THE CULTURE OF CONTENT

Nine steps to content marketing excellence

2016

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Digital noise RISING.

Imagine a young, urban couple with their third baby on the way. They're ready to make the oft-dreaded leap to a minivan, and it's time to decide on a brand and a model. While dad checks safety ratings and online reviews, mom calls her friends to ask how they like their own vans. Together, they review and compare features on the manufacturer's website and later "build" their dream minivan, choosing colors, fabrics, floor mats, and other accessories—all without leaving their living room. Perfect car in hand and confident that they've chosen the best one for their needs, they arrive at the dealership and walk onto the showroom floor, ready to finally meet their salesperson.

From cars and banking services to networking equipment and retail goods, the purchasing process across products and industries has changed. Consumers and business buyers have taken control—many times researching products, talking to peers, and reading online reviews, all before they interact with your staff or leave any detectable indication of their interest. Further, they expect access to information that is especially tailored for them, at the very moment they need it, no matter where they are. And if you can't meet their needs, they won't give your brand a second look.

In most cases, digital content from or about your brand is now the primary lens by which consumers judge whether or not they want to interact with your brand. In fact, 87 percent of buyers say digital content significantly impacts their purchase decisions.[1] For companies like Red Bull, GoPro, and MGM Resorts International, content—and the experiences built with it—has allowed them to stand out among all the other brands competing for a shrinking slice of consumer attention.

For Red Bull, the customer experience isn't about an energy drink. It's about content. From live sports broadcasts to homegrown adventure videos, Red Bull has built up its own media brand to help attract and engage its audience—which includes both current and prospective customers. Far from seeking product information, people look to Red Bull to get their fix of car racing, mountain biking, kiteboarding, and gaming.

More than just another camera brand, GoPro turns people into heroes through content. By encouraging people to share photos and videos on their site—and then rewarding their favorites with cash prizes—the brand has turned content into an experience.

And the digital experience for guests staying at an MGM Resorts International property doesn't end once they book a room. MGM has expanded their content marketing programs to include mobile content that helps guests decide where to dine, find out which restaurants have open reservations for dinner, and even purchase tickets to the next Cirque du Soleil show.

As you can see, there's no room for basic content marketers at the top. With the number of companies vying for the attention of your customers, only those who have truly mastered the art (and science) of content marketing will be able to rise above the noise.

The cornerstone of CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE.

Marketers are now starting to recognize that great content creates great customer experiences. Like peanut butter and chocolate, they're just better together, both topping Econsultancy's list as the most exciting digital opportunities that lie ahead for marketers.[2] And even though digital experiences are relatively new in marketing—as is the term "content marketing"—using content to connect with your audience isn't.

Years ago, if a door-to-door salesman showed up on your front porch, they'd leave behind a brochure so you could remember them later. Before digital (and still today), messaging for radio announcements, static billboards, and airplane banner ads had to be relevant if marketers hoped to get someone's attention as they were relaxing in their living room, commuting to work, or just soaking up sun on the beach.

Although the terminology, delivery channels, and tools for managing experiences may have changed, trying to reach your audience where they are with information that interests them most has always been a critical piece of the marketing mosaic. And with today's fast-changing market and ever-growing consumer expectations, the evolution continues as more and more organizations realize that their very survival depends on developing great content to fuel and differentiate the customer experience.

Crowds go wild for CONTENT MARKETING.

The Content Marketing Institute says 88 percent of B2B and 76 percent of B2C organizations are now onboard with content marketing.[3] While these figures may seem high, the percentage of companies that actually rely on content to tell their story is probably much higher. Through their websites, mobile apps, or word of mouth, just about every single company out there is "doing" content marketing.

And judging by the numbers, this train is only picking up speed:

- Each year since 2010, marketers have noted that they would be increasing their content marketing budgets over the previous year.[4]

- By 2017, 51 percent of companies will have an executive, such as chief content officer, VP, or director of content, in their organization who is directly responsible for content marketing strategy.[5]

- By 2019, the content marketing industry is projected to be worth more than US$313 billion—more than doubling in value in just 5 short years.[6]

88%
of B2B companies rely on content marketing.

