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CONTENT MARKETING ROUNDUP

Content marketing can serve a number of purposes, from establishing thought leadership in the marketplace to attracting new leads and pushing those leads down the purchase funnel. eMarketer has curated a roundup of key trends, statistics and interviews relevant to content marketers.

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Overview

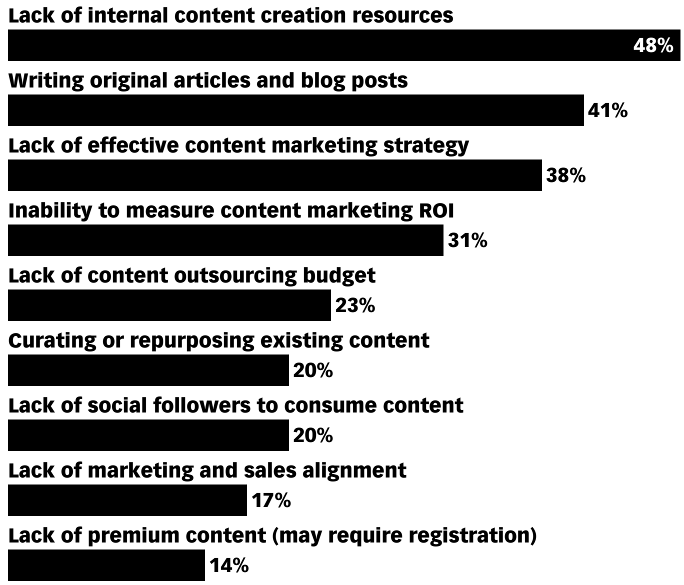
Content marketing can serve a number of purposes, from establishing thought leadership in the marketplace to attracting new leads and pushing those leads down the purchase funnel.

According to research from demand generation solutions provider Ascend2, increasing the number of leads is the top objective for content marketers worldwide. More than half reported this was important to them, followed by 41% who were hoping to increase product or brand awareness. Lower-funnel considerations, like improving the sales-readiness of leads or customer retention rates, fell further down the list.

But the frustrations of content marketing also run a broad span. The lack of resources to create content internally was a problem for nearly half of respondents. And lack of a strategy is still holding back nearly two in five.

Meanwhile, changing trends in content consumption mean content marketers must stay on top of what is most effective. More than eight in 10 respondents to content creation platform TrapIt's survey of US marketers said visual content was more likely to be consumed. But about half were also expecting mobile to change consumer habits and discovery routes, creating new norms.

Challenging Obstacles to Achieving Content Marketing Objectives According to Marketing Professionals Worldwide, Jan 2014
% of respondents



Note: n=521
Source: Ascend2, "Content Marketing Benchmark Summary Report," Jan 22, 2014
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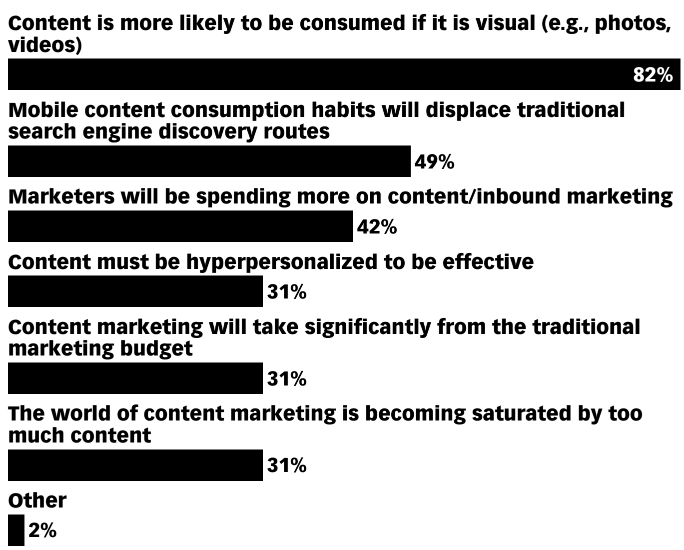
Leading Trends in Content Marketing According to US Marketers, Oct 2013
% of respondents



Note: n=131
Source: TrapIt, "Curation: What Does it Mean to Marketers?" Dec 10, 2013
167528 www.eMarketer.com

Three-quarters plan to raise investments in content marketing; two in five intend to do so for mobile

Content marketing is coming to the forefront this year. According to a December 2013 study by Advertising Age, three-quarters of business-to-business (B2B) marketers planned to up content spending in 2014, and just 1.3% said they would decrease their content budget.

