



THE NEW RULES FOR CONTENT MARKETING

Whether it's native advertising, sponsored editorial content or blog posts, great content is still King



WENDY LEWIS is President of Wendy Lewis & Co Ltd, Global Aesthetics Consultancy, author of 11 books, and Founder/Editor-in-Chief of www.beautyinthebag.com. She is a contributor to a number of trade and consumer publications in the USA and Europe.

contact w@wlbeauty.com

JUST HAVING A WEBSITE AND SOCIAL media platforms is not enough anymore to stand out from the pack. Your marketing plan also requires some creative and engaging content that can promote your practice in fresh, new ways. The overriding goal of content marketing is to get your content in front of the right customer at the right time.

In theory, content marketing is designed to create valuable, relevant and compelling information on a consistent basis to a targeted audience with the goal to stimulate activity and results for your company or brand. Ultimately your content should aim to build an audience that likes, trusts, and respects your brand.

Custom content marketing is on the rise, mainly due to the fact that Google has increased the viability of content. In short, custom content is real brand-specific content demonstrating your expertise through a range of modalities, including infographics, videos, photos, articles, podcasts, and blog posts. For example, keeping up an

onsite blog is a great way for a practice to produce custom content in-house on a regular basis. There are numerous ways to produce content that your clients will want to read and share.

Marketers need to ensure that all of the content generated integrates seamlessly with your marketing activities and business goals. Content should never exist just for its own sake; it should be well thought out, address the needs of your customers and effectively move them closer towards making a purchasing decision.

Marketing revisited

Think of yourself as the storyteller whose job is to inform and inspire your audience to drive measurable actions that impact your bottom line. From editorial copy, website content, blog posts, to social media posts, everything you put out there for your brand should be consistent in tone and quality. The best content is searchable, shareable, consumable and relevant.

Your main objectives should include raising your >

▷ brand's profile and messaging as well as promoting lead generation, decision making, retention, and ultimately, driving purchasing decisions. Raising awareness can be effectively accomplished via content, social media and video marketing. Lead generation is more readily linked to direct search and digital advertising.

Branded content has come into its own in 2017. We are seeing more brands who formerly spent big on traditional advertising now devoting a big chunk of their budgets to investing in relevant content to connect with their target audiences. Branded content is different than what is known as 'native advertising.' Native advertising is a type of format that directs users to branded content, whereas branded content is a fresh form of marketing that is more closely aligned with the objectives of traditional marketing strategies.

So what's really driving this trend?

In a nutshell, consumers don't really like to be sold to. They are programed to do their research online before making a purchasing decision or reaching out to your practice. If you are lack rich content to persuade them to get in touch, they may easily go to other sources.

This form of marketing does work, but less is more. For example, consumers tend to respond better when the telltale signs of hardcore branding are more subtle. Instead of aggressively pitching your products and services, providing truly

GOOD TO GREAT CONTENT

Create content with a consistent flow

- 1** Describe an issue that is on the minds of your target audience of patients (such as looking older or losing their hair)
- 2** Explain the impact of that issue on their lives (self-esteem, confidence)
- 3** Describe why patients think it is important (to feel better, compete in the workplace)
- 4** Share the outcomes of other patients who you have helped (avoid revealing your main solution)
- 5** Offer info on alternative solutions (home care products, lifestyle adjustments)



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relevant and useful content to your target audience to offer them solutions to what is on their minds can prove to be a better strategy. You don't always need to heavily incorporate brand messaging and product pitches to make an impact. When it comes to branded content, your strategies should have a mix of different types of content, such as content designed to generate brand awareness plus sponsored editorial content to flesh out more specific details.

There are three basic categories of branded content: sponsored editorial, custom content (where you see the brand slightly throughout the content but without product descriptions), and heavily integrated custom content (content that has a lot of brand messaging, product placements, etc.).

Consumer awareness of a brand increases after engaging with branded content. Having companion display ads alongside branded content has also been shown to increase results. Imagery (infographics, image galleries, and slide shows) tends to outperform text and video adds another dimension to tell the story.

The bottom line is that you have to know your audience and create a content experience that offers value, utility, and entertainment. It's important to understand the wants and needs of consumers and how to create a brand

narrative. When they see content that matters and that's relevant to them, they want to use all the components of storytelling to engage with it.

Consumers are willing to engage with brands online, but they expect to get something in return for their time and attention. Native ads are often more engaging because they tend to have more entertainment value, so consumers perceive a more lasting connection than with traditional click ads. Custom content needs to be authentic to work. It should never be overly fluffy and superficial to stand out.