76%
of B2C companies rely on content marketing.
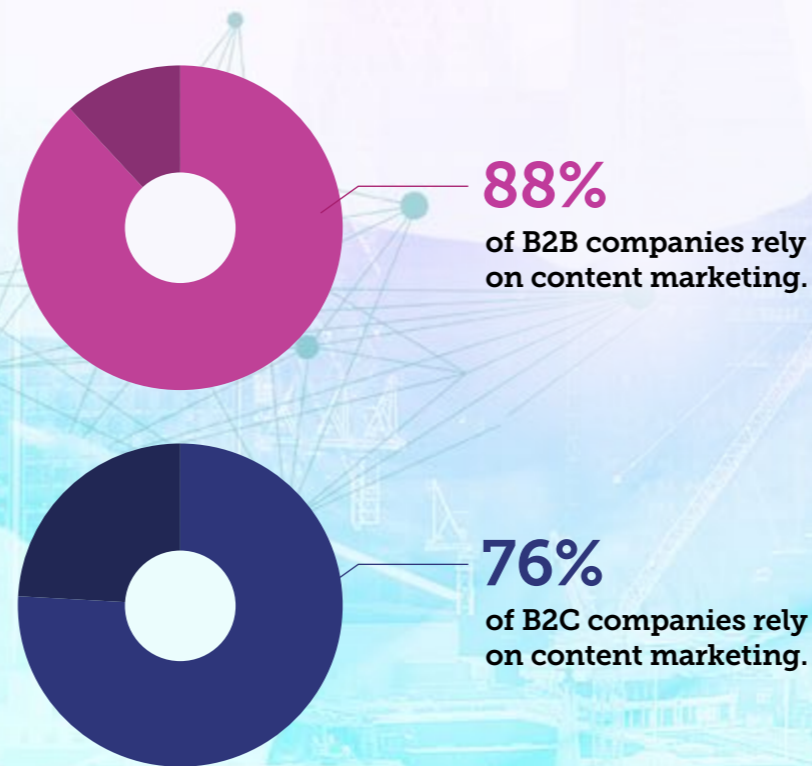
It's all about **CULTURE.**

Everyone has a different idea about what it takes to truly master content marketing.

Some think it means forming a content marketing team or investing in technology with content and customer experience capabilities. While these elements certainly play a part, content marketing excellence goes a lot deeper and wider than this.

Being the best (and maybe even just competitive) not only requires a change in the way you create and manage content, but also in the people you hire, your rewards

structure, and the systems you use. And it demands an entirely different perspective on your relationship with customers and prospects.

In short: To truly outshine the competition through content marketing, you need to consider your entire company culture. Let's look at nine steps you can take to create this culture of content in your business and better capture your customers' attention.

1 Define your content marketing strategy.

If you have any hope of seeing a return on your content marketing investment, it's time to start treating content as a strategic asset. By defining your content marketing strategy, you can better understand where you want to go with your content efforts, what you'll need to get there, and how to measure success.

And to make the most impact, that strategy needs to be written. Research shows that organizations with documented strategies are more effective at content marketing than those without.

Marketers in companies with documented strategies also say they are able to justify spending more on content marketing and feel less challenged by the day-to-day issues related to the discipline.[7]

In a nutshell, your strategy spells out how you'll use content to meet the needs of your target audience and, ultimately, add value to the organization. While your own strategy will be specific to your company, there are some elements that no content marketing strategy should be without.

The building blocks of content marketing strategy.[8]

1. **Create your business case.** Outline the need for content marketing, how you plan to meet that need, the investments and risks involved, and what you'll do if part of your initiative stalls.

2. **Define your personas.** Personas are fictional representations of your ideal audience segments that encompass their interests and needs, buying habits, and preferences for content consumption. Because you should market products or craft messaging based on audience segments, it's important to map these personas to your own buying cycle and content to ensure your messaging and delivery don't miss the mark.

3. **Develop your brand story.** Understanding why your business exists and finding a way to tell that story in an authentic voice is the only way to build a lasting connection with your audience. Create your brand story and document how you'll keep that story alive through customer experiences.

4. **Create your channel plan.** Determine the best placement for your content—whether it's your website, social media, or mobile app—and identify which personas match each channel. You should also define how you'll structure your content and which calls to action make the most sense for each channel.

