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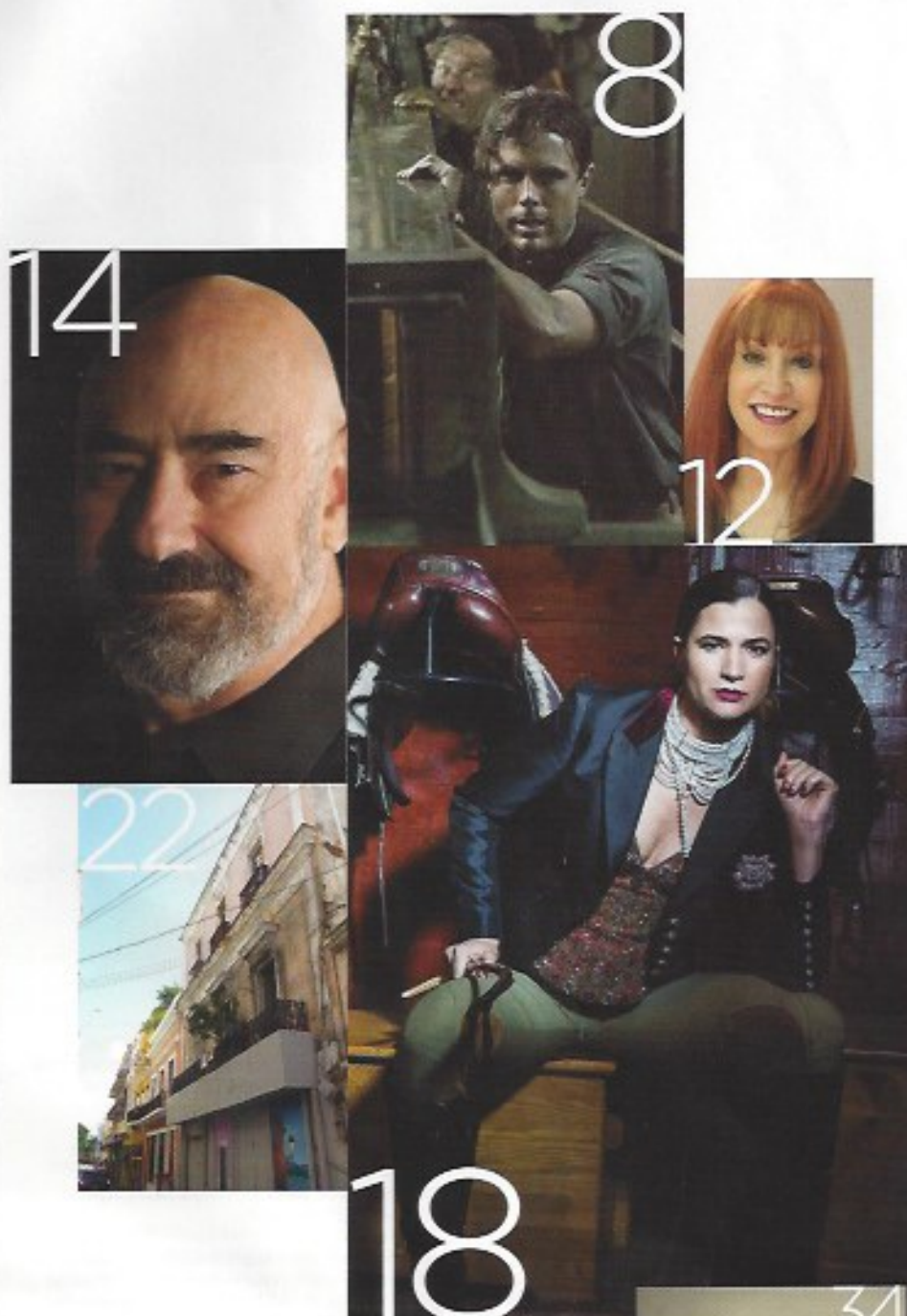
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Transmedia Marketing Turns Audiences into Ambassadors

From Film and TV to Games and Digital Media

By Anne Zeiser

Honoring your audiences - listening to what they say, following them where they go, determining what they want, and inviting them to play in the sandbox - is the single most important aspect of good film and media marketing. Nothing is more vital. The most arresting title sequence, sizzling promo reel, or cleanest logo are all lost if they're not targeting the right people, with the right content, at the right time. If you harness the power of audience with a thoughtful transmedia narrative from the inception of your media project, you will have a valuable asset that can boost its funding, distribution, and promotion.