Digital is fueling the rise in content marketing, with B2B marketers planning to increase spending in a number of tactics in the category this year. More than 64% of respondents planned to raise email marketing budgets, 63.7% said they would up investments in online video, and 58.2% said the same for social media.

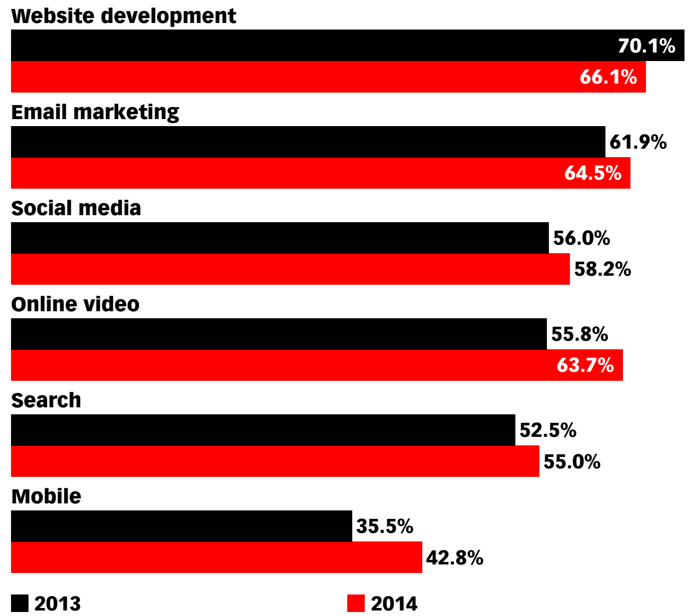
Based on results from a July 2013 study by Omobono and the Business Marketing Association, it looks like marketers are putting their money where their successes are. When asked which marketing channels were the most effective, three-quarters of US B2B marketers cited email marketing, seven in 10 said online video, and 58% noted social media.

Advertising Age found that mobile was another area B2B marketers were eyeing. Nearly half said mobile advertising would be extremely important to their organizations in 2014, compared with just one-fifth of respondents who said the same for 2013. As a result, B2Bs are putting more dollars toward the tactic, with 42.8% of respondents planning to increase spending on mobile this year, vs. 35.5% in 2013.

However, the B2B space still has a long way to go when it comes to implementing mobile marketing. Just 38.6% of marketers said they currently used mobile in their strategies. But among those respondents, 47.3% used apps in their marketing strategy, compared with 21% in 2012.

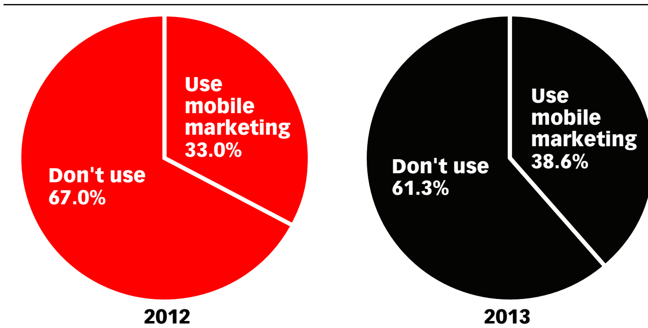
US B2B marketers using mobile advertising appear to be seeing success. Data released in September 2013 by the Interactive Advertising Bureau and Ovum showed that 94% of marketing executives who used mobile advertising were either "fairly satisfied" or "satisfied" with the tactic.