You do not have to attract huge numbers of potential customers to be successful; you just need to attract the right ones. By casting the net wide enough to not miss anyone, you may be attracting people who are a waste of time and budget. The most important result is to attract the right consumers who are potential clients or patients, not to attract just anyone. If you cast your marketing net too widely, you will waste time and money attracting the wrong kind of consumers. With so many channels of information out there, consumers can easily just tune you out.

Content marketing strategies

You need to tell a different story to cut



the services you offer as solutions to their own needs. When your potential customer calls you after reading the content, seeing a video, or listening to a podcast, they will often refer to the article that ignited an interest to reach out. That is the best way to know how your strategy is working.

Content wars

We're in a knock down drag out content war right now; every browser, website and social media platform is fighting for attention with all of the others.

Just think about how many emails and ads your mailbox is flooded with every day. Then factor in Gmail ads, Facebook ads, Instagram promotions, text messaging marketing, and automated calls to your mobile phone. Today all consumers are bombarded with brands sending them thousands of pieces of useless information 24/7. Most of the time, the content they get is not very relevant or valuable to them, or it's just spam.

This increased competition that is forcing marketers to reconsider what they are putting out there. Therefore, you need to make sure every single post you publish has value for your target audience. The more targeted your content is, the better it will work for you. Targeted content sent to the right customer and the right time is most effective to drive traffic and interest in your practice.

Avoid falling into the trap of putting out any old thing you can come up with just for the sake of posting. Focus on topics and themes that are important to your audience. If you are not sure what those are, just ask them. Quality trumps quantity in all forms of content marketing.

Blogging remains an ideal way to utilize search engine optimization practices to get noticed. By optimizing your website for search engines with interesting blog posts, your business will appear at the top of search results for topics related to you're the services you offer. This will lead to more visitors to your website, increase

your leads, and help you grow your practice. You can post a blog with keywords weekly, but unless the content is valuable, you will lose your readers' interest. If you do not have time to draft quality blog posts on a regular basis, or there is no one on your staff who is capable of keeping up with content creation, consider hiring a marketing agency experienced in content for medical practices or enlisting the services of a professional beauty or health writer.

As more marketers and publishers realize that consumers don't want to read random content that is not personalized, they will need to get more creative to devise new ways to provide more engaging content to maintain their audience's attention. Branded content will not only be published on social media, your blog and website. Among the most common strategies we are seeing, branded blog posts, infographics, GIFs, videos, and other forms of content are being used more frequently to reach their audience. Keep in mind that sponsored or branded content needs to be labeled as such, in line with the FCC rules on social media posts and Instagram influencers.

Another strategy to consider is content rich sites sponsored by brands in a subtle way to generate consumer interest in the category of their products or services. For example, a plastic surgery clinic may use a blog or microsite that is dedicated to a specific topic - such as Best Facelifts or Acne Scar Treatments. It may not be obvious at first that it is owned by a single brand or entity, but it can be an effective marketing tool.

Storytelling, like the kind of content used on Instagram and Snapchat for example, allows potential patients to feel like they already know you, like you, and trust you before they ever come to your practice. Because consumers are now controlling the conversation, storytelling is in favor and we can expect that it will be for the foreseeable future.

through the clutter. Therefore, don't just focus on your products, but instead focus on your customer's needs. Think about who your ideal customers are. What information would they find valuable enough that they might be willing to pay for it? In most cases, customers seek answers to their questions. They want to know how to solve important challenges for themselves or their businesses.

Great content does not start with glitzy blurbs all about you and your products or services. Consider that the best kind of content is generated by listening to your customers. Think about what they are interested in learning and what form of content they want to consume, and use this to plan your content calendar.

Think of it as a problem-solving exercise. Patients first need to know why they need what you have to offer, and what problem/concern you can solve for them. Then they need to develop confidence about the potential result or outcome of that solution.

The goal of generating your best content is to resonate with customers who can visualize themselves in the description of

PUBLIC TRUST IN BRANDED CONTENT

The findings of a study by Time Inc. revealed that two in three consumers trust branded content more than traditional advertising. 57% of respondents said they feel brands put more thought into being creative and interesting in custom content; 56% like that brands aren't just trying to sell, but are sharing something 'cool' or teaching them; and 56% appreciate brands that partner with sources they trust. The study also showed that consumers are very open to custom content as a more interesting way to connect. In addition, they found that 90% of those polled like the idea of custom content as a way for brands to engage them, 89% believe custom content is a great way for brands to break through the clutter, 93% like brands sharing interesting things they may not have otherwise seen, and 92% believe brands have expertise on topics and add value to content¹.

Reference

1. Elkin T. Study Finds Two In Three Consumers Trust Branded Content More Than Traditional Advertising. MediaPost; New York, US. Available at: www.mediapost.com/publications/article/303131/study-finds-two-in-three-consumers-trust-branded-c.html