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THE CONTENT MARKETING GUIDE

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The ABC of content marketing

It's been only sometime that we have heard such a buzz around the term 'content marketing' and it started showing up in the earnest as the "Next Big Thing". Thanks to the age of hyper connectivity and social networking people are fed with information from all over and not just a few sources. Hence, the marketers and brand evangelists have realised the power of good quality content, which can help realise the sales bottom line.

The concept of content marketing isn't so much a new field but with increased number of platforms to cater to, the structure around this technique has definitely evolved. The long format of digital content includes blogging, video, social media, and e-books etc.

What is Content Marketing?

Content marketing as a term probably originated at a round table conference at the American Society of Newspaper Editors in 1996. Content Marketing Institute defines it as "a marketing technique of creating and distributing valuable, relevant and consistent content to attract and acquire a clearly defined audience – with the objective of driving profitable customer action."

In a nutshell, content marketing is the art of communicating with your customers and prospects in a way that they are being better equipped with information. It simply means that instead of using the "push" strategy in which a brand will blow its own trumpet, marketers are now focussing on the "pull" strategy wherein the consumer is

equipped with information. The essence of this content strategy is the belief that if we, as businesses, deliver quality and valuable information to buyers, they ultimately reward us with their business and loyalty.

Why should one go for it?

The real purpose of content marketing is to attract and retain customers by consistently creating relevant and valuable content with the intention of changing or enhancing consumer behaviour. Content development is an on-going process that is best integrated into your overall marketing strategy, and it primarily focuses on owning media, not renting it.

The after effects of content marketing: engagement

Content marketing, at its core, is basically a relationship marketing discipline, whose success depends on active audience engagement. Currently, for any brand it is crucial to have effective presence on social media channels and using relevant and engaging content, as social media has become the "word of mouth" platform. Today every person has become a content marketer simply by virtue of using Facebook, Twitter and other content publishing platforms, which offer everyone both relevant tools, information and power, to either promote or bad mouth a brand.

Hence, the challenge here lies in the fact that that the bar of creative content has touched new heights. As the waters rise on content and the bar scales higher on quality, online influencer strategy becomes

THE REAL PURPOSE OF CONTENT MARKETING IS TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN CUSTOMERS BY CONSISTENTLY CREATING RELEVANT AND VALUABLE CONTENT WITH THE INTENTION OF CHANGING OR ENHANCING CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR.

TODAY REGARDLESS OF THE INDUSTRY – TO WHOM OR WHAT THEY'RE PROMOTING – MARKETERS ARE INCREASINGLY TURNING TO CONTENT TO HELP RESOLVE COMMON CHALLENGES.

more important than ever.

Engagement leads to Earned Media and Advocates

The reason why content marketing owns the media as opposed to renting it is simply because one has to use their own social channels and other platforms such as blogs, main sites, sub-domains, e-mail lists, etc. to publish content.

And the biggest reward of using content is engagement. One of the upsides to that engagement is the earned media that one gets when other people share your content on their personal networks.

How do we measure KPIs?

At the end of the day, it's up to you to decide what your content goals are. Some of the goals could be channel-specific, hence we might measure social media in terms of engagement with shares, likes, etc. If one wants to follow the customers through a purchase funnel, one may either track them with gated content or impressions on the website.

The success of gated content like e-books can be measured easily: signups are, obviously, tracked. But following those people is a different ball game altogether. You may still be in the game even if you're short on resources: measure what you can with easily available analytics, do some

social listening to make sure that your content is intriguing, and don't be afraid to tweak your content consistently to refine your message.

Content marketing: The Leftover Turkey

Today regardless of the industry, to whom or what they're promoting, marketers are increasingly turning to content to help resolve common challenges. Based on the respondents' experiences, content marketing has become essential, for all the good reasons.

Marketers need to understand that people will consume the content differently, depending on who they are, what information they want, and on what channel it resides. For example an e-book with a lead capture goal can be broken down into blog posts for your own blog, Tweets, Facebook posts, memes, e-cards, webinars, Power Point presentations: you name it, and you can probably create it from what you already have if your core long-format content has enough information.

When it comes to planning the content marketing strategy, it's very important to think how a piece of content you're creating might be recycled like leftover turkey to generate maximum engagement with as little re-creation as possible. ■

Content marketing trends to watch out for in India

Content marketing in India, while coming into its own formally, is showing signs of some really clear and interesting trends that marketers need to consider carefully:

Content first, evaluation later

At the top of the heap, is a shift to thinking that prioritises putting together the content first, and measuring impact later. Having said that, even the traditional measures of performance, like click through rates are being challenged. For studies have increasingly demonstrated that CTRs are not always an accurate measure of a campaign's performance. This shift is actually driven by some of the other key trends, which we take up next.

Video

While it is still early days, it is safe to say that video content will grow exponentially for the next few years in India. This is driven largely by the wholesale shift to visuals at the consumption end, as well as the ease of producing and using video making tools. While largely an outsourced function even today, expect firms to have in-house video production facilities soon enough. And by that, we don't mean a studio or a large team. We are talking about a team of two to three people, armed with the latest in video production tools from YouTube and/or other sources. Even hardware requirements are a lot more simpler than they used to be even a year ago. In fact, if you do not have your own production and editing ability, unless you have a really involved partner doing the job for you, expect it to be a serious crimp on your ability and cost effectiveness of churning out a solid stream of video content.

Not just text

Following on from the ascendance of video

is the obvious downgrade of the text only approach. While content will be driven by text where necessary, it is a fact that there is a premium on visual text, or the use of infographics. Today, we distinguish media outlets by the quality of their infographics, so there is no reason why your own content should not learn from them.

Regularity

Content marketing is not a once in a quarter, or even a weekly exercise. To work well, it requires daily, or some would argue even 24X7 involvement. That means adding on elements like a blog, newsletters and more, to build a better connect with, and nurture the communities you create. Regularity of content also means a badge of respectability for content curation, an aspect too many firms still remain uncomfortable with. The underlying logic, besides providing quick and free content is really about trying to keep your audience with you as long as possible, meeting as many of their requirements in your domain at your media platform. Thus, curation can only grow, as we see it.