Today's Audiences Rule

We used to live in a Zagat's world where industry experts and critics were the arbiters of a film or media project's value and success. Now we live in a Michelin world where audiences' opinions are as credible and influential as experts'. With their own digital producing and distribution platforms and social media voices, audiences are powerful, not only as producers, distributors, and marketers of their own content, but also as critics, funders, and ambassadors of yours.

Technological advances have wrought this democratized consumer landscape, and have also redefined the concept of audience. Audiences don't fit into simple demographic boxes like the prototypical American family of yesteryear - upwardly mobile, young, white, and suburban. Social media monitoring and Amazon-like algorithms provide deep insight into how audiences think and act. People simply don't cleave by demographics of age, education, income, education, race, or education levels. They hew by psychographics of interest, ideology, and predisposition.

No matter how specific the characters or subject matter of your film, you can reach and serve the affinity groups whose pastimes, beliefs, and predilections align with your film or media project. You can find them via Google simply by typing in key words related to your project's themes - whether forgiveness or survival in an apocalyptic world. You'll find active and passionate online and on-the-ground communities connected to your themes. These authentic audiences



Anne Zeiser. Photo courtesy of Azure Media.



Anne's book: *Transmedia Marketing: From Film and TV to Games and Digital Media*
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can become your superfans. To activate them you must delight and challenge them with an array of transmedia content. Not only your film's content, but also content on various media platforms - together creating an overall story arc.

Transmedia Marketing - Integrating Story and Marketing

Don't be intimidated by the buzzword du jour - transmedia. When you strip away the semantics, you'll find that the core of transmedia is something you're probably already doing. You're engaging audiences through your film, teasers, posters, social media platforms, and community events wherever they are - in movie theaters, in living rooms, in cars, and on the street. And your content isn't just randomly distributed across various media streams. It's part of something bigger and more strategic.

That's what the new book in the American Film Market® Presents series, *Transmedia Marketing: From Film and TV to Games and Digital Media* from Focal Press is about: how

to create holistic content that integrates storytelling and marketing across multiple media platforms. Punctuated by hundreds of vibrant examples of effective marketing techniques from across media platforms, powerful in-depth case studies showcasing successful approaches, and real-world advice from 45 leading entertainment professionals, *Transmedia Marketing* lays out the fundamentals of a sound 21st century marketing and content plan. As a successful media maker and media marketer, all of your content must hang together as a cohesive whole; provide multiple points of entry into your story universe; tell an overarching story through many smaller stories; and inspire audiences to engage and participate with your story and content. Some of your content will tell the story. Some will market the story. Much of it will do both.

The socialization of content has blurred the lines between entertainment and its marketing. Tweets or shared online video teasers, once seen as marketing tools for a bigger product, are media products unto themselves. The advent of social media has ushered in a mindset of engaging audiences with film and entertainment properties using additional media platforms - from Facebook and Twitter to YouTube and Instagram. A fully transmedia approach simply expands that universe of platforms to film, TV, radio, books, publications, games, online/mobile, music, events, live installations, toys, and more. Now, in any form, media content can both advance the story and market the story. *Transmedia* is the forum where content creation and content marketing have truly collided, sharing the goal of creating immersive story worlds and engaging audience experiences.

You may ask why you need to be transmedia. If your primary job is to write television scripts, why do you need to understand games? Because your pilot's premise might be suitable for an interactive gaming experience that feeds superfans. If you produce films, why do you need to understand target audiences? Because to greenlight your film, you must prove to financiers and distributors that it's marketable to key audiences. If you create movie trailers, why do you need to understand social platforms? Because your trailer could be the lynchpin of a mysterious social teaser campaign to promote the film. And if you

publicize games and digital media, why do you need to understand story? Because to secure press and blogger coverage, you must craft compelling narratives about your media project.

Transmedia is well worth it. Embracing multiple media platforms creates stand-out, relevant media experiences and delivers huge rewards. Transmedia cuts through the morass of content and connects your audiences with deep, participatory experiences. This translates into your audiences' active engagement with and co-creation of your content. Then, they find meaning in it and personal connection to it. This translates into your audiences' loyalty for and ambassadorship of your project – the Holy Grail of branding, marketing, and engagement. When your fans use, love, and tell others about your media content or project, that's a smash hit for you.

