Make sure that you’re using a regular industry format, such as JPEGs, PNGs, or GIFs.
- Make sure that you have all the rights and permissions necessary to publish this particular piece of imagery
- Brand the individual piece of imagery, so that people can connect that piece of content to your brand if they see it out of context
- Make sure that your imagery complements the message that you’re pushing out

Benefits and challenges

Some of the benefits of image-based content are that images help bring slightly dull text-heavy content to life, they can make your content stand out in the newsfeed, and they can also add an element of personality or emotional connection to your brand or business.

Challenges with image-based content include the time and resources needed to invest in high quality image-based content. Also, remember that stock imagery can be used by your competitors too. So avoid embarrassing situations where you and a competitor are both caught using the same piece of stock imagery. And make sure that your image-based content is optimized to fit on the right social media platform at the right time.

Considerations for Facebook

Adding text to images on Facebook can be a very useful way of including further context for posts. However, there are a number of restrictions that apply to doing this.
Images with text content are eligible for pay promotion on Facebook. However, Facebook groups content into three main categories: content with low text, medium text, and high text. Reach is restricted based on how much text is included on an image post. There are exceptions to this: these would include any imagery that you have of products that happen to have text on them rather than images where text has been overlaid onto the picture in post-production. Examples might be album or book covers, movie posters, or infographics. Where possible, try and limit the amount of text that you include on images for your individual posts. These restrictions will affect any Facebook paid promotion of these individual posts.

Examples of branded image content

Here are some great examples of high quality images that have been branded by individual brands for their social media (see slide ‘Examples of branded image content’). Note the additional text layers that have been added in post-production, in addition to the branding. These text layers add an additional emotive cue for audiences and also link back to the brand benefits. If you saw these posts in isolation with no post copy whatsoever, the message would remain clear and the connection to the brand strong.

Evolution

To stand out in newsfeeds, social media content is evolving. More and more brands are starting to innovate their static imagery-based content into looping GIFs. Here’s a great example from L’Oréal (see slide ‘Evolution’), where they show a lady’s hair flowing in the wind, which generates a style of interaction that they wouldn’t necessarily get if it was a static image. Largely, these work better as pieces of content when there’s no long narrative and when the looping doesn’t become an irritation to users.

PODCASTS

What is a podcast?

Podcasts are short audio blogs that allow users to listen to shows on the go from their desktop or mobile device, where they can hear topics discussed and considered from one or more contributors. Podcasts have a number of advantages and limitations.

Advantages

Some advantages of podcasts are that they’re a very controlled piece of content. They can be edited in post-production and made into really premium pieces of content that deliver your business or brand objectives. Podcast charts and seeding platforms allow you to track download information for your piece of content.

Limitations

A limitation of the format is that it is purely aural, so any visual cues, visual puns, or anything that an audience needs to be able to see will not be communicated. Another limitation is that it can be time-intensive to edit a long stream of rambling consciousness into a concise piece of content. Limiting the number of contributors can help this greatly.
Characteristics of high-quality podcasts

Let's consider some characteristics of high-quality podcast content.

- The podcast should focus on a particular topic or theme and be consistent throughout.
- It should be short, ideally no longer than 15 minutes.
- It should be fun and topical.
- It should be recorded in high-quality clear audio (that means using a specified piece of software for recording your content and not just relying on the smartphone microphone, for example).
- It should be promoted regularly with other social media content, and with articles and blogs that lead to your podcast.

Social sharing

Here's an example of some social plugins used by podcast publishers (see slide ‘Social sharing’).

The example on the left from Empire of the Sun shows a remix they did with a popular DJ, David Guetta. They’ve used the SoundCloud podcast card on Twitter, which auto-plays within the Twitter newsfeed. This is a great example of innovation and cross-promoting your podcast channel through other social media formats.

In the example on the right, NPR has shared their podcast through Facebook’s native podcast format. This ties in with podcasts streamed from iTunes and also allows consumers to interact with the content natively within the newsfeed.