Digital Marketing Tactics on Which US B2B Marketers Plan to Increase Spending, 2013 & 2014
% of respondents



Source: Advertising Age, "2014 BtoB Outlook: Marketing Priorities and Plans"; eMarketer calculations, Jan 6, 2014
150198 www.eMarketer.com

US B2B Marketers Who Currently Use Mobile Marketing, 2012 & 2013
% of respondents



Source: Advertising Age, "2014 BtoB Outlook: Marketing Priorities and Plans," Jan 6, 2014
150613 www.eMarketer.com

For B2C Marketers, Social Media Tops Content Marketing Efforts

Facebook, Twitter serve as popular platforms for content messaging

Will the marketers of the future look back and decide that 2013 was the year of content marketing? Maybe so, according to data from the Content Marketing Institute (CMI) and MarketingProfs. In a survey of marketing professionals in North America at business-to-consumer (B2C) companies, the overwhelming majority of respondents—90%—had used content marketing in 2013, compared with 86% of companies who did so the year before.

These B2C marketers also heavily rely on social media other than blogs to get their message out; The survey found 88% of respondents saying they had used such social networks. The written word also emerged as a popular medium for content marketing messages—78% said they used articles posted on their website, 76% employed electronic newsletters and 72% had blogs in their content marketing mix. Videos were also a popular content marketing medium, employed by 72% of respondents. B2C marketers saw significantly less value in podcasts, video conferences and games and gamification efforts.

Zeroing in on social media, CMI and MarketingProfs found that Facebook was the most popular platform this year, used by 89% of B2C marketers, followed by Twitter (80%), YouTube (72%), LinkedIn (71%), Google+ (55%) and Pinterest (53%). The survey also revealed that social network usage saw a jump across the board over 2012, and that marketers were spreading their efforts across a number of different channels, with respondents using an average of six social media platforms.

Despite the attention paid to content marketing, 23% of B2C marketers—a significant number—were unsure how much of their total budget was allocated to the practice. Of those that did know, one-fifth said that between 10% and 24% of their budget had been earmarked for content marketing purposes. Seventeen percent of respondents said content marketing comprised only between 1% and 4% of their overall budget, a sign that content marketing may be widely adopted but given scant resources.

Content Marketing Tactics Used by B2C Content Marketers in North America, 2012 & 2013
% of respondents

	2012	2013
Social media*	84%	88%
Articles on your website	84%	78%
E-newsletters	78%	76%
Videos	70%	72%
Blogs	69%	72%
In-person events	63%	65%
Articles on other websites	61%	61%
Mobile content	43%	46%
Microsites	41%	43%
Case studies	38%	41%
Infographics	33%	40%
Mobile apps	42%	39%
Online presentations	-	39%
Print magazines	42%	37%
Branded content tools	40%	37%
White papers	28%	31%
Digital magazines	29%	30%
Webinars/webcasts	32%	30%
Annual reports	28%	30%
Print newsletters	37%	29%
Research reports	33%	28%
Licensed/syndicated content	33%	25%
Books	32%	24%
Ebooks	28%	23%
Podcasts	26%	19%
Virtual conferences	21%	18%
Games/gamification	17%	17%

*Note: *excludes blogs*
Source: Content Marketing Institute (CMI) and MarketingProfs, "B2C Content Marketing: 2014 Benchmarks, Budgets and Trends - North America" sponsored by Imagination, Oct 15, 2013

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White papers, webinars are leading SMB content pieces used for lead gen

Small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) are always on the hunt for new leads, and increasingly, content marketing is how they are finding those prospective customers. According to a May 2013 survey from Business.com, three-quarters of US SMBs actively worked on lead generation tactics, with a variety of different types of content used for this purpose.

As to which content marketing tactics respondents from SMB companies deemed most effective, nearly all content approaches received fairly high marks. Among the most valuable types of lead gen-oriented content marketing were white papers, webinars and case studies. More than 60% cited both white papers and webinars as at least somewhat valuable, with white papers especially likely to be considered extremely valuable. Videos were seen as the least valuable type of content marketing tactic. However, a still considerable 56.4% of respondents thought it was at least reasonably valuable.

