



Think like a Publisher, Chapter 1

For cross-silo content that makes impact,
and contributes to your business objectives

By Fleur Willemijn van Beinum
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Registered concept and manuscript
i-DEPOT #117757



Foreword and outline

Finding a publisher is damn difficult. Honestly, getting denied time over time again isn't that bad, feedback improved my writing and made the book to what it is today. Yet, what is content if it doesn't reach the audience. If the knowledge stays on my computer, nobody benefits. Hence, flipping the perspective and practicing what I preach, I decided to publish by myself, online, piece by piece.

Week by week I publish the individual chapters and paragraphs of my book. Each has its own release, indexed by tags. Use the tags or bounce from release to release.

At the end of each chapter, you can download the PDF with the collection of the releases that create the chapter. This is a part of the first chapter.

On thinklikeapublisher.com you can bounce from release to release by using the tags, you can search for topics or you can just go with the flow and read what resonates.

'Practice what I preach. From getting denied by publishers to digitally publishing by myself. Scarry as sh*t and gives energy like hell. Loving every moment of it.' Fleur Willemijn van Beinum

Four chapters

Four main elements, once the corresponding content is online, I add the link

1. First, build some solid [basics](#) and fundamentals with a firm strategy and identity
2. Second, create a content structure based on [data](#) and using tags, themes or topics
3. Third, set up a central and agile content team
4. Forth, get your [tools](#) and processes in place

Interviews

From theory to operational excellence. Deepend by interviews with the most inspiring peers from top-class agencies and amazing brands. From the big, international and corporate to the start-ups and pro-athletes. [All interviews](#)

Outline all chapters

A sneak peek of what to expect in 2020. Going with the flow, some of these paragraphs will change and update over time.

Chapter 1 'the basics and fundamentals' for content

[It starts with a belief](#)

[3 Key takeaways for content excellence](#)

[Four elements of how to think like a publisher](#)

[How to find great visuals](#)

[How to set up a newsroom](#)

[To blog or not to blog](#)

[Share content from others](#)

['How to keep your CFO on board for brand-building' by Les Binet](#)

[Your why and leadership](#)

[The content basics and fundamentals](#)

[Cross-silo content](#)

[Long term brand building content](#)

[Content pledge](#)

[Content pain points](#)

['Epic content marketing tips' by Joe Pulizzi](#)

[Start-up to scale-up](#)

[Sense of content urgency](#)

[We hate ads](#)

[Be distinctive](#)

[Build a brand before products](#)

[Reputation management](#)

[Brand safety and content](#)

<not included in this PDF>

Content to contribute to business objectives

Set your KPIs

Reporting Tips

Measure progress with OKR

Fill the top of the funnel

Use a brand persona for content consistency

Sonic identity and content

Podcasts and how to make your own

[Social first](#)

The audience first for the best content

Learn them something new

Content follows media spend

Create a threesome: content, media, and production

Common content mistakes

Data and content

Chapter 2 'content structure' to create an overview

- What is Content
- Content Strategy
- Indexing your content
- Use Google Data
- Content and SEO: tips and tricks
- Help Content for Hotter Leads
- Long-Form or Short-Form
- Webcare for Content
- Big Rock Content: Nike and Audi

Chapter 3 'team needed' to excel and speed up

- In-housing or Agency?
- Silo-agnostic from a PR perspective
- Your content team
- Organizational setup
- Content Team Members
- Make it a habit
- Manage your content stakeholders
- Set up and editorial board
- How to use an editorial calendar
- Content efficiency tips
- Prepare and preproduce content
- Re-use and repeat content
- Repurpose content
- Customer care integration
- Social first instead of mobile-first
- Crisis communications and content

Chapter 4 'tools and processes needed'

- Content eco-System
- How to set up your distribution
- [How to set up a newsroom](#)
- Use and abuse newsroom platform
- Email isn't dead yet
- How to audit existing content
- Set up the workflow
- Speeding Up Production Process
- How to keep track of content trends
- Writing tools for great content
- Writing tips to keep going

A preliminary list of the interviews, expect more in the next months

['How to keep your CFO on board on brand-building' by Les Binet](#)

['Content to stand out' by Flinders](#)

['Get your mandate in place before you start' by Toyota](#)

[What big brands can learn from a small retailer](#)

['Stick to your brand voice' by WodBottom](#)

['Character Gives Respect' by G-Star RAW](#)

['Context for content for success' by Nuud](#)

['Wake up!' by IMA on influencers](#)

[ACHTUNG! on the importance of your brandstory](#)

['Long term effectiveness with content' by DDB](#)

['Try!' by Erik Hensel](#)

['Brand building on social' by Callum McCahon](#)

Don't Bullshit by WPK

Think beyond the sound logo by Massive Music

5 Briefing Tips by Massive Music

Don't Be Vanilla by Sizzer

Content for People by Universal Music

Make Your Own Podcast by WPK

Two Tips for Content Excellence, by S4 Media Monks

Kelloggs on using data to optimize

S4 MediaMonks on Data and Creativity

Help for +280% 'Want to Buy a Samsung' by WPK

What brands can learn from a pro-kitesurfer

The best books to read

[Reading is candy for the mind](#)

And more to read on digital publishing and content

[Digital publishing](#)

[Don't pretend to be what you are not](#)

[Perfection is the enemy of progress](#)

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Published items of Chapter 1.