USER GENERATED CONTENT (UGC)

Leveraging your audiences

User generated content or UGC can form a very strong pillar in a social content plan, remembering how strong peer recommendations can be as a form of advertising. A few examples of user generated content that you could leverage for your business include:

- testimonials
- running polls with your perspective content audience
- reviews on your business
- co-authoring thought leadership pieces
- conducting interviews with your potential or converted audience

Things to watch out for

However, user generated content does come with some watch-outs. Always make sure to follow these five key guidelines:

- Make sure you have obtained permission for reusing any user generated content in your social content marketing.
- Be sure to credit appropriately the individual who has created the content. This could be done through tagging their brand or business page or by including a text overlay on any piece of content that you’ve obtained through their channels.
When utilizing any user generated content, maintain control of the message. For example, if somebody is doing something illegal or dangerous, don’t use it as user generated content because if you do, you will be responsible for publicizing that particular activity.

- Use common sense and implement legal advice from your internal legal teams before utilizing any user generated content.
- Always declare any paid for or sponsored user generated content partnerships. If in doubt always declare. You can do this by including a hashtag sponsored or a hashtag ad on promoted content tweets, or by including a text overlay or a comment with your individual post to say that the post was paid for by your business or the post was created and sponsored by your business.

**SOCIAL INFLUENCER NETWORKS**

Leveraging social influencer networks

It is a good idea to leverage social influencer channels and networks because:

- By tapping into influencer channels and influencer content creation, you can make sure that your message and your content is hyper-relevant to your audience, based on the audience that is subscribed to this influencer to begin with.
- By utilizing their channels and their associations, you’ll achieve great reach and access to their social audiences online.
- A strong peer-to-peer element of recommendation is added to your message.
- You’ll benefit from their creative input and ideas.

Nobody knows an influencer’s audience like the influencer themselves. Make sure to include them in the creation process, and state the reasons why you are actually associating yourself with them.

**Influencer channels**

When accessing influencer channels, it’s important to be aware of the advantages and the limitations.

**Advantages**

Advantages include:

- Connecting a hyper-relevant audience to your message
- Creating content that meets the demands of that particular influencer’s audience
- Building credibility through peer-to-peer recommendations

**Limitations**

In terms of limitations:

- Consider relevancy versus reach: it’s better to reach 1,000 highly relevant potential customers than to reach 10,000 consumers who have little or no interest in your brand or proposition.
- Make sure your message isn’t misleading and is completely truthful.
- Declare all sponsored placements.
CONTENT CREATION TOOLS

Blogs

There are a number of blogging platforms and tools that you can utilize for your business, including:

- WordPress
- Squarespace
- Tumblr
- Medium
- Blogger
- LinkedIn
- Typepad

Some of these have paid premium subscription features and some of them are free to use. Examine the background of each of these individual platforms and assess if they’re geared toward a business-to-consumer or a business-to-business audience. For example, Medium is a great format for connecting business to business in terms of the creative industry, whereas Tumblr is a great tool for reaching millennial audiences with a business-to-consumer message. Make sure to do the research and find out which blogging platform is right for you.

WordPress

WordPress is a very popular blogging platform, content management system, or CMS. The platform allows for great freedom in terms of post creation, gives great insights into backend analytics and traffic sources, and allows for really creative plugins that can help innovate and energize your individual platform. It also provides a great feature by which you can police and administrate your individual page to prevent any spam or any trolls from getting involved or creating any crisis moments for your brand’s blog.

Free and paid-for video tools

With video content, there are a number of free and paid-for video editing platforms. Some of these are native apps that have video editing built in, and some of them are third party apps. Some great longform video editing tools include Adobe Premiere Pro, After Effects, and Final Cut. Shortform video tools include Photoshop. Native video editing tools include YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat, who all have various video editing elements built into them.

Native video editing

The YouTube native video editor offers a number of handy options, including the ability to add music and sound effects, add scene transitions and subtitles, make basic edits in terms of chopping and changing the length, and add additional scenes. YouTube also has a very handy library of royalty-free music for any video projects that you are working on.

eBooks and whitepapers

When it comes to creating eBooks and whitepapers, there are a number of free and paid-for tools that you can utilize. Microsoft Word and Adobe InDesign are two paid-for platforms that you can use. Other free platforms that you can use are Atavist and HubSpot, who offer a great selection of entertaining eBook formats for free.
Infographics

For creating infographics, there are a number of free and paid-for tools available. Some of these are native applications and others are cloud-based web applications. Free tools include Infogram and Piktochart; and paid-for tools include Visually and Adobe Illustrator. Some of these platforms have great templates you can use to design your infographics quickly and easily.

