

# Performance IN

SEPT // 2015

Sponsored by

NewsCred

## Content Marketing

The Reasoning Behind a Steer Away from Traffic  
How to Avoid a False Start Content Strategy  
Trusting your Brand in the Hands of the Influencer  
Targeting Publishers in Specific Verticals  
Innovation & Performance in Content Marketing



# GREAT CONTENT POWERS THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

NewsCred's content marketing platform helps  
brands grow with **efficiency, agility, and scale.**

# Performance IN



## FOREWORD

Brands have an opportunity to build genuine and authentic relationships with their audiences through blog posts, guides, infographics, and even video. But the end result of content marketing must show a clear ROI for your business. When executed correctly, content becomes a brand asset – generating a steady stream of leads, sales, and revenue.

Consumers are more than ever relying on content to research and make purchasing decisions. In response to this strong demand for informative, high-utility content, brands are investing a great deal in content marketing, and the output is increasing year on year as it continues to prove its value.

It is critical that companies not yet investing in content marketing do so now, before their brand is entirely overshadowed by the competition. Likewise, those brands engaging in content marketing must ensure that their output is high quality and of real value to the end user if they wish to be noticed in such a crowded space.

By defining a content approach, building an efficient team and workflow, creating an editorial calendar, regularly publishing quality content, and measuring ROI, brands can be well on their way to leading the way with content marketing in their industry. Once there they will find that it's an immensely productive place to be.

Thanks to everyone who attended our recent roundtable and provided their learnings and insights on content marketing – we hope you enjoy the supplement!

Shafqat Islam, Co-Founder & CEO, NewsCred

## Contact & Advertising

Content Enquiries: [content@performancein.com](mailto:content@performancein.com)  
Advertising Enquiries: [advertising@performancein.com](mailto:advertising@performancein.com)

Postal Address: PerformanceIN, 7.17 & 7.18 Deco Building,  
Paintworks, Bath Road, Bristol, UK BS4 3EA

## Contents

- 04 The Reasoning Behind a Steer Away from 'Good Old' Traffic
- 06 Q&A: How to Avoid a False Start Content Strategy
- 08 Trusting your Brand in the Hands of the Influencer
- 10 Narrowing the Sights: Targeting Publishers in Specific Verticals
- 13 Q&A: Innovation & Performance in Content Marketing

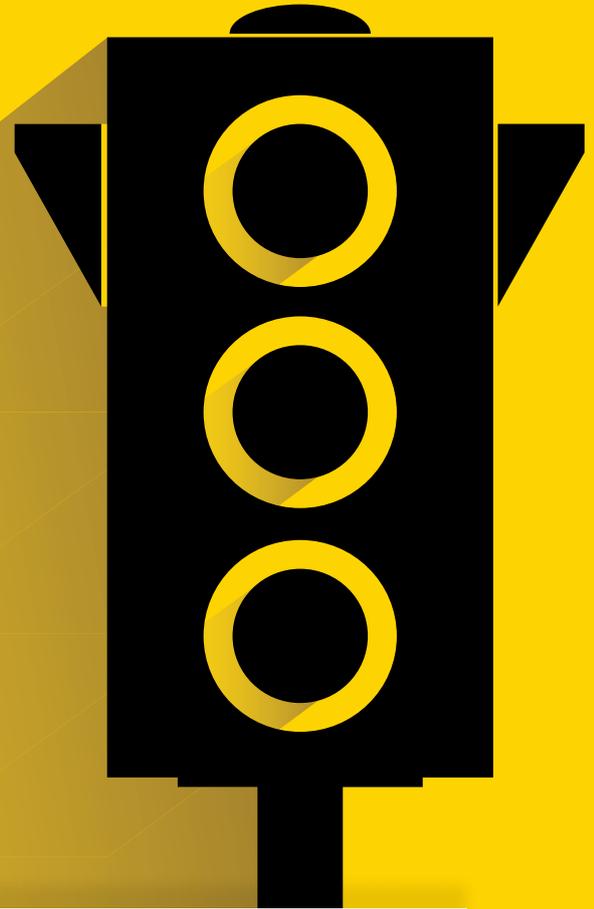
**Richard Towey**  
*Head of Content, PerformanceIN*

**Mark Jones**  
*Editorial Executive, PerformanceIN*

**Jonathan Chubb**  
*Senior Designer, PerformanceIN*

**Mark Atherton**  
*Sales Manager, PerformanceIN*

**Andy Tozer**  
*Marketing Manager, PerformanceIN*



Follow Rich Towey:

[richard.towey@performancein.com](mailto:richard.towey@performancein.com)

[@RichToweyPI](https://twitter.com/RichToweyPI)

# The Reasoning Behind a Steer Away from 'Good Old' Traffic

**V**iews, hits, traffic, eyeballs: everyone has their own term for categorising people on a page or website. Traffic – for the sake of consistency – is one of the most basic ways of establishing the success of an article or any given piece of media on the web.