30%

of B2B and 38% of B2C marketers say they're effective at content marketing. This number jumps to 44% (B2B) and 58% (B2C) among those with a documented content strategy.[9]

2 Infuse customer experience into company culture.

Best-in-class content marketing organizations get it. No matter how feature-rich or reasonably priced their offerings may be, they know that without customers, their companies would soon fade away.

Because of this, they focus on customer experience innovation. Considering the trends, this makes sense. By 2017, 50 percent of product investment projects will be redirected to customer experience innovations.[10] By 2020, customer experience is predicted to surpass price and product as their brand's key differentiator.[11]

Clearly, for any company that plans to keep their doors open, customer obsession should be job one.

However, making the transition from a product-focused business to one that puts the customer front and center isn't easy. It requires not only the right tools and capabilities, but also an entirely different way of thinking.

Unfortunately, we have a long way to go. A recent study shows that only 11 percent of companies have integrated customer experience into the culture and across the organization. [12]

How to make the shift from product focused to customer obsessed.

1. **Get leadership buy-in with data.** Like any major initiative, keeping the focus on the customer must be a corporate strategic imperative, or it will fail. Identify leaders who recognize the value of the customer experience; arm them with the data needed to communicate this value; and help them advocate not only to other executives at the top, but also to leaders throughout all levels of the organization.

2. **Make it a companywide commitment.** Customer obsession is not just a marketing or a customer service thing. It's a huge undertaking that involves the entire organization.

   Start with identifying leaders and teams from various departments to promote, recognize, and reward customer-centric actions. When thinking about content and the customer experience, go beyond creative, campaign, and digital marketing teams, looping in sales, product, training, and other units to help shape more holistic experiences.

Make the customer experience vision personal to each employee by finding ways for them to connect with your audience, even if they're not on the front line. For example, give teams ready access to a 360-degree view of the customer, including feedback and suggestions, so they can better visualize how their everyday work affects those experiences.

Finally, aim to get at least 75 percent of your employees to commit to putting the customer first. According to Forrester, this is the percentage of employees that must be onboard if your transformation to a customer-obsessed organization is to move forward.[13] (Make that 100 percent, and you can truly call yourself customer obsessed.)

3. **Give it time.** Customer-centric organizations aren't built in a few months—or even a few years, notes Forrester analyst Samuel Stern, so come prepared with patience and a healthy dose of commitment:

   "Most transformations take at least five years, and most companies that set out to transform their culture to be customer-centric struggle to do so." [14]

   In order to keep everyone motivated over the long haul, it's important to set smaller milestones along the way and celebrate successes often.

3 Place your audience front and center.

Today's buyers expect you to deliver relevant, meaningful content when they want it, in the way they want it—and marketing leaders are catching on.
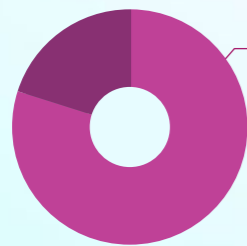
80%
Nearly 80% of CMOs say that custom content is the future of marketing.[15]

But you can't create relevant content for someone you don't know. That's why you have to be passionate about understanding the interests, goals, and aspirations of the people you want to interact with your brand—whether you're selling software to an enterprise business or hotel experiences to family travelers.

To keep your brand top of mind, you also need to extend your reach so you can be everywhere your customers and prospects are. At first glance, this appears to be a seemingly impossible task.

Organizations have more and more digital properties to manage. Consumers switch devices and channels in the blink of an eye. And content demand continues to skyrocket at a dizzying pace.

When all of these forces converge, brands are faced with potentially thousands of customer experiences to create, deliver, and manage. And they all have to be relevant, personalized, and compelling.

One brand that's making it all work with a smile is Comedy Central. Intimately familiar with their Millennial audience, the comedy brand not only understands that these customers define themselves by their taste in comedy, but that social sharing is second nature to them.

As a result, in addition to their apps, website, Amazon, and Hulu channels, marketing leaders make sure their content is available on every major social network, exactly where their audience can find them.

When Trevor Noah—the only Millennial late-night show host—took over as the host of Comedy Central's *The Daily Show*, the brand noticed that fans began conducting online searches for topics

like "Trevor Noah single" and "Trevor Noah girlfriend." Seeing an opportunity to engage their audience, they created hidden videos of the host responding to these and other popular fan queries. The videos, which could only be found when searching promoted terms on Google, were a hit with fans and demonstrated Comedy Central's reach beyond the television screen.