But lead generation is not simply a matter of creating content that will catch the eye of a prospect. Marketers need more robust information to really put lead gen to work. The most valuable piece of lead gen data, according to respondents, was information on the purchasing time horizon of a prospect, with more than half of respondents saying this was extremely valuable. Knowing the number of employees at a prospect's company, the industry and the person's job title were also useful elements.

These data points can all be used to ultimately create a lead score for prospects, so that sales and marketing can know how close the individual really is to buying, and how they should be approached. Half of respondents also said lead scoring was extremely valuable.

Most Valuable Content Marketing Elements for Lead Generation According to US SMB Companies, May 2013

% of respondents

	Extremely valuable	Valuable	Somewhat valuable	Least valuable	Not valuable at all	N/A
White paper	25.3%	25.3%	10.1%	20.3%	19.0%	0.0%
Webinars	17.7%	16.5%	26.6%	15.2%	24.1%	0.0%
Case studies	15.6%	18.2%	32.5%	16.9%	15.6%	1.3%
Interactive product demos	15.6%	15.6%	27.3%	18.2%	19.5%	3.9%
Sponsored emails	14.5%	23.7%	26.3%	14.5%	18.4%	2.6%
Product feature guides	14.3%	20.8%	27.3%	15.6%	19.5%	2.6%
Videos	14.1%	20.5%	21.8%	20.5%	17.9%	5.1%

Note: numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding
Source: Business.com, "Small Business Pulse: 2013 Lead Generation Insights," Aug 27, 2013

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Most Valuable Data Elements for Lead Generation According to US SMB Companies, May 2013

% of respondents

	Extremely valuable	Valuable	Somewhat valuable	Least valuable	Not valuable at all	N/A
Purchasing time horizon	51.3%	31.3%	10.0%	2.5%	5.0%	0.0%
Size of company (employees)	30.5%	20.7%	30.5%	9.8%	8.5%	0.0%
Industry	29.1%	22.8%	22.8%	15.2%	10.1%	0.0%
Job title	20.3%	27.8%	29.1%	8.9%	12.7%	1.3%
Size of company (revenues)	18.8%	22.5%	27.5%	11.3%	16.3%	3.8%
Job function	17.3%	25.9%	34.6%	7.4%	12.3%	2.5%

Note: numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding
Source: Business.com, "Small Business Pulse: 2013 Lead Generation Insights," Aug 27, 2013

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In-house content is most common

Digital marketing has driven home the importance of content, as marketers strive to keep customers engaged and drive brand awareness. These were the top two benefits of content marketing, according to an August 2013 survey of marketers in North America from Unisphere Research. And marketers are certainly putting money behind that effort: 48% of respondents reported devoting at least 10% of their budget to content creation, with 19% of marketers allocating 25% or more.

That said, there are still holdouts among marketers who either do not think content is critical to their strategy or have not yet moved significant resources into the category. A notable 36% of marketers spent less than 10% of their budgets on content creation.

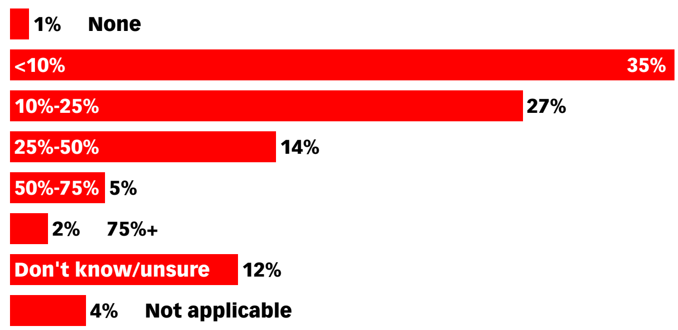
So what kinds of content are marketers primarily producing? In the survey, articles and videos topped the list, at 76% and 60%, respectively. And these, and other forms of content, were most often created in-house—87% of marketers said they created digital content internally.