It's also valuable. Highly valuable, in fact. The promise of reach sells billions of pounds worth of display ad impressions every year. In content marketing, though, its own measure of basic awareness is in an awkward place.

A demand for performance on things like time on site and engagement is working in favour of the niche publisher – groups that may not be able to compete with some sites in terms of traffic, but can assure the writer of a relevant audience.

This granular level of assessment is now sweeping into the post-upload phase, questioning whether traffic really is a worthy barometer for gauging whether a piece of content lived up to its early promise, or flopped when it mattered.

## Getting past X and Y

A tidal shift in perception from point A (views are what matters) to point B (what these views are doing) owes plenty to brands getting 'serious' with content. There is pressure on turning the millions spent on content every year into hard return, as proven by studies such as the one ran by NewsCred in 2015, showing that 57% of content marketers are eyeing ROI as a priority for the year.

The same study urged readers and respondents to move away from “pageviews” and “uniques” towards producing content that carried a meaningful impact on business.

Thus, there is now a greater focus on bringing relevant users through the door. In this sense, it's less about the total number of viewers and more about the quality of personnel being reached.

“For us, it's about getting ‘motivated’ traffic through the site, which equates to the quality of customer we manage to send to the likes of BT and Sky,” comments Mark Irwin, marketing director at broadbandchoices.

The site prides itself on being a price comparison hub for utilities as well as a place to learn about relevant sectors via blogs, guides and news stories. According to Irwin, traffic is just one of many steps towards defining whether the content performed.

## A matter of trust?

This change in mindset seems to have triggered a range of actions – not least a heavy investment in data management at Haymarket and the granular analysis of user interests, but also the marriage of publishers and advertisers based on commonalities.

As of January 2014, there were 861,379,000 registered host domains, up 350,000 year on year. Competition in the publisher space is at an all-time high, yet there is certainly money to be made in broadening horizons; catering for a larger audience; packing in a greater number of audience interests; satisfying even more advertisers. There is, however, a viable argument to stay niche and targeted.

In a poll of trust conducted on 2,000 consumers by UK affiliate network affilinet, bloggers placed third. Family and friends were first and second respectively, while

are learning that content can generate ‘hard return’ when it needs to.

This is particularly the case in B2B. According to research from the Content Marketing Institute, 75% of content marketers look to their articles and media as a way of obtaining direct sales. If the purchase is a step too far, solid leads are adequate compensation – this demanded by 83% of the CMI's study group.

Away from sales, the content marketers' ever-expanding toolset is helping brands translate wordsmithery and ideas into benefits across the company as a whole.

In grading content on the ability to improve customer service times among other skills, proving success on traffic or reach almost seems like a throwback to a bygone era; surpassed by one that sports an action-driven edge.

## Affected by a need for measurability and return – traffic is becoming increasingly obsolete as a singular method of judging success.

“Our strategy enables good rankings through SEO, which translates into traffic, which results in sales, because people receive the information they need to make a decision about something.”

It's important to realise this step back from prioritising with views has been observed at publishers in a traditional sense, whose sponsored content offerings are growing by the day.

“We definitely try to get past the request ‘I want X views and Y visits,’ claims Lee Williams, director of digital revenues at Haymarket Media Group, known for its publishing of FourFourTwo and PR Week among other titles.

“If that is the objective then there are numerous digital traffic-buying methods to achieve this, but they will not deliver the best result for true underlying objective of the campaign.”

brands placed a lowly ninth. The research urged advertisers to work smarter to find out who was “influencing” their target market after witnessing a “big shift away” from mass, one-to-many marketing strategies.

Reverting back to Haymarket's need to drill into an advertiser's needs beyond obtaining a certain amount of views, bloggers are now able to position themselves as the gateway to highly motivated audiences. A hip-hop publication may not boast the same numbers as Billboard or Rolling Stone, but it can outscore the beast in other areas.

## Driven by action

It's not to say that traffic faces a battle to stay relevant. Rather – like so many facets of marketing, affected by a need for measurability and return – it is becoming increasingly obsolete as a singular method of judging success.