Involvement

Interesting content is about your community. Solid content necessarily has to talk with the community, and not talk down or even talk to, as advertising does. That means creating content using polls that help people zero in on the issues that matter to most of them, be it when it comes to your product, or beyond. It means an active approach to encouraging feedback, and other UGC (user generated content) where possible. Consider yourself really lucky if you have members in your user community who can contribute. Encourage them as much as you can. Keep in mind that while involvement is a useful measure, not everyone interacts. In fact, typical community interaction with

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content will rarely cross 5%, so content needs to be tailor made to the people who won't interact too.

Webinars are back

After a long hiatus and relative indifference, marketers are rediscovering the use of webinars as an option to connect, inform, and generate leads. Driven by changing and improved technology, consumers need to process information in smaller chunks. With the possibility of interacting with domain specialists for participants, webinars as an option will now be a key part of any firm's content marketing suite.

Use of content platform tools

Content dissemination is an increasingly sophisticated business or job, and can benefit tremendously from the use of the appropriate tools to do the job. Be it tools for curating and selecting content, or push it to social media and manage it, there is a platform for everything. Using the one that works for you will make a serious difference to the effectiveness of your content. This is one area where the use of experts, or professional tools, still remains a very much viable, if not necessary option. ■

Choose your weapon wisely – content marketing platforms

The traditional ways of advertising and marketing have undergone a complete overhaul. Gone are the days when only a few clutter breaking creatives over a single platform would work. Today, the term marketing has a new meaning altogether. It includes a broader perspective of engagement as new-age media has resulted in an increased level of consumer awareness. Marketers are trying to find more innovative ways to reach out to their target audience and one such method that has gained a tremendous amount of momentum and hype is content marketing.

As per the Urban Dictionary, content marketing is the art of storytelling and telling your story well means telling it to people in a way that they can (and want to) understand. Besides the art of conveying your story in an effective way, it's imperative to find the right platform to promote it.

In the age of social media, it is in the best interests of firms to build social media properties to engage and communicate with an ever expanding online community so that they have a greater number of fans, customers, or prospects allowing them to generate improved insights with continued interaction with their followers etc. This leads us to the biggest question of all – which platform is right for your content?

The first step to picking the appropriate platform is understanding the brand and the consumer. There are many stories of business owners creating pages on numerous platforms and expecting results overnight, but content marketing is very similar to offline marketing in this sense, which is to say that only perseverance and determination garners results. There are a plethora of media platforms available to every business, but it is essential to be present on those platforms that will project your content in the best possible

manner. All said and done, there are many considerations to be made, textual versus visual, presence of your potential clients, and so on. If the business you represent has products that are best presented visually, why bother being present on LinkedIn when Pinterest and Instagram would offer far superior results? Let us have a look at the various options open to the marketers of today:

Facebook

Facebook is by far the largest social media network with an estimated 1.28 billion users present. Regardless of the kind of communication you wish to engage in, it makes sense for all businesses to have a presence on it. Advertising on Facebook is a costly exercise, but can be necessary to gather momentum. A study shows that only 5% of your followers see the content you broadcast due to the recent changes in Facebook's algorithms. On the other hand, being able to broadcast your content to a vast number of people everyday is a great advantage that all advertisers like to capitalise on. In addition, Facebook is not a one way street, so broadcasting content that engages your audience means conversing with them and allowing them to see the people behind the brand, thus fostering brand loyalty. It is to be noted that a study found that 40% of people respond better to visuals, and that photos are liked twice as often as text updates. Yet, for those keen to broadcast information, it is still the ideal platform due to its text and image friendly nature.

LinkedIn

With over 259 million users on this platform (according to LinkedIn), all of whom are seeking connections with those they would like to have professional relationships with, it is a goldmine of direct content marketing, and LinkedIn

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ENGAGEMENT IS THE KEY FOR BUILDING A NETWORK. WITH A DEVELOPED NETWORK, YOU HAVE AN AUDIENCE THAT IS KEEN TO ENGAGE WITH YOU, AND IS ALREADY RECEPTIVE TO YOUR MESSAGE.

knows it. The recently launched feature titled Content Marketing Score will allow firms to see how their content is being received. Finding worthwhile leads is much easier on LinkedIn as it reaches professional channels and the potential for B2Bs to expand their business is very real. LinkedIn allows content marketers access to their rich user data which in turn allows them to target a specific audience. This yields results as long as the content matches the needs of the TG.

YouTube

With more than 1 billion unique users added every month, businesses that have video content simply cannot ignore YouTube. With over 100 hours of video being uploaded every minute, it takes a lot to stand out from the crowd to gain views, or go viral. But statistics are on the side of video marketers as videos are 12 times more likely to be shared than links and text combined and viewers spend 100% more time on pages with videos. B2Bs have reported that videos drive new business, and 88% of businesses have reported that e-mail campaigns involving videos improve performance.

Instagram

Launched in 2010, this photo-sharing app now has over 150 million users. It has already been established that visual content has more takers. If the content you seek to market is primarily pictorial, Instagram is an opportunity to be grabbed with both hands. The app has a number of features that will prove helpful to marketers. Hashtags allow for great searchability, letting users search

for content they're interested in. Good pictures go viral quickly, and popular hashtags draw thousands of views. A great example of capitalisation of hashtags is TIME Magazine, who are now masters of the game. Every picture they upload provokes global discussion, a marketers dream. Engagement is the key for building a network. With a developed network, you have an audience that is keen to engage with you, and is already receptive to your message.

Paid Promotion

The importance of paid media is often understated. Unless you are a market leader, your content will not promote itself. Simply publishing content on your social media platform will not provide adequate results. To truly gain traction in the market, one has to shell out to promote your content via numerous avenues such as promoted Tweets, highly targeted Facebook advertisements, pay-per-click, Outbrain, etc. Paid marketing is a sure shot way to ensure that your content reaches your TG as all the listed organisations track user demographics (example: age, gender, interests, and so on).

Mailing Lists

Many have been steadily predicting the death of e-mail campaigns, but the fact of the matter is, it will take more than naysayers to take down this way of marketing, which is old, and still has the potential to be gold. Mailing lists, are by far the cheapest method to spread the word. If you are a new player, mailing lists will always hold temptation due to the low cost and the potential to reach

numerous people, but purchasing mailing lists is never the way to go. The most important word is consent, as people who are not open to your mail will only report your campaigns as spam, and this will cause a number of subsequent problems (marked as spammers, flagging your IP, etc.) which take a lot of time to be undone. The other important term to keep in mind is the open rates, to ensure a good open rate, and subsequently click through rates, it is crucial to keep the list size relevant, resulting in a high delivery rate.