Where companies may be stalling is in making content especially responsive to the channel where it is viewed. The study found that 56% of marketers most of the time or all of the time leveraged the same content in every channel.

The company website remains the most important channel for content, with 88% of marketers citing it. That was followed by email campaigns (73%) and public relations (70%).

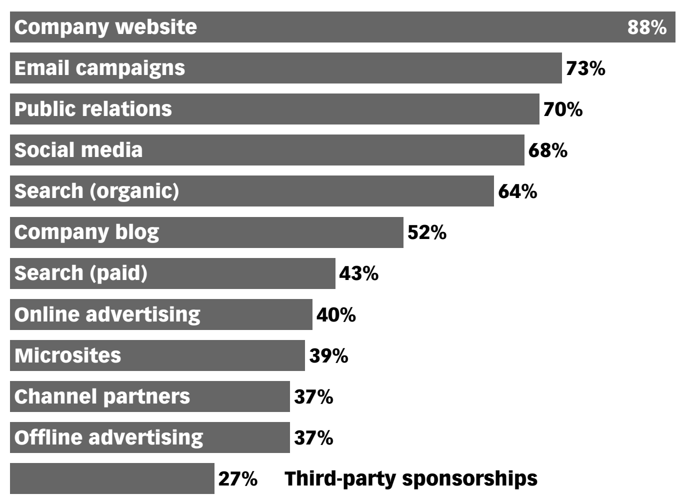
Following close on the heels of these top three content channels was social media (68%), where marketers are increasingly looking to get their content out to a wider audience.

Percent of Marketing Budget Allocated to Content Creation According to Marketing Professionals in North America, Aug 2013
% of respondents



Source: Unisphere Research, "Content Marketing Gets Social" commissioned by Skyword, Sep 24, 2013
164230 www.eMarketer.com

Important Channels for Content Marketing According to Marketing Professionals in North America, Aug 2013
% of respondents



Note: respondents who ranked the channel as "important" or "extremely important"
Source: Unisphere Research, "Content Marketing Gets Social" commissioned by Skyword, Sep 24, 2013
164224 www.eMarketer.com

Leads Take Hold as the Primary Goal of Content Marketing

Nearly half of companies now have a formal content marketing strategy

Content marketing saw its importance balloon between 2012 and 2013. According to the digital marketing company that delivers branded newsletters and content for vertical markets IMN's "2013 Content Marketing Survey Report," the number of US companies with formal content marketing strategies in place jumped from 28% in 2012 to 49% in 2013, while those without a content strategy contracted from 26% to 18% during the same period.

And even if not all companies surveyed had a content marketing strategy in place at the time, another one-third said they were working on one, suggesting that by 2014, the percentage engaging in content marketing will only go up.

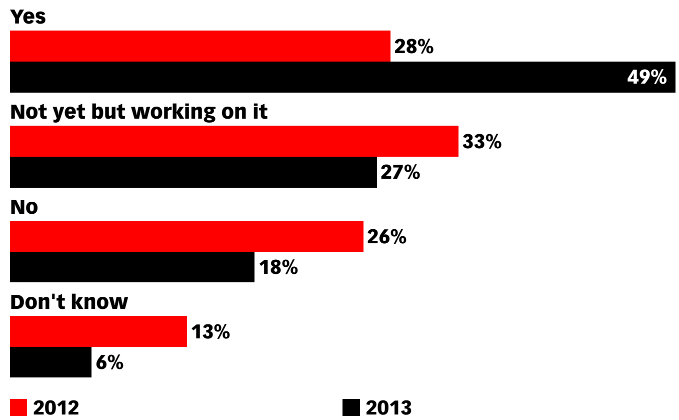
As more have focused their efforts on content, the purposes of the tactic are convering on one key goal: lead generation. Last year, increasing leads was the No. 4 goal among marketing professionals—cited by only 16%— behind engagement, awareness and loyalty. This year, generating more leads was the No. 1 goal, cited by 44% of respondents, far ahead of any other response.