Huge advancements in user tracking technology have led to traffic operating as a base point for something bigger, and brands

There will always be a demand for ‘awareness’ campaigns, by new companies or otherwise, that champion traffic above all. But marketers are fast realising that it's not just about drawing a crowd; it's about what happens afterwards, too. <sup>8</sup>





Q&amp;A

# How to Avoid a False Start Content Strategy



**Vikki Chowney**

*Director of content & publishing strategies  
Hill+Knowlton Strategies*



**Mark Addis**

*Business development  
NewsCred*



**Mark Irwin**

*Managing director  
broadbandchoices*

## In building a content strategy, where precisely do you start?

**Vikki Chowney:** Brand purpose, plans and objectives. Otherwise you jump straight to the medium (ie. 'let's run a Twitter competition'), rather than working out which channel is actually going to be the most effective.

**Mark Addis:** It's really important that brands start off by thinking about the value that they want to provide with their content marketing. By truly understanding your audience and what types of content are relevant and useful to them, the rest of the content marketing journey will become much more clear. Building out the business case, defining key measurement metrics and gaining executive buy-in all rely heavily on finding the unique value you are able to provide.

**Mark Irwin:** Assuming you have already identified the purpose of content as part of the overall strategy. An understanding of the consumer's requirements and what our role is as a company in fulfilling those requirements – that gives us the direction for our substance. An understanding of the consumer's preferences and how we can match those – that gives us our style and tone. Everything after that is structure and operations.

## How imperative is 'brand purpose' to this process?

**Mark Irwin:** If content is an important part of your overall strategy then it can actually be the thing that drives your brand – we produce more pieces of content and have more site visits than we make adverts and have airtime, so the brand identity comes from the content more than anything else. It is who we are, not just an advert of who we say we are. Of course, if content is not a key part of the strategy then it might not matter at all.

**Mark Addis:** Tying in your brand purpose to your content marketing is a must. Consumers today call 'BS' faster than any other time in history, so if you aren't being truly authentic to what your company stands for, your content marketing will not resonate. The ideas and messages you want to communicate, and how they differentiate you from competitors, are all important factors to think about through the lens of your brand purpose.

## What are the typical errors you see people making in the early stages of strategy development?

**Vikki Chowney:** Focusing on tactical content rather than strategic. As in, content for the sake of being 'always on' rather than having it mean anything in the context of your brand.

**Mark Addis:** The most common mistake that we see is that many companies focus too much on volume. It's not just about more content, you really want to make sure you set a quality threshold and publish quality stuff – stuff that you would read or would be proud to tell your mom that you're publishing! Set the quality bar first and then drive toward quantity goals at that level. The other mistake is companies trying to be too different in their messaging at the early stages. Make the customer the hero early on and your point of view can come later.

**Mark Irwin:** No insight: lacking direction of what the consumer really needs and wants as opposed to just what you want to talk about. No idea: no unifying purpose that makes the whole range of content greater than its individual pieces. No integration: not having it align with all your other public or consumer touchpoints, and so seeming schizophrenic.

## Which company representatives should be in the room when talks over strategy are beginning?

**Mark Addis:** For the initial discussions around strategy, it's most important to have the employees who will have a direct impact on the process in the room. Examples of directly involved contributors would be a social media strategist, editor (if you have one), your point person responsible for the success of your content marketing, and the higher-level employee who will be acting as champion for the initiative. With a balanced group you can make sure not to leave out any important viewpoints and cover all your bases when building out your strategy.

**Mark Irwin:** Hard to answer, as it really depends on the business size, and importance of content within the overall strategy. For a small publisher, probably CEO and downwards. For a FTSE100 financial company

that doesn't have content at its heart, probably just the brand team and content producers getting involved.

My general rule for who should be present in forming strategy is anyone (at any level) where it really matters that they are on board, in agreement, and feel part of the process, because their role is such that they are someone who can make it a success or failure. Anyone outside of that definition is less relevant.

**Vikki Chowney:** The most senior people you can get, because they're the ones setting out business objectives and targets. This is often driven by a CMO or equivalent, but to save endless rounds of changes and tweaks at later stages, you have to get stakeholder buy-in early on.

## Any tips for helping marketers stay on the right track with content strategy?

**Mark Irwin:** Your advertising team will typically have a brand guidelines deck – the content team should have their own version, as well as a gold standard piece of content of each type produced to refer back to. A singularly minded editor or champion helps as well.