"We need to be the favorite comedy brand for Millennials anywhere they're looking to laugh."[16]

WALTER LEVITT
CMO
Comedy Central

How to get to know your audience (perhaps better than they know themselves).

1. **Start with personas.** An essential step in defining your strategy, your content marketing efforts will stop dead in their tracks unless you've taken the time to clearly define your buyer personas. Beyond just gathering demographic information, the most effective personas are developed by analyzing data around the kinds of content your audience wants to consume and how they want to consume it.

2. **Take inventory of audience behavior.** Every time someone clicks on a Facebook ad, shares your content on Twitter, follows an email call to action, or downloads a piece of content from your website, that person is telling you their story about what they want to consume and how they want to consume it.

   Likewise when they interact with you offline, such as during a customer support call or when they read a piece of direct mail.

   The plot thickens as you dig into how they behave across devices. Do your customers watch videos and read blog posts on their phones but prefer to download longer form content on their desktop?

Getting a handle on how your audience interacts with your content is an important first step in knowing who they are.

3. **Come to grips with obstacles.** Yes, data is important, but sometimes it can be suffocating. Many organizations still struggle to get a handle on customer data that comes from various sources and audience segments.

   In addition, they rely on disconnected technologies to feed this data into various channels, like web, email, mobile, social, and even direct mail.

   The inevitable result of these fragmented data sources is disjointed messaging and a disconnected customer experience.

   Fortunately, it is possible to turn these fragmented experiences into a coherent, relevant, powerful customer journey. Doing so requires finding out everything you can about how your audience engages with your content—and then bringing all of those bits and pieces of data together under one umbrella.

   With a data management platform (DMP), you can create and manage your different audience segments in a more holistic way.

Creating incredible customer journeys rests on your ability to do the following:

- Track customers across devices and channels to gain a better understanding of their wants and needs at every touchpoint

- Combine all of your data sources (customer relationship management data, website behavioral data, second- and third-party data) in a central location to create a single view of your customers

- Identify new high-value audience segments using this holistic view as a model, and activate them with better ad targeting and personalized messaging wherever they are

4 Assemble a crew of "journey" managers.

The work of creating experiences doesn't end once customer profiles have been defined and the content developed. In order to ensure that your content has impact and drives results, it's critical to optimize where that content fits along the customer journey.

This means taking a good look at how customers interact with content at each stage of the customer journey, uncovering any issues that negatively impact those interactions, and immediately testing and troubleshooting to ensure you deliver highly relevant content exactly when the customer needs it.

While initially, it might make sense for employees to focus on only those touchpoints they can directly impact, research shows that looking at the customer journey as a whole yields better outcomes.

The trouble is, customer journeys have become exponentially more complex as more devices, more channels, and more ways for your audience to experience your brand enter the picture. In this world, businesses need to come up with innovative ways to manage the mushrooming number of customer journeys—including the content that supports those journeys.

For Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS), this meant creating a team of superstars dedicated solely to managing the customer journey, a program they called "Superstar DJs"—short for digital journeys. RBS recognized that in order to create the perfect customer experience, they had to make each customer journey outstanding, so they paired up every journey with its own manager, or DJ.

Performance on customer journeys is

30%-40%

more strongly correlated with customer satisfaction than performance on touchpoints

20%-30%

more strongly correlated with business outcomes, such as high revenue, repeat purchase, low customer churn, and positive word of mouth[17]

By empowering their front-line DJs to create, test, publish, and analyze content without having to rely on IT or other business units, they were able to roll out more streamlined experiences in just weeks rather than months.

Armed with the knowledge that 30 percent of their customers use mobile devices to apply for a loan, RBS used a data-driven approach to identify the steps in the loan application process where customers may be having trouble. Then by adapting those experiences to be more mobile friendly, their customer conversions on mobile rose 20 percent, while the loan application process was slashed from days to minutes.

"Whether a customer opens a direct-mail piece, receives a follow-up email, visits a branch, or applies for a loan on a mobile device, the entire customer experience should mirror customer needs perfectly. We must be everywhere customers are and personally cater to their needs at every turn."[18]

MELISSA WEBSTER
Program Vice President, Content and Digital Media technologies
IDC

Lessons on journey management from RBS.