Images

For image creation, there is a vast number of both paid-for and free tools. For SMEs, Canva is brilliant for creating beautiful presentations. Tools like GIMP and PicMonkey allow advanced image editing without having to pay high fees. Photoshop by Adobe would be the industry standard in terms of image editing. This is used by a lot of image professionals, but is a paid-for product.

Here’s a screenshot of online image editing platform, Canva (see slide ‘Images’). As you can see, you can use a collection of high-quality formats and design assets from templates and the stock library provided. You can then customize and personalize these into exactly what it is that you need to design. It’s a very simple interface and works great for creating not just social media content, but also presentation decks and even infographics.

Podcasts

Podcast creation and seeding platforms come in a variety of formats; iTunes would probably be the largest in terms of seeding across the web. Other platforms like PodOmatic and Podbean can help you create great podcast content that travels well online. Probably the best integrated with social sharing would be SoundCloud. SoundCloud have worked with social media platforms to build specific formats that aid the sharing of their content in native newsfeed streams.

Social content mockup

Other tools to consider as part of your content creation arsenal are social advertising mock-up generators. Essentially, what these tools allow you to do is create a number examples of social media posts. You can draft up content and use templates to visualize exactly what it is that you’re hoping to achieve.

AdParlor

AdParlor and lemmetweetthatforyou.com both offer very dynamic platforms, where users can fill in pre-populated templates to get their data analyzed and visualized exactly as they need it to be.

Here’s a screenshot from AdParlor (see slide ‘Social content mockup’); in this particular example, you can see that they are demoing a Facebook advertisement. This tool is great for mocking up social media posts, social media advertising formats, and even social media channel design; for example, you can use it to map out what a new cover photo on your Facebook page or your Twitter account might look like if you change the font or change the color position.
LESSON 3:
CONTENT SCHEDULING
What is a content calendar?

A content calendar is an essential piece of kit for any content marketer. You can measure and effectively plan your social media strategy using one of these template documents. A content calendar helps you align your content to a business objective, a day of the week, the channel in which you’re publishing, and your content personas. It acts as a road map to make sure that your content is focused. Usually, it takes the form of an Excel spreadsheet.

Creating a content calendar

When creating a content calendar, the overarching consideration is whether you need to plan your content by the week, the month, or by business quarter. Being able to effectively plan by week, month, or quarter will help you create a road map for that particular time period.

To create your own content calendar, create a spreadsheet that contains the following headings:

- Platform
- Time of day
- Intended audience
- An overview of the content itself
- The copy to go with the content
- Any creative in terms of images or video
- Any call to action that is included with that content

Make sure to populate your content calendar with as much detail as possible. Best practice is to embed any creative, for example, images or stills from videos into these spreadsheets. Sample copy should also be included.

Another helpful feature is to keep a rolling spreadsheet and create a new template for each week or month. This will help keep content in the same place for easy reference. Also, consider inserting results. This will help you analyze, amend, and optimize content going forward, and also provides a history of how previous content has performed in one easy-to-use place.

Which strategy is best for you?

When considering the seeding of your social media content, it’s important to put some thought into what strategy will work best for you in terms of an Always On or a Pulsed approach.

Always On approach

- An Always On approach is very heavy on customer service. Because content is going out consistently, you will have to engage with your audience consistently as well.
- The budgets required are obviously higher because the content is ongoing.
- More investment is needed in teams and in resources to manage an Always On content approach.
- Be aware that evenings and weekends may not be as free as before. With an Always On content approach, audiences are more inclined to engage with you around the clock.
- Always On content is consistent throughout the year. So key times like Christmas, school vacations or any business closures will need to be factored in.
Always On content, by its very definition, is non-seasonal. It runs through the 12 months of the year. So you need to factor this in.

**Pulsed approach**

- A Pulsed approach to content seeding should definitely yield lower inquiry levels
- This approach is lower on budget and resource allocation
- Ultimately, it’s better leveraged for daytime activity
- It still allows for key campaign moments to have high volumes of activity
- With the Pulsed approach, seasonality works best

That said, a combination of both of these approaches can work quite well: big Pulsed moments for your ongoing campaigns that happen at key times of the year, with an Always On approach to customer service might be exactly what your brand or business needs.

**Importance of content calendars**

So why are content calendars so important?