Blogs

According to the 2013 Social Media Marketing Industry Report, 62% of marketers said that the platform they would like to learn the most about is blogging. The power of blogging cannot be underestimated as it can reach huge audiences, which means prospective customers too. If you are starting afresh, then why not focus on giving helpful advice on your blog? People are always looking for a digital friend whom they can trust, and eventually, you might even ask them what to blog about. Gaining a trusted readership is marketing gold, and trusted readers can be counted on to share content.

Search Engine Optimisation

SEO is crucial to broadcasting your content effectively. Writing great content and not optimising it to get views is akin to writing an epic and leaving it in your cabinet. In recent times, content marketing is projected in opposition to SEO, when in fact they both should work together. Creating great content (which finds readers

on its own, somewhat), and optimising it for increasing reach in a holistic manner, seems like the better option. Earlier, pages that had the best optimisation came out on top, but search engines smartened up and realised that users were keen on high quality content and so the algorithms were changed to bring quality content to the fore of the results. Thus the key is telling great stories and working to get that content discovered.

Public Relations

Content Marketing Institute defines public relations as “any activity, online or offline, designed to improve communications and build relationships with audiences that matter to your business”. PR uses the created content, and amplifies it through its regular channels to further the reach. As an added bonus, PR teams have taken to using content marketing tools to output content and measure their ROI. They also seek to engage guest posters, partners, and also submit content for awards to extend the life of any marketing exercise.

Inbound Marketing

“Inbound marketing is about getting found online, through search engines and on sites like Facebook and YouTube and Twitter” according to the author of The New Rules of Marketing and PR, David Meerman Scott. Creating quality content and making it visible through online channels and communities is crucial for all marketers. Inbound marketing not only drives traffic through other websites, it can also drive sales, customer retention, and so on. ■

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The Background

For years, companies have failed to rise to the challenge of engaging their fans on social media, but some have succeeded where others faltered. Marketers simply failed to co-relate the consumer's need for information and entertainment to their brand proposition.

Amul figured this out decades ago, but few others could follow in their footsteps and conquer the beast that is content marketing in as sublime a manner. Now, Amul is no longer lonely at the top, Oreo India has taken the hard steps to understand content marketing, and followed in Amul's footsteps. Oreo only came to India in March 2011. They have successfully manipulated social media (Facebook) to engage, entertain, and inspire their followers in a manner that only Amul did earlier.

The Challenge

The premium cream biscuit market is worth INR 5500 crore. Naturally, this made it harder for Oreo to make inroads, as brands such as ITC, Parle, and Britannia were already established players in the market. The brand team began an awareness campaign, with the message of togetherness in the driving seat, as a part of their strategy, which they called Take Leaders Down, or TLD.

Oreo India launched a content-

centric social media campaign to increase brand awareness. Their efforts were an unprecedented success as their Facebook page is one of the fastest growing pages in the world, according to Business Today.

The Campaign

The most noticeable aspect of their posts is the usage of the product as a visual device to further explain the content. For example, their Tetris themed post to mark the release of the game, wherein they portray Oreos as Tetris bricks.

Another aspect is the use of hashtags. #DailyDunks, is not the only one they use. Unique hashtags relevant to days, such as Doctor's Day have also been used to engage with their TG. These varied hashtags serve to increase their reach. The concept of Daily Dunks is used to set the frequency of the posts. Contrary to the advice of social media experts, Oreo India generally posts only once a day on its Facebook wall.

The brand is an example in its use of Facebook as a means of spreading interesting content. Oreo India's Facebook page, has followed the lead of Amul's print campaign, as they have taken to creating content that strikes a chord with the highlight event of the day.

On June 21, they used a

stretched pack of Oreos to signify the longest day of the year, a fact often missed by adults. The visuals were used as a means of forming a connect with the brand.

Oreo India largely focuses on Facebook, but they have taken to using Pinterest as well. They have a good formula in place, as they have interesting content on their page, even though they only have 17 followers on their Pinterest. Apart from a board for Daily Dunks, OreoArt contains some innovative images. There exists a fan upload board where the brand puts up images sent in by followers.

The Conclusion

Oreo India's work on social media platforms has been second to none, be it Facebook or Pinterest, although the numbers on Pinterest are too low to have a tangible effect. The content they offer tells its own story, as it is one of the fastest growing Facebook pages in the world. Oreo uses innovative ways, which are simple yet strategic enough to engage maximum people either via their hashtags or creative content that highlights event of the day. Creative campaigns, such as Oreo's "Daily Twist" campaign, which was launched in 2012 on the brand's 100th birthday was received very positively. Oreo has clearly shown us that how by offering timely, interesting content a 101-year old cookie is still able to engage its consumers in the most relevant manner. ■

CASE STUDY

REDBULL

The Background

Brand journalism usually causes one to think of blogs, social media channels, branded and promoted content, but no one thinks of a brand's very own media network. Red Bull, the world's most popular energy drink, has done the unthinkable. Red Bull, founded in 1987 by Dietrich Mateschitz, created multimedia experiences that incorporate film, photography

its team of over 400 employees. They can now be projected as a media firm that just happens to sell the most popular energy drink in the world.

The Idea

The content strategy of Red Bull is focused on sports and cultural events and projects. Its strategy has been in the making for nearly 25 years. The past couple of years, barely a month

customers, just for the sake of doing so. The emphasis is on associating the brand with adventure, showcasing the kind of talent that viewers aspire to and creating something remarkable that people want to share.

The Results

In the past few years, Red Bull has been everywhere. Infinity Red Bull Racing have won four out of the last five Formula 1 championships. FC Red Bull Salzburg have won three out of the last five Austrian Bundesliga football titles. New York Red Bull was placed first in the Eastern Conference in Major League Soccer in 2013. The Red Bulletin magazine is one of the largest circulating magazines in the world. Red Bull Stratos set the record for the highest views for a livestream on YouTube, with 8 million concurrent views during Felix Baumgartner's Stratos Jump, the highlights of which currently have over 34 million views on Red Bull's official YouTube channel. The channel itself has over 3 million subscribers, and over 860 million views. All this has resulted in over 5.3 billion cans of Red Bull being sold over 166 countries in 2013, and a worldwide revenue of over 5 billion euros. Locally, Red Bull India's sales increased by 55% in 2013. We can only conclude that content marketing has led to successful engagement in the case of Red Bull, and that they have reaped the rewards of all these non-obvious promotional activities. ■



and stories built for broadcast, print and digital media partners. In 2007, Red Bull Media House was created to promote the brand's content strategy via every digital and traditional medium you can imagine - a TV station, a magazine that has grown to be one of the largest in the world, documentaries, movies, music, alongside a comprehensive digital strategy. The media house controls the production and distribution of all Red Bull content from their headquarters in Salzburg, Austria, with another office in Santa Monica, California with

passes before we see some sort of Red Bull content attaining virality. As difficult as it is to believe that the Stratos Jump from 2012 could be topped, subsequent videos from the Red Bull Media House have done so, and in the process, highlighted a broad shift in viral marketing strategies, where brands have started to focus on a holistic approach to product promotion, rather than approaching it directly.