1. **Democratize your data.** Give the right people real-time access to data so they can spot problems as they occur, or identify areas of improvement before it's too late to take action.

2. **Optimize your content.** Content is not static. It needs to be constantly tested at different parts of the customer journey, sourced, coordinated, optimized, and improved. Content also has to be composed and tested for mobile, social, desktop, search, and physical experiences to ensure a seamless customer experience.

3. **Empower everyone.** Optimization shouldn't be relegated to those with special skills. Everyone from the C-suite to customer support agents should be empowered to test different versions of content to find out which resonate best with customers so that they feel ownership of the journey.

4. **Dedicate resources.** Historically, different parts of the business like testing, analytics, product, and demand gen have been responsible for developing and analyzing the performance of content at different parts of the customer journey. Dedicate a team whose sole mission is to experiment with new content to ensure that customers always have amazing digital experiences, no matter where they are on their journey.

5. **Making it fun.** Create a theme, give outstanding employees rewards and recognition, and encourage healthy competition.
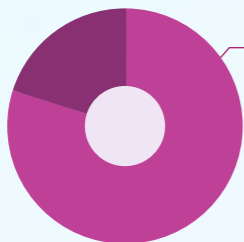
80%
of RBS board members have configured and made a content test live.[19]
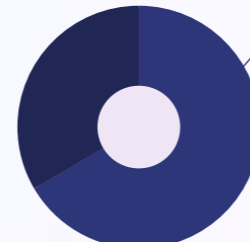
65%
of companies have not assigned a central responsibility for overseeing customer experience across all touchpoints.[20]

5 Cue up cross-functional collaboration.

Because creating great content and customer experiences involves the input and commitment of every person in the company, the need to efficiently exchange information and ideas has never been greater.

For example, although developing content like research and comparison tools may require input from one area of the organization, creating onboarding materials for new customers requires the expertise of other business units. In addition, those who collect and analyze data about how customers interact with content need to share and discuss that data with the teams responsible for testing and optimizing that content.

And although many people still rely on email for this purpose, using email as a collaboration tool comes with its share of problems. For starters, email just isn't fast enough to keep up with the pace of rapidly changing digital experiences. Next, because email tends to be more limited to sender and receiver lists, it discourages broader corporate information sharing and can lead to silos. Inboxes also contain so many competing messages that the likelihood of a message being missed is very high. And finally, issues with file attachments and confusion over document versions result in lost productivity.

In order to break down silos, foster free flow of information, and discover new ideas for improving the customer experience, organizations should take a cue from Royal Bank of Scotland.

Their Superstar DJs use digital dashboards to stay connected and gain insights about their customers, which they share with all areas of the company in real time. Nothing says "pay attention" like a well-formatted chart highlighting a dramatic drop or spike at a critical point in a customer journey.

They also invite "guest DJs" from other departments like customer experience, HR, and legal to provide cross-functional expertise and insights. For example, if the journey manager for personal checking accounts wants to optimize the customer experience on a web page in order to increase conversions for new services, that person might invite someone from the call center team to provide insights about issues customers may have reported while on that particular page.[21]

By using tools and processes that make it easy to collaborate, RBS is now able to uncover new ideas and reinvent the customer experience at a moment's notice.

How to knock down organizational silos.

1. Provide a common real-time environment for sharing and coordinating project scheduling and details among content producers, analysts, and optimization teams.

2. Give your teams access to a shared dashboard, set of metrics, and goals to work from.

3. Make sure each team knows which portion of the customer journey they're accountable for, and allow them to view the details being managed by the journey manager.

4. Help your teams work together more efficiently by giving them the power to comment and share information directly in line with project reports and results dashboards.

6 Crank out content at lightning speed.

With so many choices at their fingertips, getting people to consume and engage with your content has become even more difficult than ever before. If consumers don't like the layout or format of your content, they'll go elsewhere. If they're tired of squinting to read text on their mobile phone, they'll stop.

In order to accommodate these growing consumer choices and expectations, brands need to invest in putting in place processes and systems that not only allow creative teams to produce high volumes of quality assets quickly and efficiently, but also empower marketers to publish those assets and update content without having to wait unnecessarily for anyone else to approve or assist.