- Content calendars can help key stakeholders input into the messaging that comes through your social media content. Key stakeholders would be your customer service teams, your advertising teams, your legal teams, your finance teams, and your web deployment teams.
- Content calendars can help ensure that anybody who is public-facing, such as a spokesperson or press officer, also has input, so that the messages from your business or your brand are completely aligned.
- Content calendars allow for defined content themes that make your content easy to associate with your brand and also logical to your business.
- Content calendars should help you reach the right audience at the right time by using the right channels

**Considerations**

Key considerations when putting together your content calendar include:

- Your business priorities
- Making sure that any new brand developments, sales, promotions, or innovations are adequately covered
- Making sure that your social content ties in to other forms of marketing that your business is engaged in, such as a sponsorship deal that’s pending, so there’s a consistent message coming from your brand
- Theming your content around time of year and seasonality in terms of sales

**Integrating time of year**

Here are some great examples from Lidl and Coca-Cola on how they integrate time of year and seasonality into their social media content (see slide ‘Integrating time of year’). Note how Lidl have incorporated a new product launch in with their Christmas activation. They’re also supporting Valentine’s Day with a key product driver too. Sporting events and international days which can be sourced through daysoftheyear.com also work well as timely content for brands on social media.
Stakeholders to consider

When creating your content calendar, there are a number of internal stakeholders that you may have to consider.

Here is an example of an internal stakeholder structure (see slide ‘Stakeholders to consider’). This may not be exactly how your organization is laid out, but it will give you a good idea of some of the internal people who may want to input into a content calendar.

Selling the benefits of content marketing to each department might be a challenge. However, including them in the content calendar creation process will help you win them over and help you represent a full and holistic version of your content. Make sure that representatives are limited to one per key area and are involved from the beginning, to avoid last minute changes or repeated revisions.

SCHEDULING COMPONENTS

Methods to increase social media reach

Spending time putting together a content strategy and then creating this content is useless unless you can get your content seen by your intended audience. Here are a few tips to increase your social media reach, and make sure your content is seen by your target customers:

- Create a strategy around your content.
- Know where and when your customers are online, what their audience behaviors are, and what they’re consuming day-to-day.
- Engage with your audience online, answer all queries, ask them questions, and be a point of contact that they can approach.
- Use your traditional channels to promote your social media accounts. If you’re advertising in a newspaper, include the link to your Twitter account.
- Make sure that you have consistency across all marketing materials aligned with your social media platforms.
- Social-charge your website by including social media sharing buttons.
- Educate yourself on all paid social formats, so you know how they can be leveraged to gain you additional reach.

Benefits and limitations

Using the native scheduling features on individual social media platforms can help you introduce a new efficiency into your content.

However, watch out for the fact that these scheduling features are not dynamic. So keep an eye on any content that you have scheduled in through native schedulers to make sure that they’re still relevant and timely, and don’t offend anybody. Also consider the end dates. Scheduling in a piece of promoted content that runs from Monday to Wednesday and that says, “Happy Monday,” by the time Wednesday rolls around, looks very bad to social audiences.
The importance of frequency

When scheduling your content by platform, it’s important to consider the frequency by which you have social permission from your audiences to publish.

- **Facebook.** Posting more than twice per day on Facebook as a brand can be seen as a bit spammy. The highest frequency should be one to two at the very most in terms of Facebook posts.
- **Twitter.** Twitter audiences are a lot more susceptible to ongoing content pushes from brands and businesses. This is largely due to the very versatile and fast nature of Twitter’s newsfeed.
- **Instagram.** With Instagram, one to two posts per day is fine.
- **Blogs.** With blogs, we recommend at least two blog posts per week.

Paid and fixed social buying

Social advertising in its simplest form falls under two categories.

**Paid social**

The first is auction-based paid social, where your ad competes in an auction against other ads, bidding for visibility with your target audience. Usually, these ads are placed via a self-service platform, where you can determine your ad copy, creative, and budgets per day. In this self-service platform, you can also determine how much you’re willing to bid based on your objective.

**Fixed media**

The other form of social media advertising is around fixed media: advertising space that is charged a fixed price. These are largely negotiated with sales reps from the individual platforms. For example, a promoted hashtag or trend on Twitter is a deal that is done directly with a sales representative from Twitter and is sold at a fixed price. This particular format is not available to social media advertisers through the individual sales platform.

