

What's this about Marketers becoming Publishers?

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Articles about the increasingly important role of content in the marketing mix are everywhere, and leading global advertisers including [Coca-Cola](#), [American Express](#) and [Volvo](#) are pioneers in leveraging content to its fullest. But for the vast majority of brands, even those in mature markets such as the US, UK and Australia, progress has been slower than we might expect.

Failing to adapt to our content-led era leads to an overreliance on traditional paid media, which can be expensive. It also means falling behind competitor brands that are using content to build more relevant and meaningful relationships with consumers.

The old model of launching a product, supporting it with paid media for 4-6 weeks and then

settling in to some level of sustaining support is dead. Consumers are in the market every day, doing their own research, reading reviews, talking to friends, sampling products – you name it – and the winning brands are those who are telling the stickiest, most interesting brand stories.

Where do we start?

For businesses born of the digital age like Airbnb and GoPro, it's natural to embrace this approach. With no pre-existing business models, silos or lengthy approval processes, they are built ready to perform in a 24/7 world. For legacy brands, the challenge can often be unlearning (or building new paths around) decades of corporate behavior.

What's the best way to start? For many, the first step will be to audit the content that they and their direct competitors currently produce. This can be an enlightening exercise.

Large companies, in particular, often find that they are producing more content than they realize. Marketing, PR, sales, corporate communications, HR and customer service, for example, are all likely to be pushing out some form of consumer-facing content.

Recognizing these multiple channels provides an opportunity to create a cross-division team that can help develop a coordinated strategy. At a minimum, it's a chance to make sure that all the content in which you are currently invested is being used and re-used in as many appropriate ways and places as possible.

Metrics of success

A model in which content is pushed year-round, in multiple formats across multiple platforms, needs to be monitored and measured in new ways.

Online video, for example, can still deliver reach, but metrics like completion rate and shareability may be more relevant.

Only after completing an audit of existing content and defining the metrics of success can we develop a content strategy. This starts with defining the measurement KPIs before deciding how much, in what format, for what platforms, and when content should be created

and distributed.

The role of influencers

A content strategy will also take third-party influencers into consideration. A great example is Sony Mobile's [pioneering deal](#) with [Red Bull Media House](#) and Ridley Scott Associates (RSA) to promote the world's first 4K smartphone, the [Xperia Z5 Premium](#).

Together the partners created [Kaleidoscope](#), a short film starring BMX rider [Kriss Kyle](#) attempting first-ever tricks. RSA used the Xperia Z5 Premium to film breathtaking close-ups, along with four bespoke Sony videos – "[Through the lens of Kaleidoscope](#)" – showcasing the four key features of the Xperia Z5 Premium. These videos are centered on the tricks in the main Kaleidoscope film and incorporate the phone into the content in a way that offers viewers an experience over and above the main film.

The branded content sits alongside the hero film on the Red Bull microsite, and Xperia Z5 Premium used a shot from the film as the central visual in its overall campaign. The extensive rights package we negotiated also ensures that the image was front and center in 1,650 retail stores and an extensive OOH campaign. The deal and its results are outstanding evidence of how a content-led media campaign can infiltrate an entire business.

In the end, success depends upon a rock-solid strategy founded on clear business objectives and sound KPIs that can objectively measure success against those goals. The worst thing a marketer can do is simply go out and randomly commission content. As we say in other parts of this magazine, hoping a video will "go viral" is not a strategy.

Getting it right

Consider these five steps for building your organization's content expertise:

1. Audit your current output and that of competitors'. MediaCom deploys three tools to do this: Community Plus, which assesses the social

performance of online content; CAT (Content Assessment Tool), which predicts the emotional power and shareability of a brand's content; and DIS (Dynamic Influencer Score), which helps assess the reach and relevance of different influencers.

2. Bring the relevant parts of your company together to design a strategy and select the metrics to gauge success and areas for improvement. These may include identifying and addressing gaps in consideration, purchase intent or conversion.
3. Think hard about how to organize. You do not want to quash creativity, but having marketing saying one thing and customer service saying another can generate confusion and mistrust amongst consumers. You may, for example, appoint a central team to coordinate the content strategy across your company.
4. Identify and address current processes and procedures that need to be changed. We work with many marketers who have needed to recraft expectations with finance, sales, customer service, operations and other internal partners who are accustomed to a slower, more predictable decision-making calendar.
5. Set up some basic measurements and experiment! "Test and learn" is a strategy custom-made for the content world.

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