According to IDC, 71 percent of marketers say they have to create 10 times as many assets to support their different channels, and 85 percent say they're under pressure to create assets more quickly.[22]

With these processes and systems in place, organizations have the power to deliver relevant, consistent experiences in a flash.

French e-commerce company vente-privee shoots 20,000 photos each day in order to ensure its customers always have a fresh assortment of designer products to choose

from when visiting their site. With 10,000 flash sales each year, the company dedicates one-third of its workforce to creating digital content, just to keep up with demand.

Experiencing growth in the double digits, the company was looking for ways to increase productivity while maintaining the kind of quality that generates conversions. By using simplified workflows, the company's creative teams can now deliver a consistent look and feel to all of their images in one step, while marketing can find, publish, and reuse those approved web assets to get pages live faster.[23]

Essilor of America faced similar challenges around content management as they sought to streamline the web properties of their four eyeglass brands while still allowing each brand to retain its unique identity. On top of this, they were running television campaigns to drive people to their sites to search for an eyeglass provider, so like vente-privee, they had to get their content live quickly.

Working with digital agency Razorfish, the company was able to standardize across brands using templates and shared digital assets, while still retaining the ability to customize each site. Within 6 months, Essilor had launched their first new site, with sites for their remaining three brands live just 10 weeks later.[24]

"We really want to empower internal marketing teams to take ownership over their campaigns and author new content that fits with the global templates. They can then share best practices that have been proven to work throughout the entire organization at a fraction of the cost."[25]

MELISSA WEBSTER
Program Vice President, Content and Digital Media technologies
IDC

How to efficiently create the right content.

1. **Rethink your workflow.** Implement processes around content so that teams involved in creating and managing the experience can be more efficient and agile. By repairing communication breakdowns across departments and streamlining interactions between creatives and marketers, you enable your teams to be ready to deliver spot-on content at a moment's notice.

2. **Rein in your digital assets.** Developing compelling customer experiences rests on your ability to create, share, and deploy digital assets in the most effective way possible. This can only happen if everyone is working from a single, shared digital asset management (DAM) solution. With mobile, email, and web assets all pulled from the same repository, you can ensure brand consistency across channels and campaigns, give everyone access to the latest asset versions, and measure the performance of those assets in real time.

3. **Lean on data.** With so many different audiences, channels, and content needs along the customer journey, it's impossible to manage and personalize it all using manual processes. Delivering relevance at scale requires relying on your data to help automate decisions about which pieces of content should go where along the customer journey in order to create the most relevant experience.

7 Align business goals with customer experiences.

Customer experience is everyone's job, so people should be held accountable accordingly. However, only one-third of companies tie employee incentives to customer experience metrics.[26]

Many companies find it hard to reward customer centricity. For employees who don't talk to customers every day, the customer experience can seem like just another distant corporate vision. So it's up to leaders to translate this vision into something meaningful for those employees. This means taking a good look at the customer

experience and finding out which areas are most relevant to each employee, and then developing appropriate metrics that those employees can work toward.

However, it's important to make sure people don't lose sight of the overall customer experience. If goals are too narrowly defined, employees may not look beyond their own four walls. And when people are rewarded for operating in silos, their work often clashes with that of other teams, degrading the very experience they're supposed to support.

How to align goals with content and customer experience metrics.

1. **Update your rewards structure.** Teams need to work closely together and have a high degree of shared ownership, or the customer experience will suffer. Ensure that your performance management structure includes shared rewards that encourage customer-centric behavior.

2. **Apply the right metrics.** Content and experiences require different metrics than those traditionally used to measure web and overall marketing performance.

   "We often talk about engagement, views, and sharing to measure content," notes Will Phipps, VP and group director, DigitasLBi. "But each piece of content should have unique KPIs depending on the type of content and its role in the customer journey."[27]

Take video content, for example. For a B2C company, sharing a video might be a key metric they define for content success. On the other hand, a B2B company might see the value differently, using metrics around consumption rather than sharing.

When defining your metrics, be sure you're using those that are most suited to the customer experience you want to deliver. Here are some examples:

- *Interaction metrics* go beyond just single-device clicks and downloads to let you know how people interact with your content across devices and whether or not that content resonated with them.