This points to content marketing as primarily a first step in new customer acquisition, as opposed to a tactic used primarily for hooking current or already-identified customers. However, awareness and engagment were still cited by 19% of respondents each.

In keeping with lead generation as the primary goal of content marketing, social media's role in content strategy also keeps growing, as social outreach helps companies reach new potential clients. Just over half of respondents said social media was the most effective content marketing tactic in 2013. That was followed by the company website (44%), newsletters (42%) and email blasts (42%).

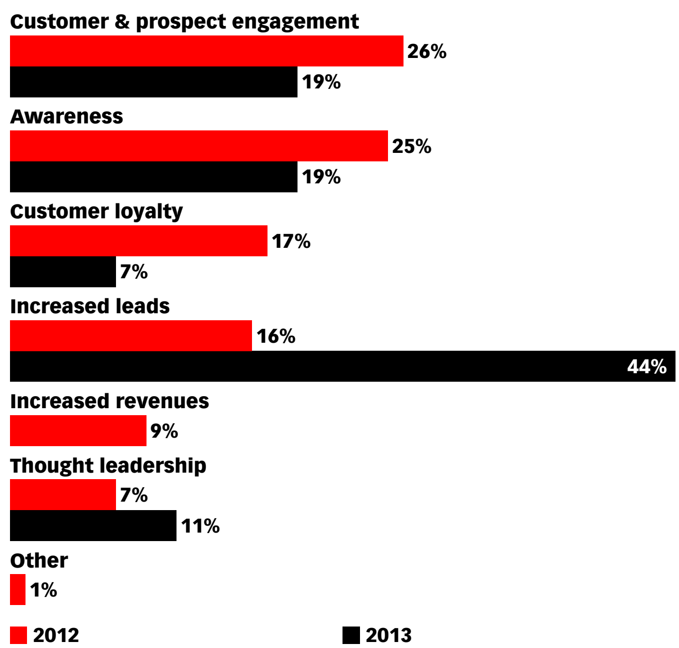
Perhaps adding to content marketing's appeal—the price is right. More than one-third said they devoted less than 10% of the marketing budget to content marketing in July 2013. But cheapness is not necessarily equivalent with ease of implementation. Content marketing is consistently cited as one of the most difficult tactics to pull off, even if it is one of the least expensive.

Presence of Formal Content Marketing Strategy at the Companies of US Marketing Professionals, 2012 & 2013
% of respondents



Source: IMN, "2013 Content Marketing Survey Report," July 30, 2013
161362 www.eMarketer.com

Primary Goal of Content Marketing Programs According to US Marketing Professionals, 2012 & 2013
% of respondents



Note: numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding
Source: IMN, "2013 Content Marketing Survey Report," July 30, 2013
161365 www.eMarketer.com

Success with Video Content Means Pushing Boundaries

Steve Baer

Managing Partner, Director of Brand Design Group

Code and Theory

Interactive agency Code and Theory has found video content to work effectively in various stages of the marketing funnel, whether it's discovery, education or purchase for its clients, including Dr Pepper Snapple Group and Maybelline New York. Steve Baer, managing partner and director of Code and Theory's brand design group, spoke with eMarketer's Danielle Drolet about how brands can successfully integrate video content into digital campaigns.

eMarketer: What should brands be thinking about first when planning a video content marketing strategy?

Steve Baer: Figure out who you're talking to, and then what you need to tell them to move them along the funnel. First, we want to know what story the brand is trying to tell. If you don't have a story to tell, you've got to figure one out.

There are cases now that you have many stories to tell. This is a departure from how a lot of brand marketing has been done, where many advertising campaigns went with more singular messaging. With content, you might have lots of truth as a brand, and therefore many stories to tell. The key is to figure out which of those story streams will yield the most interesting content and will build best alongside the objectives you set.

eMarketer: What's most difficult for brand marketers?

"Pushing the boundaries of the brand's tone and personality is what's keeping brand marketers up at night."