In most of Red Bull's online video content, there is minimal Red Bull branding, which means that they aim to engage

MARKETER'S SUCCESS STORY

Moving ahead with empowering content strategies – Dell India

Social media's capability to work on multiple platforms and yet become a medium to bring people closer, is a big opportunity to create relationships. Going by this principle, Dell India connects with its primary audience – the young Indian – through varied campaigns.

RITU GUPTA



Director, Marketing, Consumer & Small Business, Dell India

A MARKETING PROFESSIONAL WITH OVER 17 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE ACROSS INDUSTRIES, SHE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR DEVELOPING THE OVERALL BRAND STRATEGY FOR DELL IN INDIA.

Being associated with a brand distinguished for its ahead of the curve and strategic thought in social media and taking on Dell India's social media strategy has been the most value creating effort. The Dell Social Media Listening Command Centre delves into the challenges of consistently operationalising all types of social media content ranging from marketing to technical support and customer service, culminating into a strategy that is responsive and connected.

More so, a strategy that speaks of the successes of our customers, making them our brand ambassadors and at the core of our every decision.

Social media's capability to work on multiple platforms and yet become a medium to bring people closer, foster a sense of satisfaction and loyalty among customers, is a big opportunity to create relationships. Going by this principle, Dell India connects with its primary audience – the young Indian – through varied campaigns, all enabling our customers with the **Power to do more**, or as interpreted in our Personal Achievement campaign (PAC), **I can do kuch bhi**. Content marketing has emerged for Dell as a gap reducer, interaction starter, solution providing tool; all of which are bringing Dell closer to its audiences. Not only has Dell attained a position of a socially well connected brand, but we believe we have demonstrated the power of communities, strongly manifesting in ideologies of achievement, success and the inclination to accelerate your lives!

One of the leading examples of Dell India's utilisation of content marketing has been the PAC that reflected our core strength, that is, Dell gives customers the power to always do more, do better – with the power of technology. The campaign needed to address the challenges of –

- ◆ Taking a single brand value proposition and multiplying its effect, repeatedly across diverse activities for diverse product portfolios
- ◆ Sustaining a two way engagement with customers

Dell's unique brand proposition of being able to drive relationships with end consumers, was achieved through the 2013 launch of the PAC, tied in with a theme of *Technology fuels your dreams and passions*, across multiple social media platforms. Our objective was clear – Dell is a brand that has connected with its customers to help them bring out their potential. With content marketing being the primary tool for the PAC, we tapped into social media amplification in the most creative and symbiotic ways that clearly led to increasing brand and product visibility, evoking an emotional response and adding value. Some prominent highlights –

- ◆ #ICanDoKuchBhi – Launched with India's youth talent, *I Can Do Kuch Bhi* was a film that captured the can-do spirit of today's youth and showcased the Inspiron range as an enabler through different features, like the touchscreen, HD webcam, etc. While the TVC ran nationally on leading GEC channels, a simultaneous Twitter contest recorded over 3000+ conversations within the first couple of days. On the first day of the contest, #ICanDoKuchBhi was trending in Bangalore at the 1st spot, on 6th spot in Mumbai, in Delhi on 5th spot, and 4th spot in India.
- ◆ *Achieve with Dell Microsite* – The second aspect of PAC, www.achievetwithdell.in microsite had an influx of over 550 customer stories apart from video logs being posted on YouTube of user generated content, showcasing individual stories of personal achievement. For Dell it was about

becoming an entity, who is listening and powering consumers with solutions on personal technology.

Broadening our emphasis on the education segment this quarter, Dell India's dynamic *Back to College* online and offline campaign chartered out engagement with students on *Learning meets doing*. At the core of this is the belief that Dell can be the enabler of helping students showcase their skills in an efficacious mode. Driving the campaign, again with the consumer in mind, the outreach of the program has been to connect with youth through the Dell *Learning meets doing – Hub* active on Dell's Facebook page and via our Twitter handle @Dell_IN. An ongoing campaign, it is concentrated on empowering students by means of contemporary skills founded on the latest trends that are influencing the youth – for instance, taking of photographic selfies, followed by filmmaking and music.

For the first time we are also intensively engaged in a *Listen & Respond* program via our Twitter handle @Dell_IN with #LearnitDoit. This is a one on one, deeper engagement between Dell and the youth to understand what is important to them and what they are excited about as they go back to college. As the engagement progresses, these students also receive useful tips on how to pursue and excel at their passions, as part of Dell's mission to enable the youth with the *Power to do more*.

It is understood that the aim of content marketing is to ultimately identify and nurture leads and pragmatically address business goals. The value a brand gains from conversations, insights, trends, from listening to your audience and moreover providing them with a platform conducive to their growth, proves to be the ultimate synergetic win. A new generation of students aiming for greater heights and ultimately entering the workforce, bringing advanced technologies and a connected world with them, encourages us to nurture our interaction with them through social media. And we are constantly listening and learning. ■

DELL IS A BRAND THAT HAS CONNECTED WITH ITS CUSTOMERS TO HELP THEM BRING OUT THEIR POTENTIAL. WITH CONTENT MARKETING BEING THE PRIMARY TOOL FOR THE PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT CAMPAIGN, WE TAPPED INTO SOCIAL MEDIA AMPLIFICATION IN THE MOST CREATIVE AND SYMBIOTIC WAYS THAT CLEARLY LED TO INCREASING BRAND & PRODUCT VISIBILITY.

“Content marketing has emerged for Dell as a gap reducer, interaction starter, solution providing tool, which is bringing Dell closer to its audiences.”

MARKETER'S SUCCESS STORY

Storytellers maintain the world's emotional equilibrium through compelling content

A brand's life cycle is no different from a human life cycle. Except that the commercial side of being in the business of brands, is almost always measured in translation of the emotional impression into colossal quantities of consumption.