- *Engagement metrics* go even deeper, allowing you to measure the true quality of your content. These metrics rely on data about audience preferences and include numbers like percent of content consumed, completion, and page depth, as well as behavioral actions like mouse movements and percent of traffic reaching certain areas of a page.

- *Value metrics* measure how valuable a piece of content is to your audience and include things like shares, comments, reviews, and likes.

3. **Refine your reporting.** Performance will never improve unless those doing the work can see exactly what's working and what isn't. That's why it's important for your campaign reporting and analytics to show you exactly what happens during every touchpoint in the customer journey—not just the first and last click.

For example, through algorithmic attribution you can see in real time which content played a part in getting someone to click the buy button or abandon their cart, making it crystal clear how employees are performing against their customer experience goals while giving you a glimpse into your content ROI. Read *On Love and Data* to learn more about algorithmic attribution.

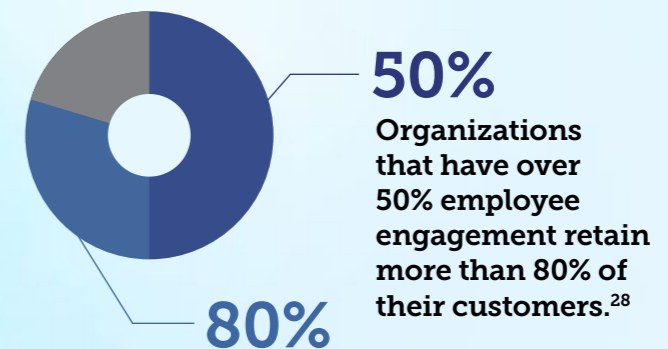# 8 Reward outstanding customer-first performance.

People want their work to be meaningful. But many times employees have no idea how what they do contributes to the overall goals of the company and, therefore, no sense of personal ownership in their work. Without these, workers become disengaged, unmotivated, and nonproductive.

On the flip side, companies with engaged employees see higher profits, productivity, and customer engagement. What's more, these employees are more likely to make customers happy, which leads to better customer experiences.

The problem is that many organizations find it hard to show back-office employees how they contribute to the overall experience. Royal Bank of Scotland figured out how to overcome that issue by making their Superstar DJs program fun for everyone.

They encouraged healthy competition by publishing Billboard charts displaying the performance of each DJ at the end of every week. Those who demonstrated excellent optimization work were rewarded with gold records. RBS then expanded this recognition to guest DJs, which included members of their executive board and managers from other departments. And whenever someone qualified to become a DJ, they were recognized with a pair of Diamante headphones.

By engaging their audience with an entertaining theme they could relate to, RBS was able to bring every employee another step closer to understanding the importance of the customer journey in their own work.

50%
80%

Organizations that have over 50% employee engagement retain more than 80% of their customers.[28]

"People were changing, and their behaviors were changing. They didn't notice because it was the level they wanted to be playing at."[29]

GILES RICHARDSON
Head of Analytics
RBS

How to encourage customer-centric behavior in your employees.

1. Educate employees about how they're expected to contribute to the customer experience with clear goals and metrics.

2. Empower them to do what it takes to improve the customer experience by providing them with the right training and tools.

3. Motivate and reward employees for their performance around goals, including regular celebrations of customer-centric employees, cash prizes for individual contributions, and bonuses based on customer experience quality scores.

4. Put the right systems in place to measure content and experience metrics in real time, and give employees ready access to their progress to help them make adjustments on the fly.

9 Keep the momentum going with flexible content processes.

The multiscreen, multichannel environment we're experiencing has brought on an explosion of content, and with so many employees tweeting, posting, sharing, emailing, and updating, many brands struggle with how to manage all of the moving parts. However, without strong content processes in place, your content marketing efforts will never be more than mediocre.

Indeed, more than two-thirds of marketers say the biggest challenge to producing good content is a lack of clear direction, including the absence of content strategy, guidelines, workflows, and understanding of their audience.[30]

Yet those who implement proper content processes will reap the benefits.

Companies with a well-defined process for managing content development see an average website conversion rate that's 55% higher than other companies.

55%

These companies also see an average email click-through rate that's 30% higher than other companies.[31]

30%

How to become a content process-driven organization.