**Vikki Chowney:** My favourite quote on this subject is from Tyler Brule's article in 'Contagious' from the beginning of the year: "Brand must learn to edit". I can't stress the importance of this enough. There is so much opportunity to create and publish content, that it becomes overwhelming.

New platforms and tools can dilute your content strategy, and distract you from the places you need to focus on to make most impact. Fewer, bigger, better, with a heavy emphasis on quality not quantity, is my motto.

**Mark Addis:** Document your strategy, don't just talk about it! It's relatively easy to create a baseline strategy in a group discussion on how you want to proceed, but without a written reference to keep coming back to it's very easy for content marketing to fall through the cracks. In addition, set someone as the individual responsible for content marketing. Not clearly defining the employee responsible for successful execution of your strategy will result in your team spinning their wheels without gaining much traction. 📌



# Trusting your Brand in the Hands of the Influencer

**N**o longer just the property of wannabe reporters, the successful blog is a legitimate and highly effective channel for connecting with a targeted and loyal set of web users. A successful blog, however, is exceptionally hard to produce.

Blog creation can take huge amounts of time and effort before the site can earn authority in its field, not to mention having to stand out amongst a huge amount of competition.

Every industry has them, with food, fashion and travel perhaps the most recognisable among consumers. Last year, a study by Research Now found that 83% of UK blog readers have made a purchase based on content, with one in four doing so every single month.

The investment into crafting an engaged following – be it on Instagram, a blog or YouTube – means online ‘influencers’ will not willingly sell their audience down the river and risk losing the integrity of their broadcast for a few advertising bucks.

That said, they also have to make money and can offer access to an engaged and active audience across a multitude of sectors. Just a few chats with brands will reveal there’s clearly a strong motivation for growing fruitful relationships with influencers, many of whom are known to moonlight as brand advocates and ‘niche promoters’.

## People like us

The once humble blogger has climbed the ranks in the last five years to land itself a seat at the table of mainstream media and advertising. It’s now that the power of an exclusive few’s ability to affect certain audiences’ purchase decisions’ is being realised.

“You can point to a few specific examples of blog posts being highlighted by mainstream press as ‘starting a movement’, or held up as the driver for conversation online about a product,” observes Vikki Chowney, director of content & publishing strategies at UK agency Hill+Knowlton Strategies.

Once the initial spark has been ignited, brands started to see the value in engaging with bloggers, she adds. Far from creatures of habit, marketers love a new way to promote their wares and access a new audience, so learning how to best leverage the ‘blogosphere and beyond’ is viewed by many as a natural evolution.

Additionally, a raft of research has taken strides in proving that consumers are trusting people they can relate to far more than personnel with arguably higher authority. This came to light in the 2014 Edelman Trustbarometer, where ‘people like us’ were cited by consumers as more trustworthy than academics or experts.

Gaining trust is an even harder task for people relaying messages through ‘traditional’ forms of advertising, according to the same research, on billboards, TV commercials or banners ads to name but a few.

As with almost all effective marketing, there’s a lot of groundwork that goes into identifying the right influencer for an audience, and



ultimately being satisfied that a company's image is in safe hands.

## Mutual goals

Before diving in, a number of factors should be taken into consideration when sourcing an influencer, including their position in the industry and area of focus, as well as what they can add to the brand in terms of opinion, expertise and reach, according to Intel's head of business content marketing practice for EMEA, Stuart Dommett.

"We also look to ensure they have the right persona that is line with our brand, based upon innovation, trust and also performance.

"When we work with influencers there are a number of areas where they can bring value, firstly linked to a one-off event or campaign. It could be something that we are looking to bring to market or where we have mutual goals."

The challenge for brands is that without a journalist's code of ethics to adhere to, they must be careful not to allow bloggers to simply become an extension of the marketing team, argues IBM Social Consulting's Andrew Grill, at the same time as highlighting the plus side to this lack of stringency.

"Bloggers that use and love a particular product or service should be able to recommend without having to consider multiple stakeholders," he comments.

"In many ways, bloggers have much more freedom than journalists to become brand ambassadors. Journalists report facts, but bloggers can go further and explain why they really love and use a particular product or service, free from the need for impartiality."

## Transparency

So once an influencer fits a given criteria, then comes the task of nurturing a relationship that will add real value to the product. It's not all that hard, says Chowney, but comes down to the basic courtesies of respect and transparency.

"There's a whole community of influencers who blog and write professionally, so respect that they're essentially running a business and the conversation will be much more fruitful for both sides."