AJAY NAQVI



General Manager, Content Excellence, Coca-Cola

AT COCA-COLA, AJAY IS RESPONSIBLE FOR COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES TO DELIVER CORE CREATIVE IDEAS AND OVERSEE DESIGN ACROSS A HUGE PORTFOLIO OF SPARKLING, STILLS AND JUICES.

I remember growing up listening to my nana (maternal grandfather), my mom and her poet friends. Nana had an extempore style of storytelling and the sessions lasted multiple nights with the power of climax being exercised every night, before he announced the continuity of the story the next night (baki kahani kal raat mein).

During childhood, it was curiosity that was the dominant emotion, perhaps coupled with the fact that somebody was helping me visualise some of the things, ideas, and entities that I only heard about vaguely .

During my teenaged years, those stories were a blur, with vague memories of oratorical skills whenever I failed to tell a compelling story.

Only much later in life, I understood that there was an even more important cultural role of storytelling as I realised, that everybody has a nana or dada (paternal grandfather) who was telling stories.

What is the cultural relevance of storytelling? What do storytellers do to the cultural fabric? Changing medium aside, is there a concerted effort to shape society and world at large? Is it ingrained deep inside of us? Does the mind force us to balance out the narrative? Is there a tit for a tat? Are there stories of hope for every one of despair? Are there optimism stories for pessimism? Are there stories of courage and valour for when there is none? Are there stories of change when status quo creates rot?

Let us understand this specifically

“Marketers must balance brand's role, that is, only a positive, happy, do good community will help sustain their business.”

through brands. Why do brands tell stories?

Stories tend to have a larger impact arc. A story told today goes through an arc of emotional impression, losing relevance and coming back as nostalgia to corroborate your behaviour and decisions in life.

A brand's life cycle is no different from a human life cycle. Except that the commercial side of being in the business of brands, is almost always measured in translation of the emotional impression (love) into colossal quantities of consumption.

With great disgust shown for long term and love for immediate, marketers are not creating long term brand strengths. Promotions and other sales tactics are driving marketing communication.

So are we losing the opportunity of shaping the narrative for the next generation, who we are squarely responsible for? Great storytelling is rooted in great values and emotions that a society is in dire need of. Brands were the conduit so far, just like the movies that have pulled out an entire nation from the clutches

of despair, by telling motivational and inspirational stories.

When Coca-Cola bought the world a Coke, it was giving the world a message of inclusiveness; a much required emotional elixir at that time. Today, when Coke asks you to believe that the world can be a happier place, or that one should be kind so kindness does not die an untimely death in this world; the brand is balancing the emotions of the world in its own small humble way.

Marketers must balance brand's role, that is, only a positive, happy, do good community will help sustain their business. On the other hand, if in their self-introspection, they ask themselves "what am I doing for the world?"; their answer should be, "I am helping maintain the world's emotional equilibrium".

Social content driven by our liquid linked-and-live philosophy, further strengthens our brand belief of simple, inclusive and rather topical storytelling; helping maintain world's emotional equilibrium. ■

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MARKETER'S SUCCESS STORY

Financial literacy – we like it!

Today, financial planning is not a daunting task, which a few years ago was left to elders or a chartered account or friends' advice. The young are using various financial portals to compare different financial options to take informed decisions.

VINEET ARORA



Executive VP & Head - Product & Distribution, ICICI Securities

VINEET HAS BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN ESTABLISHING ICICIDIRECT AS A LEADING NON BANKING MF DISTRIBUTION HOUSE IN THE COUNTRY.

A recent study puts India, with 243 million internet users, ahead of the United States and second only to China. This rapid growth in the past ten years has come due to cheaper smartphones and a proliferating telecom industry.

Indians are exploring the World Wide Web for everything – information, education, shopping, travel, and most importantly, social media. And as Indians get savvier on the internet, they are relying heavily on it for all their financial needs – internet banking (29%) comprised a substantial percentage of the overall

number of electronic transactions for private sector banks.

Hence, it becomes imperative that ICICIdirect, the largest online integrated financial services portal shoulders the responsibility of providing the best-in-class financial services which includes equity and mutual fund trading, as well as financial planning to its 3 million customers.

Today, financial planning is not a daunting task, which a few years ago was left to elders or a chartered account or friends' advice. The young are using various financial portals to compare different financial options to take informed decisions.

To reach out to this target audience it is important for the knowledge to come from a credible source, using the right platforms for engagement and keeping the content simple and fun. At ICICIdirect, we felt that the need of the hour was to be someone trustworthy on the internet, who can guide, educate and introduce them to the world of investment.

Considering that a Google survey found ICICIdirect to be the most popular financial service provider Indian internet users searched for, we had to use online platforms to reach out to our target audience – 20 to 45 year olds in sectors A and B. To achieve this we relied heavily on social media.

ICICIdirect took upon the execution of this strategy through ICICIdirect Centre for Financial Learning (ICFL), a division to promote financial education and knowledge.

Take this, Facebook has 100 million users in India, their second-largest market worldwide. Similar numbers are witnessed

on YouTube. Both play an instrumental role in influencing people. Their social network influences their likes, purchasing power, as well as trends. Social media is the best viral medium, in terms of sharing information and knowledge, apart from being collaborative and increasing networking with people.

We had a great opportunity to use these channels for our larger objective of financial literacy.

An increasing trend is witnessed for finance related searches both on YouTube, as well as Facebook. We decided to use these platforms to create experiences and a centre of financial knowledge and support.

However, we had to overcome challenges and stereotypes:

- ◆ Finance is considered to be a boring subject and might not do well on this medium.
- ◆ Complexity increases as financial jargons are very tough to demystify.
- ◆ It is very difficult to be creative in the financial market, as even a hint of finance scares away the viewer.

The biggest challenge was to get the youth interested. It was challenging to create interesting content and stay well-connected with their everyday activities.

Creative Strategy

The creative strategy was defined in two ways:

A. Personification

- ◆ ICICIdirect created 2 characters against the market practice of one. The characters represent the bad and good side of an individual.
- ◆ The idea was that the bad guy being more flashy, high pitched, and animated will be in a position to grab the immediate attention of viewers, while the hero being comparatively sober can subtly put across the message.

B. Hangout – It's Finance and Fun, Out and Out

- ◆ ICICIdirect created a financial hangout which is seamless across Facebook, YouTube & Twitter.
- ◆ On YouTube, the idea is to make the viewer realise his dreams and interact with a financial tool.