**Tips**

When it comes to using both paid and fixed social buying, here are some tips:

- Match your paid social amplification with a strong objective, whether that be video views, mobile app installations, increased reach, increased engagement, fan recruitment, or website clicks
- Align each of your objectives very clearly to an advertising objective
- Target well to avoid any wastage in your advertising spend by delivering the right message to the right people
- Be aware of how fixed inventory offerings from each platform differ, and how they work slightly differently to your auction-based format
- Double and triple check any paid promotional content for typos or incorrect data

Once the paid promotion goes live, your content will receive reach and engagement far beyond your brand channels.
Objectives for social advertising

Objectives for social advertising, for the most part, focus on the following objectives:

- **Impressions.** Impressions are great for generating brand awareness where the aim is to get seen as much as possible. These are usually measured in Cost per Mille or Cost per Thousand, as 1,000 views of a piece of content.

- **Engagements.** Engagements are where the objective is to have social audiences engage with your piece of content. Ads will be shown to users most likely to convert.

- **Views.** This objective is for video content and targets users by their behavior and propensity to view video content and engage with it. You can also target based on interest.

- **Downloads.** This is where a social ad is placed to drive app downloads from either the Apple iOS store or Google Play Stores. This is a clever tactic, as users can be targeted by device, relevant purchase history from mobile phone applications, and location based on languages.

- **Fans.** This is where a business is keen to build a community of followers and ads are displayed to users most likely to convert, based on their interest set and user behaviors.

- **Clicks.** Ads that drive clicks to a website that sits outside the social media platform.

Formats in social advertising

Formats in social media advertising that are important to understand are:

- **Newsfeed ads.** These are content formats pushed into your newsfeed and viewable by all, but driven more heavily toward the intended audience most likely to convert.

- **Dark ads.** These ads are only visible through promoted spend and can only be seen by the intended audience. They are not visible to all members of the public.

- **Display ads.** Ads which incorporate content that sits within social media but does not exist in the newsfeed.

Limitations of social advertising

Limitations on social media advertising are:

- **Relevancy.** Make sure that your content promotion is reaching a relevant audience for the intended duration.

- **Retention.** If you put a piece of content out and you place some social media advertising behind it, you'll undoubtedly get results. But in actuality, how many of the people who engaged with that content are going to follow your brand consistently? Retention is a real challenge for social media marketers. Aim to engage with audiences on an ongoing basis by nurturing any leads obtained.

- **Short-term traffic.** Social media advertising provides a strong boost to your social analytics on a short-term basis. But investing and focusing on a long-term strategy, with consistent social media advertising moments across the year, makes more sense to drive traffic holistically.
LESSON 4: CONTENT STRATEGY
Forming a strategy

Your social media content should tell a story about you. As Simon Sinek once put it, people don’t buy what you sell, they buy why you sell. Being able to tell a convincing narrative will help you convert audiences to your business objective and to become brand advocates.

What story do we want to tell?

Roughly speaking, content can be teamed into three overall categories:

- **Functional.** This is less emotive and more fact-based content. This is a strong driver of B2B content and is directly related to your business or brand objective. Essentially, it’s the hard sell.
- **Emotional.** This is the realm of tapping into the human experience, be it funny, uplifting, or a moment of real honesty or poignant reflection. Showing your brand has a personality allows consumers to relate to your business.
- **Essential.** This is the absolute bare minimum that a consumer needs to know about you in order to form an opinion. This might be your product range, your prices, maybe the locations of your venues or your vendors. This content can help achieve great calls to action for your brand or business.

A good social media strategy should contain a mix of these content pillars.

Steps

Forming a complete content strategy will help you create meaningful content that’s seeded to the right audience and to the right channels. There are a number of steps in the content strategy planning process:

- **Objectives.** Define your objectives. It may be that the main objective for your social content is to achieve brand awareness or you could be looking toward getting sales and full conversions. Whatever the objective, you need to be able to align it with your content.
- **Key Performance Indicator (KPI) measurement.** Measure the effectiveness of your content, and establish benchmarks and targets that you want to achieve with it.
- **Audience segmentation.** Identify key content personas and create content based on audience needs.
- **Content type selection.** Determine which content formats best serve your purposes and are required by your target audience.
- **Platform selection.** Ensure the platforms that you choose to push out your social media content on make sense, and are aligned to your audience behaviors and business objectives.
- **Social listening.** Engage in social listening to highlight opportunities, identify brand crises, and establish a real picture of the sentiment toward your brand or business.
- **Competitor analysis.** Identify opportunities and crossover between you and your competitors.
- **Content audit.** Conduct content audits to make sure that your content is performing as well as it should be, and that you haven’t missed any opportunities to optimize or improve your content.
- **Resourcing.** Decide whether it’s better to have your social sit in-house or with an agency.
Scheduling. Schedule your content.