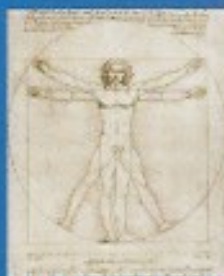
Your Transmedia Content Approach

Start by channeling Leonardo da Vinci, one of the greatest transmedia storytellers and innovators of all time. He was a true fifteenth-century polymath – thinking, creating, and expressing across every conceivable platform of his era.

From the beginning, approach your transmedia project and marketing from a holistic content creation perspective. Don't differentiate between story and marketing. Step back and think of yourself as serving a passionate defined, niche audience by creating and curating content. Find a narrative or a story that will enchant them. Build a brand personality, story universe, and user experience across your media platforms to fully immerse them. Cultivate a voice that enhances and reinforces your brand archetype and characters. Usher your audiences into the tent to help you find, tell, and share the story. Deliver plot points, embellish your story world, and create audience invitations with more content – photos, video, blogs, headlines, Web sites, art, and hashtags.

In so doing, you're creating your story and its marketing through a single, integrated content creation and curation impulse. And you're fully honoring and serving your unique niche audiences.

Think of all of your content – whether "owned" (assets you create such as the film and digital platforms), "paid" (ads and product placement), or "earned" (publicity, social



Leonardo da Vinci "Vitruvian Man" is in the public domain.

comments) – as installments in an overall experience. Keep the story moving and fresh. Add context and social relevancy. Link your narrative to other timely content. Play generously with other content makers and audiences. Exchange ideas, cross-promote, and give credit to others. Catch the eye with captivating headlines, art, and video. Pay attention to what resonates with audiences and develop new content accordingly. Create an organic forum that supports an active, ongoing community around your project. When you're lucky enough for that to happen, allow it to take on a life of its own and simply feed the beast.

How does all this work? When your content and its context offer value to your audiences, they are motivated to explore further or take action – click, view, or share. Shared content is an inexpensive means of distribution and promotion that spreads the word and the assets for your media project. It's also a ringing endorsement of it. With enough value-driven exchanges, audiences choose to become part of your project's community and story as co-creators, characters, and marketers. Audiences then participate directly in both your production universe and your project's story world – from crowdfunding the initial shoot to watching the director's cut. Once emotionally engaged, audiences see your timely content around both worlds as an immediate reward.

To make content share-worthy, many successful viral entertainment marketing campaigns develop content that first, creates mystery around a passion topic or project; and second, rewards audiences by making them feel special or in the know. The powerful tension between these emotions has an amplifying effect. It's accomplished by providing teaser content that asks as many questions as it answers to create pent up audience demand; and then releasing coveted content in a drip-feed to sustain the demand. This places superfans in the position of having content or information first. They share because their tribe will be interested

and to demonstrate they're in the know. In turn, audiences in their sphere of influence share it, and so on.

In this new world order additional media platforms aren't just post-production marketing tools for your film, but vehicles that deliver carefully-orchestrated elements of its fictional or real-world narrative, well before it premieres. Reverse-engineer some of your content and decide when, to whom, and how to tell key parts of your project's story. To connect audiences to your story world, use various platforms to seed "rabbit holes" or clues that reveal a character's POV or key details of a story universe using in-character tweets, a prequel Facebook game, or an in-story Tumblr publication. To connect audiences to your production world, use various media to provide behind-the-scenes project news or release key art, trailers, and preview Web sites using an Instagram-launched film poster, a live event streamed on Periscope, or a song launched on iTunes. Over time, the narrative takes shape across multiple media platforms and your fanbase builds. As your project's most powerful ambassadors, your engaged and empowered audiences sustain the overall project storyline and promote it to a wider audience – before, during, and after your premiere.

Go forth and be transmedia. You can embrace this new sensibility of making and marketing content across multiple media platforms. Grandma Moses didn't start painting in earnest until she was 78 years old. Her bold and indomitable spirit is what transmedia's about. But being transmedia is more than ticking off a box to say you've done it. You must invest in it, tinker with it, and learn from it. And you must fully engage your audiences with it.

Anne Zeiser is a critically-acclaimed transmedia and social impact producer who has stewarded iconic series and films for PBS, produced news for CBS, managed national brands for marketing firms, and founded Azure Media, which develops transmedia projects on air, online, and on the go that fuel social impact in communities, in schools, and in capitals. She's the author of Transmedia Marketing: From Film and TV to Games and Digital Media, a new title from Focal Press in the American Film Market® Presents book series. Connect with Anne at: www.transmediamarketing.com, [@azuremedia](https://www.facebook.com/TransmediaMarketing).