“Given the complexities attached to investment, the user needs guidance and financial education. To educate him, ICICIdirect takes him seamlessly to Facebook via MoBo's Paathshala.”

SOCIAL MEDIA IS THE BEST VIRAL MEDIUM, IN TERMS OF SHARING INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE, APART FROM BEING COLLABORATIVE AND INCREASING NETWORKING WITH PEOPLE.

- ◆ The Facebook page provides education about financial products and process.
- ◆ The game Virtual Stocks provides a practical platform to experience, experiment & learn trading during live market hours without the risk of losing money.

Execution Process

A. Hangout – The Brand Channel

ICICIdirect used YouTube as its gateway by making it the entry to the financial Hangout. With out of the box creativity and animated videos, we wanted to draw the audience to this Hangout.

ICICIdirect used the custom channel of YouTube to create a property.

- ◆ To start with, Gyaano, the shortcut genie introduces himself by luring the audience to fulfil their dreams through his proposed shortcuts. Asking the audience to rub the lamp so that he can fulfil their dreams.
- ◆ Upon rubbing of the lamp, dreams that we aspire for, appear as icons. Gyaano asks the user to choose one of the dreams by asking them to drop any one of the icons into his hat.
- ◆ Whichever dream is chosen, accordingly the respective video plays. Storytelling continues on how Gyaano uses shortcuts to fulfil the user's dream.
- ◆ At the end of every video, it is realised that shortcuts can only take us for a ride. Thus, MoBo, the Money Boss is introduced, who guides the user the right path to realise their dreams by proper planning.
- ◆ MoBo guides them to a user-friendly dream calculator where the user can

calculate the amount to be invested to realise his dreams.

Thus, ICICIdirect used YouTube to create a financial Hangout where the user could visualise his dreams, and also the amount of money to be invested to fulfil them.

Realising the fact that proper investment is required to fulfil dreams the user looks out for investment options. Given the complexities attached to investment, the user needs guidance and financial education. To educate him, ICICIdirect takes him seamlessly to Facebook via MoBo's Paathshala.

B. Education via Facebook:

ICICIdirect uses Facebook as a platform to educate users on financial products and process.

◆ **Education via videos:**

On Facebook, ICICIdirect uses entertaining videos and creative posts to educate the youth. These videos are streamlined from ICICIdirect's YouTube Channel. There are various segments of videos that include:

- i. Learning videos for interactive stock investing and learning the basics of the stock market.
- ii. Detailed mutual fund educational videos.
- iii. Money to wealth videos that provide real-time case studies on how proper investments can create wealth.

◆ **Education via Facebook posts:**

ICICIdirect decided that its posts will mainly focus on educating the fans. Hence the posts on Facebook revolve around the following:

- i. The monthly Money Manager Magazine, a personal finance magazine that provides the appropriate material that teaches the user to manage their finances.
- ii. MoBo's Investment Tip of the Day! offers effective tips for investments that are easy to understand and fun to share with friends on Facebook.
- iii. Mutual fund ratios helps in demystifying financial ratios.
- iv. The financial quiz, e.g., unjumbling

letters to form financial jargons, completing financial terms through fill in the blanks that keeps the user engaged with the Facebook page.

In case studies, ICICIdirect presents a real life query to its fans, and ask them their realistic solution

◆ **Education via Twitter:**

On Twitter, ICICIdirect adopted the posts from Facebook and YouTube to create a personalised relationship in a fun and interactive way to learn personal finance as well as equity market.

◆ **Virtual Stocks game on Facebook:**

After the user gains the knowledge to start investing, they can use ICICIdirect Virtual Stocks simulator to hone their investment skills by investing during live market hours with virtual cash. The user gets 15,00,000 of virtual money to practice investing in real market scenario without the fear of losing real money. This gives the novices, who are sceptical to enter this segment, a unique experience as the first step into the real world.

It is this combination of the right brand, interactive and engaging platform, fun filled content and a safe environment to practice the learning that made this a winning strategy taking ICICIdirect brand to the youth of India. The results so far have been very encouraging.

A. Social Results:

Over 11.8 lakh video views from over 2,500 subscribers, 1.3 lakh Facebook fans and about 2,650 Twitter followers.

B. Virtual Stocks Game Results:

ICICIdirect has received whopping 1,00,000+ registrations for Virtual Stocks.

C. Business Result

Significant increase in online traffic on ICICIdirect.com and ICFL online courses.

By 2020 the average age of India will be 29 years and this young consumer base will be internet savvy. We believe that the various steps we are taking today, will keep the young India hooked to financial planning and a better and secured future. ■

IT IS THIS COMBINATION OF THE RIGHT BRAND, INTERACTIVE AND ENGAGING PLATFORM, FUN FILLED CONTENT AND A SAFE ENVIRONMENT TO PRACTICE THE LEARNING THAT MADE THESE CAMPAIGNS SUCCESSFUL AND TOOK ICICIDIRECT BRAND TO THE YOUTH OF INDIA.

What makes content marketing a challenging task?

Irrespective of what type of marketing tactics you use, content marketing has become the foundation of an enterprise's marketing mix. Quality content is the backbone of almost all forms of marketing. From social media, SEO, SEM, and PR, to inbound marketing, content is the key.

Despite the increasing popularity and numerous benefits, it doesn't come without challenges. The top content challenges, which marketers face are:

1. Producing original and engaging content
2. Integration
3. Time constraints
4. Budget constraints
5. Variety in content
6. Measuring effectiveness

Producing original and engaging content

Content Marketing has become a tried and tested marketing strategy. With more and more marketers jumping on the content bandwagon, creating original and engaging content has become a challenging task.

Integration

Producing and integrating content for different marketing channels is another task which poses a great challenge for marketers. Be it social media, e-mails, websites, blogs, print, or in-person communication need to be integrated.

Time constraints

No matter how much we ignore the fact, time is of the essence for generation of content. And generating really good quality content takes more time. The prime resource here is time, which no marketer has in abundance.

Budget constraints

Marketers spend a fragment of their marketing budgets in developing and distributing quality content. Most marketers are addicted to allocating a huge amount of their budgets to the traditional channels and are afraid to take the risk of increasing investments in content marketing. Content marketing is perceived as an expensive tool of marketing, despite studies showing its effectiveness in reducing cost-per-lead.