Baer: Clients know they need to become serious about content marketing. The best examples of video content marketing tend to be the ones that are edgy and push the boundaries. And the lesson that you could take away from that is the only way to do content marketing and succeed—with video in particular—is to do things that might get me in trouble on the client side. Pushing the boundaries of the brand's tone and personality is what's keeping brand marketers up at night. They are thinking that if they don't do something risky, it won't succeed.

eMarketer: Is "viralness" still important?

Baer: Many clients are starting to realize that viral in large part is a myth or has become one. Building something, sending it out there, and getting the views and impressions to move a needle for a brand is quite difficult to do without getting some paid media behind it.

There's a pay-to-earn ratio that needs to be considered, and many people, especially in the marketing world, think something went viral—it was amazing and went viral on its own. They don't realize there's been some propulsion behind it from a media spending perspective that has gotten it to a certain place, and then it took off from there.

eMarketer: How long are the best videos?

Baer: The best video length is between 2 and 5 minutes. We typically make them less than 3 minutes. However, if it's a great piece of content it will play, even if it's a long piece of content, such as 5-minute minifilm.

It's also great to create a toolbox of formats against a story line. We like to look at a piece of content, but against a story. One story line might be expressed through three, four or five different formats. One of them is the long video. Another is a short cut-down of the video. Then, there could be an Instagram video aspect or Vine aspect. In addition, an animated GIF. We like to get efficiencies and create many different formats of a single story line because, quite frankly, sometimes the really lightweight stuff performs really, really well. It's got to be parsed across different formats.

eMarketer: What channels do you use to distribute your video content? Is YouTube really the biggest channel out there right now?

Baer: If you're a marketer, putting it out in as many places where it can live isn't necessarily a bad thing. If you have a huge Facebook following, push it out there. YouTube is also a very obvious place. Most of the world searches for video happening there. You should be there, too. VEVO is another that's been popping up on people's radars lately because of Robin Thicke's "Blurred Lines" music video. VEVO has done some risqué videos that are exclusive and a little bit off the chart. It's been successful in creating a separate community.

Distribution can sit on lots of platforms. But where it gets interesting is how you're pushing the message out, how it exists and drives people to those places.

"VEVO has done some risqué videos that are exclusive and a little bit off the chart. It's been successful in creating a separate community."

eMarketer: Is the brand site just as important?

Baer: It is. It can depend on the category, too. There are always arguments as to how much upkeep is needed on a brand site. But with brands I've worked on, there's always been some organic traffic to their sites, even the ones you wouldn't expect. There's an argument to be made that if you have content it should live in all the channels, certainly your own channels. By that, I also mean your social channels that you have access to and control. The website is just another touchpoint for it.

In addition, the brand site can be the perfect place for content when it comes to where in the funnel or where in that circle you need to hit people. For example, if you're a beauty brand or a home improvement retailer, people may be looking for information on how to use your products. Consumers may go to Google or YouTube, but there's a big chance they'll go to the brand site. From an education standpoint, it makes sense to be there.

eMarketer: How would you like to see video content marketing evolve over the next two years?

Baer: I want to see it reprioritized within the marketing mix. It's relatively new, so we'll see clients prioritizing advertising and some of the other expected marketing tactics ahead of the content piece. This is why you see a lot of repurposed advertising happening.

I'd also like to see closer integration between paid, owned and earned media. At the moment, there's media buying and planning typically happening at a media agency, and then content creation across a slew of agencies or the client itself. I think using the two in tandem is the secret. We need to be asking how to distribute it in an organic way, as well as how to boost it with paid media. How can we use the two in close orchestration? Right now, there's a lot of separation there.

B2B Perspective: All Media and Marketing Is Social to GE

Andy Markowitz

Director, Global Digital Strategy

General Electric

Andy Markowitz, director of global digital strategy at General Electric (GE), views content as key to the company's social media presence. He spoke with eMarketer about why, instead of pushing content in hopes it goes viral, GE works to create stories to craft a more human voice for its corporate face—and get that message to the key influencers.

eMarketer: Do you earmark some content for social and some for more traditional routes?

