

Performance IN ADVERTISER'S GUIDE

CONTENT MARKETING

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



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Content marketing, along with cross device, attribution and mobile, is one of the key buzzwords currently floating around the performance marketing industry.

According to the latest Content Marketing Institute UK guide, the surveyed brands are currently spending 36% of their marketing budget on content strategies and 53% plan to increase their spend over the next 12 months. This increase in investment highlights the power and success of content marketing strategies, with brands increasingly focusing on delivering content strategies that are geared towards maintaining and growing their customer base, driving excitement around new products and creating popular content that situates them within a customer's mind at a point of sale.

What is content marketing?

"Content marketing is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience — and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action." - [Content Marketing Institute](#)

Content marketing provides brands with the opportunity to engage with their audiences in a separate way, opening up their reach. It can refer to:

- Brand sponsorship
- Native advertising
- Social media marketing (platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat integrating sponsored content seamlessly in-stream)

How does a brand implement content marketing?

The key thing that you need to be able to do is tell a story. A sales pitch about a certain product is unlikely to deliver lifetime customers to your brand. They can see straight through a heavily-targeted brand piece; it doesn't fit seamlessly into the content they digest daily and they need to be able to trust you implicitly.

With all brand collaborations, you should adhere to the following three guidelines:

- ✓ Authenticity – the brand partnership and content needs to be believable and relevant
- ✓ Storytelling – the post catches and maintains audience's attention
- ✓ Immersive and not disruptive – enhance, not disrupt, the customer journey

In addition, for a piece of content to be effective, it needs to be fun and inspiring, among other things, according to [Oath](#). The most popular pieces of content are usually centred on something light-hearted, they are relatable and inclusive of their target audience.

Brand sponsorship

An effective collaboration will understand the brand's overall marketing strategy. It is illustrated well by [MasterCard's sponsorship](#) of sporting events, part of their 'Priceless' campaign.

MasterCard associates itself with these events which result in 'priceless' moments and money-can't-buy experiences. This is an example of an authentic way to successfully engage in sponsored campaigns and tie it in with your overall brand objectives.

Adidas also showed how to create a successful sponsored campaign when it launched its '[Tango Squad](#)', which entailed working with several content creators, aged 16-19, who were avid football fans and posted regularly on the topic. It was an authentic collaboration that fit the brand's image. The company engaged in storytelling through influencers, which was relevant for their audience. This way, Adidas got its brand in front of a demographic/segment of the market that it may not have reached otherwise.

Native advertising

"Native advertising is paid advertising where the ad matches the form, feel and function of the content of the media on which it appears" – [Native Advertising Institute](#)

According to a [report](#) drawn up by IHS technology and the Facebook Audience Network, by 2020 63.2% of all mobile advertising will be native. It is a more and more popular form of online advertising and can be a clever way to hook an audience on your brand.

Buzzfeed leads the way when it comes to implementing native advertising. They [collaborated with Motorola](#) on an article titled “9 things that have changed in the last 20 years” featuring familiar shows and personalities. It captured reader’s attention. Towards the end, the article showed how mobile phones have changed and presented the reader with the latest Motorola model. Seamless and in-stream, it didn’t disrupt customer experience.

Social media marketing

90% of adults aged 18-29 use social media, immediately making it an asset to promote your brand. Collaborations on Instagram and Snapchat are particularly popular, in addition to Facebook.

Sainsbury’s started a [campaign](#) that was based on diverting focus away from discounting and offers, and more on generating fun, light-hearted content. The “Kitchen dancing” video showed people dancing in their kitchens while making dinner. Stepping away from a heavily-branded marketing piece, it showed how a brand can successfully put themselves in front of key audiences, while coming at it from a different angle not driven purely by sales.

In 2016, affilinet gained further insight into the value of content marketing in achieving greater brand awareness. An example of how content marketing can work well in the affiliate space can be seen in how affilinet worked alongside a leading UK retailer.

The task was to increase the lifetime value of the brand’s customers through the use of influencers. The number of click-active bloggers on the programme increased by 80% year-on-year (vs a 25% target), with the number of sale active bloggers increasing by 75% (vs a 50% target), and revenue driven by bloggers increasing by 37% (vs a target of 20%).

We understand that influencers provide value across the purchasing funnel and we see them as the perfect way to achieve the brand’s objectives. We achieved the results in the following ways:

Category-specific campaigns and recruitment. These were used to boost brand awareness and support product launches in specific categories. Bloggers were categorised by their content and following, and communications were then targeted accordingly.

Reactivation campaigns. These were conducted to target category-specific bloggers and increase the number of click-active bloggers on the programme. A full programme audit was carried out, identifying any bloggers who had become inactive and ensuring they were placed in the right category. Campaigns were then targeted depending on whether an affiliate was click- or sale-active.

Recruitment strategy. A targeted and personal recruitment strategy was devised to ensure the brand could recruit the best bloggers, including blogger-specific events and educational material. Category-specific recruitment was put in place to increase the market share of specific categories. New recruitment was carried out for each campaign and each recruitment drive was carefully measured against predefined targets.

Influencer reach. By tapping into bloggers' social channels, the brand could reach a wider audience. In addition, affilinet worked closely with the brand's social team to ensure influencers were in line with the brand's identity across all channels.

Content marketing can work as part of a brand's overall strategy. At affilinet, we continue to engage in content marketing campaigns for our brands because of its proven success. Consistently ensuring that campaigns tick all the requirements, we aim to get our brands more involved and active with influencers, social media and sponsored content.

So, where do we go from here?

While 2016 has seen a rise in the use of content marketing, this is set to be maintained and even increased this year. According to the Content Marketing Institute, 81% of content marketers will be maintaining and/or increasing their investment in content marketing in 2017.

Remember to keep your content fun, steer away from heavily-branded sales pitches and focus on the benefits your readers might get from engaging with your content instead – whether that leads to an immediate purchase or an immediate Instagram follower.