At many places, the senior management still has not understood the value of content marketing. They have strong beliefs that either their customers don't trust such content or that they have already acquired the majority of the customers.

Variety in content

Content can take any form. It can be written, visual, interactive or audible. Blogs, websites, e-books, videos, social media messages, case studies, reports, microsites, presentations, almost anything and everything uses content. Needless to say, content has to be tailor-made for the specific needs of each and every format, every time.

Measuring effectiveness

Content cannot be measured in the same way as other marketing tools. The way the effectiveness of content is measured is much more complex than the way it is done for other tools which discourages marketers from investing heavily in it.

India cannot be treated as one single market. With 28 states, 22 official languages, and an extreme variety of sub-cultures, strong local knowledge is a prerequisite for creating engaging content. With most of the population living in the rural areas, the need to customise content locally is inevitable. ■

CONTENT CANNOT BE MEASURED IN THE SAME WAY AS OTHER MARKETING TOOLS. THE WAY THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CONTENT IS MEASURED IS MUCH MORE COMPLEX THAN THE WAY IT IS DONE FOR OTHER TOOLS WHICH DISCOURAGES MARKETERS FROM INVESTING HEAVILY IN IT.

How to overcome challenges in content marketing

Content is what binds brands to its audience which is why a brand cannot risk compromising on it. With 93% of content marketers employing content marketing at present, the importance of it is not overstated.

SEERAJ KATOCH



Chief Operating Officer, Tangerine Digital

PRIOR TO JOINING TANGERINE DIGITAL, HE FOUNDED AND SUCCESSFULLY RAN AN ENTREPRENEURIAL VENTURE 'CONTENT VICTIM'.

Over the years, online content has become vital to how businesses reach and connect with their target audience. With access to internet being commonplace, consumers today have access to a plethora of content which has changed the way they perceive brands. A consumer is no longer persuaded by the badgering, pro-brand marketing approach that was pretty effective before. He will now absorb the vast number of opinions available on the web which make him well aware of the

mass response towards the brand. That, in turn, helps him to make a well-informed decision about whether he wants to engage with a brand or not.

This is where good content becomes pivotal for a brand's reputation. This might sound a bit elementary, but analogically speaking, content is the oxygen that people absorb when on the internet. Content is what binds brands and its audience which is why a brand cannot risk compromising on it. With 93% of content marketers employing content marketing at present, the importance of it is not overstated.

Having said that, content marketing comes with its own set of challenges. And these are challenges that either make a brand raise a white flag even before getting started, or lag behind despite creating content.

Prioritising your content strategy

Keeping content strategy for last is a bad approach, especially if your business is based online. Nowadays, the first 75% of the buying process is accomplished with researching and scrutinising information online, even before the final buying decision is made. With this holding true for both products and services, a brand needs to ensure that the content strategy is devised from the outset rather than being a hasty affair afterwards.

Setting a roadmap well in advance also aids in making the strategy cost-effective in the long run.

Creating relevant and engaging content

Each brand has a different target audience which makes their content needs unique. With the ubiquity of social media and ease of creating content, a brand is able to address the challenge of content creation to a certain extent. However, that is not enough. Brands might face a crunch of resources which results in their content strategy suffering. This is where a brand should look at hiring content creation and management agencies which have the relevant domain expertise, workforce and action plan to meet the brand's content needs. The fact that 73% of content marketers are already doing that is proof of this emerging trend.

But just having relevant content does not cut it these days. The content needs to be engaging and responsive to get your core audience talking to you. And when it comes to engaging content, there is nothing worse you can do, than to create content that prioritises ROI over engagement.

Talk to your audience, acknowledge their opinions, respond to their queries, and then enlighten them about your products and services.

Engaging content along with high level of responsiveness elevates a brand's credibility amongst its customers. All the more reason to focus on engagement than driving sales.

Start identifying what works

Once the content marketing strategy is in place and content is being created regularly, there is a constant need to recognise the kind of content that is received favourably by the audience, so that you can tweak your content strategy for it to be fruitful for the brand.

The other aspect of the same facet

“Creating good content is just half the battle. What matters is, how you sustain the flow of good content for your users.”

is effective utilisation of the available platforms. There is no point for a brand to invest energy in platforms that hold less relevance to their target audience. Analyse the demographics and build and promote content only on the relevant channels.

Overlooking user response tends to render a hardened approach from a brand in mind of a user, and this can adversely affect customer engagement in the long term.

Managing the scale of content

Creating good content is just half the battle. What matters is, how you sustain the flow of good content for your users. Frequency of content plays a crucial role in user engagement which is why a brand should think of utilising other avenues apart from fresh content creation to fulfil the need of content that its audience constantly expects and demands.

One of these avenues to manage scalability, is content aggregation, where brands can use white label content which helps the brand to sustain the demand for content without compromising on the quality of it.

Managing the authenticity of content

Every individual or brand has a distinct mind-set and approach when it comes to creating content. But if monotony starts to creep in, the value of content goes down for the readers. Variegated grain in the content is what keeps readers engaged, because that is exactly what a reader wants, a different perspective to the same subject. This is where crowdsourcing comes to the fore. Instead of creating all the content in-house, a brand can look at outsourcing content by engaging writers and bloggers and incentivising them appropriately. What's more, try the gamification approach to engage both for the readers and the bloggers creating content. Making it interesting always makes it engaging.

I am a firm believer in the age old adage that “content is king”. But for this adage to live up to its true stature, it is important that it gets the utmost attention, so that it properly aids a brand's marketing, instead of being just a footnote in the strategy. ■

**ENGAGING CONTENT
ALONG WITH
HIGH LEVEL OF
RESPONSIVENESS
ELEVATES
A BRAND'S
CREDIBILITY
AMONGST ITS
CUSTOMERS.**

Role of metrics in digital content strategies

Good content plays a pivotal role in the digital content strategy utilised by a brand, but that is just the tip of the iceberg. This is where content analysis metrics come into the equation.

KESAVAN KANCHI KANDADAI



Chief Executive Officer, Tangerine Digital

KESAVAN UNDERSTANDS THE EVOLVING DIGITAL LANDSCAPE AND IS ADEPT IN CREATING INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS TO MEET THE EVER-CHANGING NEEDS OF THE DIGITAL CONSUMER.