Objective setting

Content creation should always facilitate a wider business objective. Here are some sample business objectives:

- **Increase exposure.** Increasing the exposure of your brand or brand awareness can be achieved through social content.
- **Increase traffic.** Increasing traffic can help drive conversions and, ultimately, gain new customers.
- **Increase engagement.** Increasing engagement helps build a brand trust and a brand relationship between you and your intended audience.
- **Garnern marketplace insight.** Using your social media content to act as a measuring bar for the kind of content your audiences want to consume, and also to identify the sentiment around your business or industry.
- **Develop loyal fans.** Developing loyal brand advocates or fans, and being able to foster great relationships with key influencers.
- **Generate leads.** Generating leads, ultimately, will help improve your sales.
- **Improve sales.** Improved sales can be measured by orders, new customers, or sales revenue.

Defining your content type

When defining your content type, it’s important to understand its purpose. In this particular diagram (see slide ‘Defining your content type’), we look at the difference between content that not only entertains, but educates, convinces, and inspires. You can see as we move from entertaining into the inspirational space, we move from awareness to purchase. And as we move from entertaining into education, we move from an emotional response to a rational response.

Our business-to-business and our business-to-consumer audiences are very different in their purchase behaviors and the types of content that they consume. Make sure that whoever your intended audience is, that your content format and type, including your content messaging and tone, align with their needs and requirements.

**PLATFORM SELECTION**

Choosing the right one

Analyzing audience behaviors, and their paths to purchase, will help you choose the right platforms for your social media content. Just because a platform exists, it does not necessarily mean that you have to use it. It’s better to use a few social media platforms extremely well and generate great leads, than attempting to be on every single platform. Make sure you don’t spread your resources too thinly. Focus on what works best for you as a brand.

Important considerations

When planning your channel strategy, what are the key things to consider?

- **What channels are your audiences using?** Making sure that your message is going where your audiences are, is key to getting great visibility.
Does the platform suit the specific type of content that you're seeding out? Maybe you want to publish whitepapers. Generally, we wouldn't recommend publishing these through Twitter, due to character limitations. So make sure that your content is aligned to your particular platform choice.

Are your resources allocated effectively? Make sure you have enough resources, be they in-house or third party, in terms of budgets, time, and manpower, to man these channels.

**AUDIENCE SEGMENTATION**

**Benefits**

Segmenting your audience by factors such as purchase behavior, age, demographic, location, language, and even device has many benefits:

- Helps you create personalized content that adds a hyper-relevance to your message
- Helps ensure timely delivery of your content to particular users
- Helps increase your return on investment
- Reduces risk in understanding where to launch a new product or service
- Increases customer retention, as consumers feel that you, as a business or brand, really understand what they're about

**Social media platform usage**

Here’s a great example of audience segmentation (see slide ‘Social media platform usage’). You can see from this breakdown of age profiles for social media platforms, that a youth-focused brand, for example, a concert ticket promoter, might use Facebook to place their message as that’s where the large 18 to 29-year-old age group is currently located. And that’s where they will receive the most relevancy, the best reach, and, ultimately, the best conversions.

**Insight panels**

Make sure you get to grips with the insight panels that are natively available for free within Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn. These will help you track conversations, appropriateness of content, audience growth, and any sentiment that exists on the platforms. Being able to track your content through the native insights panel will also help you generate ideas around the kind of content that performs well, so you can create more of it. Being able to leverage the reach, engagements, and time spent viewing individual pieces of content, will help you optimize your social content strategy.

LinkedIn provides a great insights analytics tool in their backend. This is not as advanced as the Facebook and Twitter insights panels, but should definitely be used for measuring the appropriateness of your content and any content successes.

**SOCIAL RESEARCH**

**Social listening**

Before setting up any social channels for your brand or business, we strongly recommend that you conduct a period of social listening. Social listening can help you identify:

- Key usages of the individual channels, and whether your audience are currently there
- The kind of content relevant to your industry that’s being consumed
What is going on in your particular industry in terms of negative and positive sentiment
The sentiment toward your brand and any pre-existing conversations about it

Being able to plan in advance, and being able to strategize around what is currently being discussed while you’re not even on the platform, will help you optimize your social content strategy.

