

Building a better scope of the content marketing space

By Athar Naser

13 Jan 2014

Before we get into 2014, I feel it is important to touch on the development that the content space experienced in 2013. It really felt like the birth year for content marketing, although we have to note that 'content' has been around as long as humans have, and digitally certainly as far back as the first-ever HTML page surfaced.

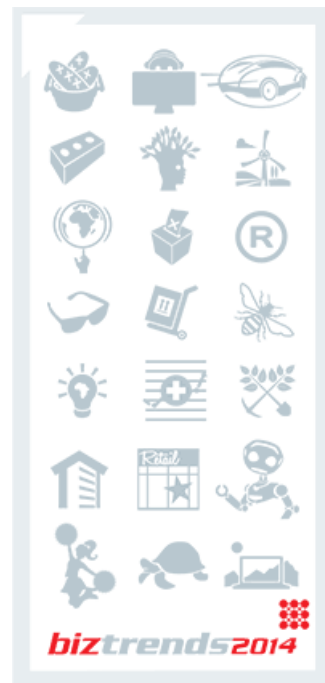
As with any new discipline and area, it is going to have to be questioned, thrown around and handled by a variety of people before it is understood.

We are now at the stage where everyone is trying to understand content marketing and where it fits. From the publishers to the media agencies and even as far as the advertising networks, everyone is jumping in. This is bad because it creates further misunderstanding, but also good because it causes engagement and interaction.

2014 will see us start to start building a better scope of this space: what content marketing is and what it is not. Critically, brands and marketers will start to delve into this space, and hence start to ask questions which will lead to a better understanding and capacity for success. Here are some predictions for the year ahead:

1. The discernment between 'content strategy' and 'content marketing strategy'

Two very different things, although they can go hand in hand. Simply put, content strategy refers to how you handle your organisation's content across all platforms. This may include regular auditing, creating governance, allocating resources, selecting CMS platforms and so on. This is an *operational endeavour*. Content marketing strategy, on the other hand, is a *marketing endeavour*. This is the strategic use of content across traditional and digital platforms to drive pre-determined user actions that align to specific business objectives.



2. An urgency to be involved in content marketing

Everyone is starting to take note of content marketing in one way or another. Some are trying to snap into action, others are watching and learning. What seems standard across the board is an agreement that they *need* to be involved somehow.

3. The emergence of content teams

Naturally, with this need to engage will come the requirement for content staff. With the talent pool highly scarce, editors, journalists and publishers will account for the majority of this recruitment. Alas, whereas they make excellent content strategists, they will not necessarily fulfil the content marketing aspect, which is first and foremost a marketing endeavour. Internal editorial teams will start to collaborate with internal marketing teams (eventually giving rise to a need for a senior content position that reports to the CMO).

4. More brands to start taking on publishing duties

A critical part of the content marketing operation is the publishing. This is what editors are also excellent at, and with

brands employing editors it will make sense for them to also do some publishing of their own - they might quite enjoy this empowerment, but may find that there is a need for help to generate the right level of content.

5. Mistaking the discipline of 'content marketing' for the tactics within it

As with any medium, content marketing is a holistic approach to a communications challenge. Within this, there are many tactics and executions, from native content to writing blogs around editorial calendars and implementing newsletters. These should form part of an overall integrated content strategy, but are frequently mistaken for 'content marketing' within their own right.

6. An uptake in native content

In an attempt to fill the *need* to be 'doing' content marketing and the mistaking content marketing as a discipline for the parts within it, we will no doubt see an uptake of the various aspects of content marketing outside of an integrated strategy. This will revolve around the 'in thing' that is being spoken about, which is currently, native content.

7. Investment in content technology

We live in a digital world. And the digital media and marketing space is dominated by technology. Content is no different. There are more and more opportunities to automate parts of the content effort and there are already companies in South Africa who have embraced this. By the end of the year, every major publisher in the country will have plugged in some form of content technology.

8. Focus on mobile

As more online traffic comes from mobile, this will (or should) become a focus area for big brands. In the US, mobile traffic has for the first time overtaken desktop traffic, and many organisations have already adopted a 'mobile first' strategy. Whereas we're not there yet, we're certainly headed into that direction.

9. 'Outside in' thinking

Putting the consumer first - what a breath of fresh air! Marketers have long been concerned with their messages, their objectives, and their communication. Social media has been the biggest step in the empowerment of the consumer, and marketers are realising that a content marketing strategy has to revolve around your target consumers' needs - not your own.

10. Measurement and accountability

The final stage of a content lifecycle should be assessing the success of that content in order to gain insights and hence fuel future planning. The only way to do this, of course, is to put in place metrics and milestones for your content performance. This will be a natural progression borne of asking questions around ROI from initial content forays.

For more:

- Bizcommunity Special Section: [Biz Trends 2014](#)
- Bizcommunity Search: [2014 trends](#)
- Twitter Search: [#biztrends2014](#)



ABOUT ATHAR NASER

I specialise in content marketing and native advertising - two areas that I have been involved in strategically and on a ground level for many years. My media career has spanned a variety of senior roles that have lead me to start my own content agency with my personal vision - one of high quality service, products and innovation. My clients now benefit from and are part of this vision.

- Native advertising works, and we can prove it! - 25 Feb 2016
- Where is your content marketing plan? - 8 Apr 2014
- [2014 trends] Building a better scope of the content marketing space - 13 Jan 2014
- Content marketing: Get a head (of content) - 4 Dec 2013
- Native advertising vs Native content? - 14 Nov 2013

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>