Content is king and today marketers have realised the potential of content marketing as consumers today are more equipped with information than ever. The question now, is how marketers can decipher the big mystery that revolves around this technique of marketing, which includes key metrics to measure the success of their content campaigns. It's very important to understand what's working for your brand, as there seems to be no tangible way to quantify the success or failure of a campaign. To find this answer, we must first focus on the components of content marketing:

Content creation and curation:

The content created by your organisation should educate your audience, while also informing them about your product offerings. You may win the hearts of your TG by answering the most commonly asked customer questions with interesting and useful insights. If your company becomes resourceful for people with your specialty, this might gain new leads and long-term customers. You may publish the content that is valuable to your audience in the form of articles, e-Books, white papers, infographics, visuals, videos, blogs, etc.

Content distribution: Besides creating valuable content, it is crucial to distribute it among your target audience via online and offline channels like social media, e-mail marketing, print ads, or other appropriate platforms where your TG might be active.

Need of Metrics

Good content plays a pivotal role in the digital content strategy utilised by a brand, but that is just the tip of the iceberg. The content strategy has to eventually culminate in bringing in business. This is where content analysis metrics come into the equation. Content metrics enables a brand to:

- ◆ Understand demographics, that is, identify target customers.
- ◆ Get acquainted with the customer's sentiments and preferences.
- ◆ Identify the preferred platforms for effective strategy execution.
- ◆ Learn patterns of customer engagement, that is, likes, comments, etc.

These are critical aspects for a brand to devise a successful content marketing strategy. While there is no single metric

which can help measure the overall impact of the strategy (due to the number of data points), there are a number of tools that provide aid.

Are we measuring the success right?

Although the internet has revolutionised the world as we know it, we still are unable to measure our success accurately. True, we have come a long way from the pre-internet age, when it was impossible to figure out how many people read your article or saw your million-dollar TV commercial. At least we now know how many people viewed it on YouTube, but we still have a long way to go. For a very long time the ruler metric of the web has been the page view, and its evil queen, the click, have reined over the media and marketing world for so many years and this has kept the real goals in the dark. So, what is the correct way to go about it? Following are some of the goals, which might help the marketers to determine the real value of the content for their brand.

Consumption Metrics

This is the starting point, as due to the saturation of content on the web, the customer is always on the lookout for engaging content. Brands that provide this, will attract a higher number of customers who consume their content.

Explicitly speaking, content consumption can be measured in terms of page views and downloads. A tool like Google Analytics is very handy to measure these metrics.

Sharing Metrics

If customers find a brand's content alluring enough, they will like, share, as well as Tweet it on their social media accounts. Some may even add backlinks for the content on their sites.

Circulation of good content through sharing is a bit like the snowball effect or even a wildfire, that helps increase a brand's visibility. Ease of sharing is another important factor for content sharing so it is always beneficial to have all the share plug-ins available on the content page.

The good thing about sharing metrics is that they are well-integrated with social

media platforms which makes analysis of user engagement pretty convenient.

Lead Generation Metrics

This is where the business side of the strategy gets initiated. Lead generation is the initial step to measuring ROI of a digital content strategy. If a brand is investing money, time and resources in a strategy, it is important to see how many leads their content generates. This can be determined through contact forms, quote requests, number of people subscribing to RSS feeds, and blogs, as well as social media interactions.

Ideally, a brand should have a lead generation metrics tool integrated within the website. And if not, a popular tool like Marketo should fulfil the purpose.

Sales Metrics

The final piece of the puzzle, sales metrics help measure the impact of the content strategy in terms of leads that got converted to customers. Social media interactions are essential as there is a high probability of these interactions converting into customers.

There is no dearth of good sales metrics on the web. A brand can look at the likes of Klipfolio, Salesforce or InsightSquared for measuring the sales that their digital content strategy generates. A digital content strategy cannot be restricted just to customer engagement. Lead generation and sales are equally important. On the other hand marketers also need to take into account the fact that content marketing is about building relationships through creative stories. Hence, we should also take into account the total engagement time per visitor, the number of unique as well as returning readers and what percentage of people who actually read through the article.

In totality, these metrics serve as means to the cardinal end: building the consumer base to bring in more business. With the cut throat nature of the competition in digital space, a brand cannot afford to overlook the criticality of these metrics if it wants its content strategy to reap the results that it set out to achieve. ■

DUE TO THE CUT THROAT NATURE OF THE COMPETITION IN DIGITAL SPACE, A BRAND CANNOT AFFORD TO OVERLOOK THE CRITICALITY OF CONTENT METRICS.

CONCLUSION

The way to my customer's heart, mind and soul...

IRFAN KHAN
Head - Marketing & Strategic Alliances, TO THE NEW

Considering the speed at which the world of digital has evolved, we all need to sit down and think about the road ahead. With almost half of the global population having access to the internet, the way content is consumed is rapidly undergoing a drastic metamorphosis. And this change brings with it a whole new range of opportunities and challenges alike. Needless to say, we can't sustain without creating a strong foundation of goals and efficient allocation of resources.

You are not the only one working hard to create content that would attract, engage, convert and retain customers. With over 80,000 articles posted on the web each day, the path to your customers heart, mind and soul is getting tougher by the minute. Competitors, publishers and bloggers, they all are trying new and innovative ways of producing content, which attracts the attention of the readers.

Evaluation of the product that the business sells should be the basis of your content marketing strategy. With evaluation of the product I refer to understanding the marketability of the product – think or feel, high or low involvement, etc. Content strategies for each type of product varies greatly.

The key metrics to measure content's success is gaining significant importance, total impressions, likes, traffic, and page views have taken a backseat. Determining

the right metrics for an organisation should be based on the goals set.

One of the biggest challenges of content marketing is to produce content for multiple channels. Many businesses are struggling to create the right content for a medium. While there is no sure shot solution to this challenge, constant innovation plays a big role in developing better integration methodologies. One of the biggest factors which has given birth to it is the change in the way consumers shop on different mediums.

As competition for attention increases, experimentation with content for different mediums to reach out to the intended audience is also increasing. To match the rate at which technology is evolving we need to develop the ability to quickly adapt and scale to new trends and opportunities.

The road ahead is exciting with greater needs and expectations of the customers and evolving marketing strategies. The task at hand is indeed difficult, but our role is to continuously face these challenges and seek solutions. ■

(Irfan Khan heads marketing and strategic alliances at TO THE NEW, Asia's leading SMACK services provider. He is a digital evangelist, an entrepreneur who has been involved in multiple internet-based startups and has mastered the art of building strategic partnerships.)

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