Addressing concerns

Social media offers a great space for discourse, and for addressing concerns and complaints. Having a proactive and honest approach should help you handle anything that comes your way.

To address concerns:

- Listen to and monitor your social FAQs, but also have a standard response document prepared. This will increase your team’s efficiency and agility, and means people won’t have to go back and forth on responses.
- Make sure your responses are personalized and not just copied and pasted, as this may add a robotic element to your response that dehumanizes your brand or business on social.
- Always try to address concerns within 24 hours.
- Make sure to sign off your response with your name to add a human touch, and to help build credibility and trust.
- Never delete or remove negative or critical comments on social media. This can often snowball into customers feeling as though they’re being censored or that their concerns aren’t being taken seriously.
- Move public spats or issues into the private space.

Standard response document

Benefits

What are the benefits of developing a standard response document?

- Helps you maintain consistent messaging across your social platforms and across members of your social team
- Adds an efficiency to your social media communications
- Prevents any crisis from spiraling by helping you manage it effectively and consistently
- Helps you deal with issues in a timely and professional manner

However, a standard response document is a very fluid creation. As you progress through your social content strategy and activities, you will add to it, amend it, and it will develop and grow.

COMPETITOR ANALYSIS

The value of regular competitor monitoring

Conducting regular competitor analysis will help your content strategy in a number of ways.

You may spot gaps in messaging that your competitor hasn’t picked up on. You may be able to identify new pieces of content that your audience requires and leverage this to your benefit.
Watch how your audience interacts with the social content of your competitors to inspire you on the kind of content you need to be creating. This should also help avoid the embarrassment of you having similar messaging to your competitors.

**TweetDeck**

TweetDeck is a free tool that can be used really effectively for competitive analysis in terms of monitoring brand mentions of your competitors, hashtag mentions, and even their account activity. You can overlay this with activity from your own account, and also with sentiment and mentions from your products or brands.

**TweetReach**

Another great free tool for measuring the impact of competitor campaigns is TweetReach. With TweetReach, you can track the success or failure of competitor hashtag campaigns on Twitter. This is a great tool for getting the insights that your competitor has already gained through their Twitter analytics dashboard.

**What to look for?**

What should you be looking at in terms of competitor analysis?

- Have a look at your competitor’s content development schedule, and identify the days on which they post and the themes on which they post around.
- Identify customer feedback on their posts. Is it positive or negative? How are they addressing it? And how are they moving conversations from the online space to the offline space?
- Watch the growth of their social following. Are there key campaign moments where they recruit social fans in a rapid manner?
- Have a look at the way they adopt new formats and innovations, to inspire yourself.
- Look for gaps that you could fill, or where you could improve upon what they are seeding out through their content strategy.

Be aware that competitors will be tracking your social content too. So don’t expose too much of your strategy, and keep any new product information or innovations top secret until you’re ready to publicly announce them.

**Facebook insights and SocialBakers**

- **SocialBakers** is a great example of a social benchmarking tool. This allows you to compare and contrast your social media following based on country, vertical, or industry. It’s a great tool for showing which brands are in campaign mode, where you can see they’re gaining huge social media followings in short spaces of time, and which brands are slightly dropping off the charts.
- **Facebook** also has a very similar tool where you can monitor your brand pages against competitor brand pages. This is a native function called Pages to Watch, and it’s built into the backend of Facebook analytics.
CONTENT AUDIT

Why it’s important

Auditing your content regularly will help you assess whether you’re meeting your KPIs and your business objectives. These can be anything from measuring traffic to your website to measuring social engagement or user sentiment.

It’s also very important for you to consider what content creation tools you’re using on an ongoing basis and to evaluate how your content is performing.

After a social content audit, it’s important to incorporate learnings and also best practices and optimization recommendations going forward.

Useful tools

Here are some useful content audit tools:

- **SocialBakers** will measure you in comparison to your competitors at a particular moment in time.
- **Facebook’s Pages to Watch** will also carry out the same function.
- **TweetReach** will help you track competitor hashtags on Twitter accounts.
- **Iconosquare** is a great tool for measuring Instagram account performance. It will give you facts and figures for reach and engagement on Instagram posts.