Andy Markowitz: We view all media and marketing as social. The same way we view everything as mobile. We think of every piece of content as being able to have an Instagram component, or a YouTube component, or a blog component, and so forth.

eMarketer: How does GE define social media?

Markowitz: There are many different ways to think about social media. There are the obvious social media that people talk about a lot, like Facebook and Twitter. We think of social media in a much broader context than that.

We think about how you use the social graph to sell more deliberately and more purposefully. We have worked with LinkedIn and a company called RockTech to use the social graph to facilitate networking among our salespeople and potential customers. We've had some good successes with it. We think about the social graph as using our networks—which is the new Rolodex—to make those connections and get people in the door where they want to go.

"There are the obvious social media that people talk about a lot, like Facebook and Twitter. We think of social media in a much broader context than that."

eMarketer: Is GE embracing social media sites such as Pinterest and YouTube?

Markowitz: We've seen some anecdotal feedback from people, especially around our TV ads that play on YouTube, that they do help tell the story in a much more meaningful way. Salespeople use that content to kind of create an entree or to have a dialogue. So even though they're not meant to be specific to lead generation, we find that accessibility has proven well for us—or at least shown some opportunities for us.

eMarketer: GE's employees are active on social media. Does having a human voice, rather than just a corporate presence, help in the business-to-business (B2B) space?

Markowitz: I think so. There are influencers. There are investors. There are people who want to work for us—or who we want to work for us. There are potential customers that may think GE is just too big. These types of stories help by saying, "Wait, behind that logo and behind that jet engine and behind that MRI machine are real people who have real-life stories and are really as smart as they come in terms of the technology and innovation they put together."

eMarketer: Do you think that affects lead generation?

Markowitz: Absolutely. Over time. We've made no secret about this. GE believes very specifically in the power of content. That content helps tell our story, whether it's in the form of a white paper, thought leadership, TV ad, video, or whatever it is. We believe in the power of that content, and we believe that content as a core component of digital is going to absolutely bear fruit from a lead generation perspective.

"We believe in the power of that content, and we believe that content as a core component of digital is going to absolutely bear fruit from a lead generation perspective."

eMarketer: How are you calculating return on investment (ROI) in social media?

Markowitz: We're building proof points. Right now, those proof points have excellent ROI if we were going to just staple traditional ROI to those things. What we're really trying to teach here is that yes, the ROI is terrific, but there's a whole new way of thinking.

There is a whole part of the digital journey that exists in terms of collecting data and information; finding out what key influencers think; and ratings, reviews and pricing. That exists online, and social is a critical component of that.

What we're trying to do is say, "There's a part of the customer journey we have to go and meet, and that's why we're focusing this." It's less about the quantitative ROI and more about really understanding that our customer does these 10 things while they're in their information-gathering period or during their buying process. And these are the things that we do, and this is where we need to be in order to meet those needs.

eMarketer: Are paid placements working to generate leads?

Markowitz: The paid component of it isn't where we want it to be, but we're not out of it. It's not in a place where we can say, "If you spend a dollar on a display ad, you get X in payback or ROI." I don't think the B2B side is that sophisticated yet.

We've tried a number of different things that have had different successes. It's relatively straightforward to buy "likes" on Facebook, and there are relatively efficient ways to do that. To take the corollary and say, "What kind of display ad would you run on a different type of network in a different environment to drive an ROI or B2B lead?" That is a much different kind of paradigm.

The real question is, if you take Facebook "likes" as an example, how many Facebook "likes" is it worth it to buy? How many LinkedIn followers is it worth it to buy? You get to a point where you feel you have a good, established audience, and that's fantastic. Then from there, what type of engagement do you want to drive, and how valuable are those people?

You have to stop, evaluate and think about those things over time. The more people you get in, the less value they're likely to have—you really want your core people. So it really is still experimentation for us.

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