1. **Let your strategy be your guide.** A documented content strategy is key to making content marketing work for your organization, but it won't do any good bundled into a PDF and saved to a "Strategy" folder that never gets opened.

   Your strategy should serve as the basis for developing processes around content that will help move your brand forward in the hearts and minds of your audience in the most efficient, agile way possible.

2. **Identify your contributors.** Broadening your range of content contributors in the organization can result in fresh perspectives and unique ideas. However, it's important to define who should really be contributing content.

   For highly regulated industries, like healthcare and financial services, that need to keep a close grip on their content, this list will be short. But for others, clearly identifying where you'll get the most valuable content can keep your organization from turning into a messy content free-for-all.

3. **Establish controls.** Be clear about who can do what by providing content developers with tools like brand trainings, brand guidelines, and channel guidelines.

   These should help answer questions like the following: Do I need approval to publish this content? What kind of flexibility do I have in this channel?

   With the proper parameters in place, you can empower more people to own and craft content while doing so in a brand-safe way.

4. **Know the why behind every piece of content.** Each piece of content you publish should help buyers move smoothly to the next step of their journey.

   But this can only happen if you understand the "whys." Why is my customer using her phone to consume this content instead of a desktop? Why does she want to interact with our brand in the first place?

5. **Plan your calendar.** Plan content in advance, not only to ensure that your content is in line with strategic goals, but also to lay the groundwork for better content processes.

   Your editorial calendar brings everything that's content-related together, including those who create and manage it. If you want it to be a useful tool, make sure everyone can access it, provide input, and understand how they need to contribute.

6. **Test. Analyze. Optimize. Repeat.** Data-driven decision-making is the oil that keeps your content gears turning, so brands must be relentless when it comes to testing, optimizing, and measuring content.

   When Royal Bank of Scotland set out to create the perfect customer experience, they knew that data could help them get there. They committed to testing out every single piece of content, learning how text, design, and other changes affected the customer experience.

   With the ability to analyze and act on those results, they now roll out newly optimized experiences in weeks instead of months.

   Read *Finding Eureka* to learn more about online testing.

"We don't build anything without knowing why we're building it. You have to understand first and foremost the experience that the customer is having."[32]

ROB ROY
Head of E-commerce and Digital Marketing
Time Warner Cable

Claim your CONTENT MARKETING accolades.

Whether shopping for a new car, booking a business trip, or just purchasing shoes, your audience demands content that is highly personalized, always relevant, and increasingly interactive. And their expectations just keep rising, which will continue to challenge even the best of content marketers in the coming years. What's more, as brands begin to fire their content engines on all cylinders, getting through to your customers' social walls and other digital feeds will only get more difficult.

That's why building a culture of content can't wait. More than simply creating a customer profile or developing an editorial calendar, lasting cultural change will only happen if those inside your company walls are deeply connected with the audience for whom they are building experiences. This means making the strategic decision to understand and invest in each of the nine steps outlined in this paper—not just one or two.

Buyers have grown weary of noise and product pitches, and they'll ignore any content that isn't 100 percent authentic. So it's time to make a choice: Compete on price alone and close up shop early, or make the culture shift that will keep your brand tops with your audience for years to come.

"There's a sense of excitement and teamwork at RBS as we learn how to treat customers better and better," says Giles Richardson, head of analytics at RBS. "Who would have thought data could drive such a positive cultural shift?"[33]

ADOBE can help.

Adobe helps you deliver standout customer experiences, from content creation to delivery, measurement, and refinement. We offer a centralized asset platform, deep data insights, and the ability to optimize each experience on any device. The result is a relevant experience that creates a real connection with your audience.

- **Adobe Experience Manager:** Empower your marketing team to create and manage digital experiences across mobile and web.

- **Adobe Audience Manager:** Get a unified view of all your audiences by bringing together data from a variety of online and offline sources.

- **Adobe Target:** Make the most of your assets and content by testing before you deliver. Adobe helps you deliver.

- **Adobe Analytics:** Measure the effectiveness of campaigns across multiple touchpoints from anonymous to authenticated customer.

- **Adobe Creative Cloud:** Unlock great content with connected desktop and mobile workflows, as well as efficient collaboration between your creative and marketing teams.

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