Considerations

The allocation of resources – whether internally or through an agency - is a very important consideration for many businesses. Both approaches have their benefits and drawbacks, but it’s important to have a fully rounded view of how each could increase your success in content marketing.

**In-house**

In-house teams are often closer to the business, their objectives, and their aims. They breathe and eat the company ethos. Knowing all of the potential skeletons in the closet also adds benefit in terms of crisis management. However, budgets here are considerably lower, internal insight may not be as wide, and functions can be siloed.

**Agency**

Agency teams usually have a wider breadth of industry experience across all verticals, which can be applied to your particular brand or business. Teams are generally more diverse and have a lot more industry insight and wider creative input. In agencies, you’ll find more specialized individuals, even in terms of the individual platforms. However, agency resourcing can be a much more expensive undertaking than recruiting in-house.
SCHEDULING CONTENT

Considerations

When scheduling in your content, keep these four concepts in mind to remain relevant and increase your chances of achieving your content goals:

- **Timing.** Is this message relevant right now? For example, an ice cream post sent out on a Monday morning is not in keeping with consumer behavior. Audiences are unlikely to engage with this content.
- **Frequency.** Have you already posted today on Facebook? Or are you running the risk of spamming audiences? Always think of high-quality content versus high quantity.
- **Reach.** Is this channel really the best for reaching your audience? Are they using it actively? And are they engaging on it? If not, how could you change to reach them better?
- **Occasion.** Is what you’re saying right now relevant? For example, posting about Christmas tree sales in July makes no sense. Also, be cognizant of fixed end dates. For example, posting a happy St. Patrick’s Day post that goes out over a four-day period when St. Patrick’s Day only occurs on one day, may be confusing and irritating to consumers. Make sure your content promotion is for a fixed period of time and that your dates make sense.

Topical versus reactive content

**Topical content**

Creating content for moments that you can predict or plan around is called topical content. This concept is about inserting your brand into a contextually relevant moment, for example, Pancake Tuesday recipes or romantic restaurants on Valentine’s Day.

**Reactive content**

Reactive content, however, is a more agile form of content, which is created around real-time conversations. For example, a social media phenomenon like “The dress” goes viral overnight. This kind of topic allows you to create something that is timely and hyper-relevant to what it is that your audience is discussing at that moment in time.

**Case study: Oreo**

Oreo hinged their content strategy on social media around topical content. The Daily Twist was a strategy that saw Oreo create over 100 different topical moments through social media using their iconic black and white cookies. The content resulted in hyper-relevant moments within the newsfeed that resulted in over 433 million Facebook views, which is astronomical. There was a 280% increase in shares of their content because their audiences engaged with it more. Oreo became a living, breathing moment in popular culture that lived far beyond its packaging.

**Case study: #TheDress**

Brands clamored to create reactive content around #TheDress, an image that divided audiences online as to whether it was black and blue, or white and gold. People were arguing and couldn’t come to a decision as to what color the dress was when it hit social media newsfeeds. And ultimately, the real winners in this were brands.
A great example of social content in the reactive space around #TheDress was this campaign from the Salvation Army (see slide ‘Case study: #TheDress’). You can see they’ve used a very clever play on words to highlight victims of domestic abuse. Being able to tie in a brand moment, which people saw as quite whimsical, and flip it into something that is meaningful and emotive, helped drive donations and awareness of the Salvation Army’s campaign against domestic abuse.

**IMPLEMENTING AGILITY**

**Ensuring swift execution**

How can a brand or business be successful in the reactive space? Well, it requires buy-in from all stakeholders and some basic ground rules:

- Agree a framework of what’s acceptable and what works within the confines of your industry regulations by consulting with your legal team.
- Develop a consistent creative style, and use templates you can populate quickly and with agility, so you don’t have to start over every time a reactive moment occurs.
- Agree a subject area to act within and react to. Just because something happens, it doesn’t necessarily mean that you should create reactive content around it. Make sure that you’re relevant, and can link your reactive moments back to your brand or business objectives.
- Agree a turnaround time with your creative team. Spotting a reactive opportunity and not being able to work quickly enough to get the creative live, whether it be a short video or a graphic that is seeded out, is incredibly frustrating. So make sure that your content team is agile.
- Manage your content organically at first. If you spot a good reaction, then amplify it with additional paid support.