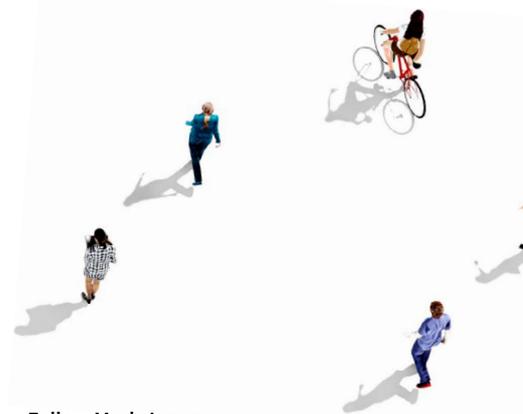
"Similarly, if someone writes in their spare time, try to be as supportive as possible when asking them to do something."

This can be as basic as not chasing them via email if they haven't responded within the hour, to more practical things like paying for travel.

"The transparency thing is just common sense; if you're clear and concise about why you're getting in touch and what you need them to do – largely you'll get the same back," adds Chowney.

"In short, influencer marketing when done right, shows a sense of willingness to be transparent, but the sheer act of doing it doesn't necessarily mean that you're acting with transparency."

Ultimately, while there are plenty of brands out there dabbling in influencer marketing, the ones that will see real results from it will be willing to relinquish a degree of control and, albeit briefly, leave their reputation in the hands of someone else. 



Follow Mark Jones:  
[mark.jones@performancein.com](mailto:mark.jones@performancein.com)  
[@markjonesltd](https://twitter.com/markjonesltd)



## Narrowing the Sights: Targeting Publishers in Specific Verticals

**W**hen it comes to finding a home for a piece of content, it might seem counter-intuitive to deliberately put a cap on the breadth of its audience. Yet, there is certainly an argument for taking a much more targeted approach to publisher sourcing – one that could well pay off more than gunning for eyeballs on the Guardian, Telegraph or another online content behemoth.

While traffic on a niche site is unlikely to be as fast-flowing as on the large publications, aiming at outlets which cater for specialist verticals can be the most effective of way of driving high-quality leads with an interest in specific areas: be it cars, computers or high-speed internet deals.

For Mark Irwin, managing director at UK price comparison site broadbandchoices, building relationships with smaller publishers as part of the company's wider marketing strategy is a 'matter of necessity' considering what both can offer.

"We'll go to a niche publisher because we're a niche business. Our target is consigned to a fairly narrow age range; they're fairly tech savvy.

"They [small publishers] tend to provide the better quality consumer we want to reach – more targeted, more relevant, more in tune, more on brand, a stronger profile fit to our audience and our tone. So whilst the 'cost' of the traffic is more, the value it generates more than compensates for that."

Irwin argues that if broadbandchoices was to try and 'go mass' with the reach of its content, such as targeting through a national newspaper, it would be washed out by the sprawling variety of subjects covered by the publication and a more general demographic of readers.

"It's no different to asking why you would advertise on Dave rather than ITV," Irwin adds.

Given their specialist nature, however, identifying the right 'niche' publishers can prove half the challenge. They might not

be on the first page of results on Google, for example, or any other search engine for that matter.

It can often be a case of scouring social media, personal recommendations or existing connections to find sites that can cater for a specific need.

"As an underdog brand in our own right, we quite like to champion the smaller publishers with higher quality content we come across in our own personal day-to-day media consumption and speak to them directly," Irwin states.

### Setting objectives

A good example of a big company taking notice of the demand for specialist publications is Haymarket Media, which runs a number of sites covering business and customer sectors. It has a particularly strong presence in the motoring industry, with in-house titles including 'What Car?', 'Autocar', 'F1 Racing' and 'Pistonheads'.



While these titles share a theme – motoring – they offer a variety of content from reviews, classified ads, features and forums – meaning each publication’s audience will have a different intent.

Haymarket Media can therefore offer a range of platforms based on advertiser objectives,

“The major difference now is seriously leveraging data insight; we’ve invested heavily into our data management platform, content teams and campaign optimisation to target the right audience segments at the right time and then track their behaviour in near real time.”

In a growing industry which has previously bore witness to content marketers throwing ‘cash at clicks’, Williams now expects to see the market open up to deep vertical publishers who have a passion for their market, a forensic ‘data understanding’ of their audience and a knowledge of how to engage with them.

## Small publishers tend to provide... more targeted, more relevant, more in tune, more on brand, a stronger profile fit to our audience and our tone.

as long as these aren’t about achieving so many visits, says the group’s director of digital revenues, Lee Williams.

