

5 big brands confirm that content marketing is the key to your consumer

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2012 has been the year of growth for content marketing. Brands have begun to embrace the discipline as a vital part of their overall strategy. What was once a conversation on "why content marketing" has turned into a conversation on "how to." Here's how five leading brands are developing content their consumers want.

Virgin Mobile

Virgin Mobile recently launched Virgin Mobile Live, a social newsroom that publishes content several times daily. Featuring new music, apps, and web memes, Virgin Mobile Live shares content across a host of social communities including Facebook, Buzzfeed, Twitter and Instagram. To date the site is averaging over 1 million unique views per month, spread virally by over 50,000 "super-sharers" on Facebook and Twitter.

According to Ron Faris, Head of Brand Marketing at Virgin Mobile, "scaling our content efforts isn't just about expanding the size of our social reach across new platforms. It's also about deepening the level of engagement we have with our fans in the social communities they hang out in. We've been successful so far in rewarding our fans with Virgin experiences on Facebook and Twitter. The next step is to evolve our social platform to allow fans to reward one another with special moments."



Screenshot from Virgin Mobile Live

American Express

American Express has participated in many content programs. One of their most successful, and long-standing, is American Express Unstaged – a program that live streams concerts by some of the biggest names in music through the lens of a well-known director to fans across the globe. Fans are viewing not only the event during its live performance, but also exclusive videos before and after the event. When American Express Unstaged presented Coldplay in 2011 it became, and continues to be the largest single-artist event on YouTube.

"Content is an important piece in all of our marketing efforts...extending our messaging through content is a great way for us to continue to convert our customers from simply seeing a message to considering our brand," explained Walter Frye, Director of Entertainment Marketing & Sponsorships at American Express. Frye went on to share that American Express will continue to invest in content through their partnerships with music but also sports and other entertainment properties. "These partnerships allow us to create memorable experiences for our Cardmembers; through our content use, we are able to scale out that experience to prospective and current customers and ultimately exposing more people to our brand and driving consideration."

Marriott

Renaissance Hotels is Marriott's experiential "lifestyle" brand, designed for business travelers who see travel as a way to explore the world. Hence, the brand designed two platforms to help guests "Live Life to DiscoverSM." TheNavigators platform helps guests to discover the local city outside their hotel and the RLife LIVE program helps guests to discover new music, films, arts, food and drinks inside the hotels. Both programs provide rich content for engaging guests online. In May Marriott relaunched RenHotels.com as not just a hotel website but as a discovery site. All the curated local discoveries (over 6,000 and growing) from their 155 hotels around the world now live online. And the brand promotes them to start conversations in their social channels. The brand's site is seeing record traffic and exponential growth in engagement while its Facebook community has grown to 270,000 likes.

We asked Dan Vinh, VP Global Marketing, Renaissance Hotels at Marriott International, about how the brand is measuring the worth of its content. "As a global brand with limited awareness and limited marketing budget, we have to find ways to be relevant and drive consideration. Content is critical for us because it's the currency that drives our relevance and therefore consumer consideration for our brand. And content for us lives first and foremost in the offline world through our hotel guest experience. This is how we ensure that what we do and say is authentic. Then we extend it to online to continue the dialogue with existing guests and their network (our prospects)."

L'Oréal

Over the past two years L'Oréal's Garnier Fructis brand has partnered with Rolling Stone to create content marketing around discovery of new, emerging musicians and their styles. In 2011 they made history by searching new artists in the country and asking consumers to vote and decide who would become the first unsigned artist ever to be featured on the cover of Rolling Stone. They developed a series of content around this program – which culminated with the winner artist signing a contract with a record label – looking to engage and connect with consumers throughout the process with the ultimate goal of building stronger affinity and emotional connection.



Garnier Fructis partnered with Rolling Stone

In 2012 Garnier Fructis evolved the program to leverage Rolling Stone's Women Who Rock annual issue, inviting consumers to get involved again, voting and deciding which female emerging musician would be in the flip cover of this celebratory issue that featured Adele in the cover. "We are very satisfied with the program having much stronger results this year achieving or surpassing our targets and benchmarks from number of page and video views, earned impressions to brand health tracking metrics," shared Debora Koyama, AVP Marketing, L'Oréal USA.

Koyama is excited about what the brand is planning for 2013. "My vision has been to take this strategic platform for the brand to the next level by comprehensively integrating all initiatives and touch points and by expanding our footprint on content creation appealing to Millennials in a much stronger and relevant way."

Vanguard

Last year Vanguard launched a campaign called "Vanguard at the Movies" which spoofed classic movie genres of horror, drama and suspense to convey what using Vanguard doesn't feel like. The initiative was launched during the summer blockbuster movie season with in-theater trailers and a heavy digital presence on sites like Hulu and Rotten Tomatoes. Vanguard used the movies not only to extend the brand, but also use it to cross-merchandise its existing video content on YouTube. The movies became a focal design point in re-launching the brand's YouTube page via a movie theme.

Michael Ma, Head of Retail Advertising and Prospect Marketing at The Vanguard Group, explained that in days after its release, the movies became the most watched video on the brand's YouTube channel and more than doubled its traffic. "Within weeks the Vanguard's YouTube channel went from tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands of views — half of them being our spots, but roughly the other half staying to learn more about our brand through other video content."

While the brands profiled here are well on their way to becoming publishers, many advertisers are just getting started. We asked Lisa LaCour, VP Marketing from content recommendation platform, Outbrain, to share 5 Tips on developing a successful and sustainable content marketing strategy:

- A content strategy should focus on existing customers as well as prospects. Content marketing is a great tool to create brand affinity but can also be powerful in building a new audience of potential customers.
- When it comes to content marketing, brands should think beyond direct response tactics and focus more on the top of the funnel customer engagement and awareness. Content marketing is a great tool for thought leadership, education and customer relations. Define the appropriate analytics so that the ROI can be measured effectively.
- An amplification strategy should be a key tactic in a content strategy. Once the content is created, search and social networks can be used to distribute, but you should also make sure to distribute it out to others who may not know it exists. Intent is not created in a search box.
- Invest in the appropriate resources to meet your objectives.
- Stay honest and true to the brand

The brands profiled in this article and many more will share their success stories at Brand Innovators Content Marketing on December 6, 2012 at the Sony Club in New York City.

Fonte: Forbes, New York. Disponível em:

<<http://www.forbes.com/sites/marketshare/2012/11/27/5-big-brands-confirm-that-content-marketing-is-the-key-to-your-consumer/>>. Acesso em: 27 Nov. 2012.