“We have always looked hard on what people actually want to achieve, be it a purchase process to a mindset consideration change,” he outlines, stressing the approach now being applied to many content marketing campaigns.

### Measures of success

It’s not just ‘niche’ brands that have realised the value of publishing their content to a smaller and targeted audience. Haymarket recently ran a video content campaign for Audi’s RS3, the success of which was proven by engagement metrics, conversation and behaviour driven among a specific audience segment.

The right publisher can offer a channel to communicate with an engaged audience that’s suited to the product being marketed, but where the value really lies is in the insight they can give brands on that audience.

After a whistle-stop tour across many digital channels, data now reigns high in content marketing: the ability to source and provide it in high quality will ultimately decide the success of vertical publishers as advertising platforms. 

# PerformanceIN

## Performance Marketing Guide 2015



More than 150 pages of insightful and educational content are packed into our fourth annual guide, covering all elements of performance marketing:

Search • Display • Content Marketing • Mobile • Social Commerce & Marketing • Agile Commerce • Affiliate Marketing • Email Marketing Best Practice & Regulation • Technology • Data & Analytics

# Q&A:

## Innovation & Performance in Content Marketing

How is the ability to measure success impacting content marketing?

**Mark Addis:** One of the common ways to look at this is subscribers to a blog or newsletter. Many businesses have ways to measure the cost per subscriber, or cost per lead. It's not overly difficult to put a monetary value on the people that are being affected. Once you do this, you can start to back into some ROI numbers on what each piece or category of content brings you.

Also, try an audit on the content you've been creating. SiriusDecisions says that 50-60% of content goes unused, so even shifting some of these costs around can help you show some ROI.

**Andrew Grill:** I've always been of the opinion that you should measure everything that you do. The challenge is to create content that is sharable, and thus measurable. While this can be seen as a challenge, it can also be seen as an opportunity to ensure your content reaches a wider audience because it is so useful and interesting that it becomes shareable.

What innovations are we seeing adopted within the space?

**Stuart Dommatt:** The use of content not just in terms of reach and engagement but also to understand more about the person engaging with the content.

**Mark Addis:** Brands are really now starting to look to user-generated content as an effective way to drive their content marketing forward, which we haven't really seen happen in the past. It's not a surprise when you think about it, really – the quantity of content uploaded every day into the social spheres is difficult to comprehend. For the first time tools now exist to help companies sift through the mass volumes and be able to quickly identify the content that's related to their business or goals.

**Andrew Grill:** The rise of content hubs, such as those provided by NewsCred are in my mind allowing brands to develop 'must visit' sites where the best of a company's thought leadership and insight from their best and brightest employees can be viewed alongside content from other reputable sources.

What will drive the success of this marketing channel ahead?

**Andrew Grill:** Marketers need to move away from the reliance on content only developed by the marketing team. Leveraging content provided by employees, as well as third party relevant content will ensure that customers and potential customers will be drawn to engaging and relevant content, and this will in turn see the company in a more favourable light, and hence place them higher in terms of consideration.

**Stuart Dommatt:** The ability to not only measure and adjust, but also how we use real intelligence to deliver content from one to many down to a personalised approach; targeting the right content to the right people at the right time will drive improved engagement and actions.

**Mark Addis:** Hyper-targeting will become really important in the next year. Consumers expect that companies now deliver them very relevant and useful information, focusing on things like age, gender, location, industry and topics of interest. Buyer personas are losing their effectiveness as they are already becoming a bit too broad. The other thing to keep a close eye on is the utilisation of new distribution channels, such as figuring out how to most effectively publish on Snapchat, Periscope, and others.

Follow Rich Towey:

[richard.towey@performancein.com](mailto:richard.towey@performancein.com)

@RichToweyPI



**Mark Addis**

*Business development  
NewsCred*



**Andrew Grill**

*Global managing partner  
IBM Social Consulting*



**Stuart Dommatt**

*Head of EMEA business content marketing  
practice & EMEA IT center publisher  
Intel Corporation*



# PI

## CONTACT US

In 2015 PerformanceIN will play host to a monthly series of exclusive roundtable events specifically designed to stimulate discussion on some of the industry's most pertinent topics. Each roundtable will be followed by an online digital supplement like this one.

---

For more information on how you can get involved with PerformanceIN roundtables, either as a sponsor or an attendee, please contact [roundtables@performancein.com](mailto:roundtables@performancein.com)