More to follow within soon, stay tuned on thinklikeapublisher.com

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It starts with a belief

Undeniable, indispensable and non-negotiable

The most important and non-negotiable element of content excellence is a 'belief'. A belief that content is essential to build your brand by providing stories to your audience, based on their needs. With the purpose to give value before getting value. That means you have to invest before you can generate sales. Courtship before closing the deal. Show and tell with pride and passion who you are and why you do what you do. If done authentically, you can capture their minds, souls and in the end their wallets. The belief comes to life with these two conditions: time and money.

You have to be in it for the long term. There is no such thing as a quick fix. It really takes time to build your brand, create awareness and generate reach on digital. Some brands are fortunate to have a flying start with one social campaign. This is a lucky shot and pretty damn difficult to repeat and keep up for that important long term. Think about a year minimum to build some kind of trust and relationship with your audience. The focus of your content is about 60% long term brand building and 40% short term brand activation. [Les Binet and his work for the IPA]

What you pay is what you get. If your budgets for media buying and content production are limited, you will get limited output. You need money to generate money. Next to non-working for production and working budgets for distribution, you need a team. If you pay peanuts, you will get monkeys. Invest in your team with a senior strategist. You just cannot expect integrated excellent successful long term content if you work with just interns and juniors.

More firmly said: If you do not have this firm belief with the support from the C-suite, plus the significant budgets, then forget 'content'.



3 Key takeaways for content excellence

TLDR: what you need to know

Creating great content is no rocket science, as long as you keep these three rules in mind. Learn and copy-paste these insights and their lessons learned from 25+ interviews, chats, and talks with the big international agencies, the most amazing brands, the inspirational startups, entrepreneurs, artists, and top athletes.

1. Be distinctive

Know your 'why' you do what you. Show and tell your passion and pride. Set yourself apart from your competitors. Dare to be different and stand out from the crowd. Don't make nor be 'more of the same'.

2. Takes time

In general 1 to 3 years before content adds to your business objectives. Balancing your content between brand building and brand awareness is key and it takes time. Be patient to tell your brand story that unfolds over time and then delivers results. Expecting direct revenue from content is not realistic. Those exponential exploding start-ups also start with building their brand awareness via content. All based on an insight into the market and on data. Basics first before skyrocketing.

3. Listen

Really listen to your audience. Tapp into their daily lives what they need to solve their problems. And adjust your product and communications to provide them with an answer. Use data from Google, YouTube, FB and IG audience insights, web analytics and your internal sales data. Use customer care and webcare, they are the first line of contact. Use Facebook Groups, anonymous and don't dare to interfere. And then, use that information to understand and implement, not to reply.

Bespoke

Last, not least, it is absolutely bespoke. There is no such thing as a one size fits all content model for

strategy and operation. It is custom made for your brand, organization, wishes, needs and available resources.

There is no black or white straight way forward one size fits all. There is no 'good' or 'bad'. That only exists in fairytales. Content is fifty shades of grey. Adapted to each and one's desires.
If anyone tells you about that golden content nugget, think twice if you want to work with them.



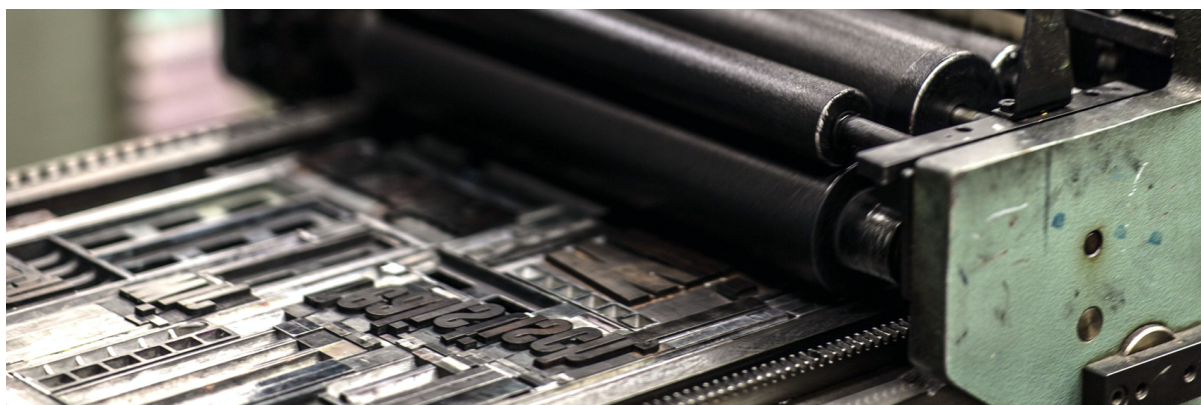
Four elements of how to think like a publisher

Simple steps to solve your content pain

For the brand-building long term content, brands need to, sort of, publish their own online magazine. Pretty old school, yet it works. A publishers' license to operate and the sole objective is to create content wanted by their audience. With an Editor in Chief who has the final say in what content gets published and whatnot. 'Thinking like a publisher' is publishing content that works based on adding value for their readers. Those readers who are your, potential, customers and buy your products.

Four main elements, you can find these topics at thinklikeapublisher.com. The links are update on the go once the content is online.

1. First, build some solid [basics](#) and fundamentals with a firm strategy and identity
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How to set up a newsroom

Publishing via a newsroom needs a different mindset and is crossing the silos. You become your own publisher.

The newsroom is the common playground of the corp comms, public relations, and marketing department. Or at least it should be. What is a newsroom actually?

Definition newsroom

In short: it is the central place where all news-related content comes together. The objective of this content is to inform, not to sell. Hence, originally the target audience for the newsroom is a bit different than for the .com. It used to be focused on the press. You feed the journalists with news with the objective they write about you. However, the world has changed.

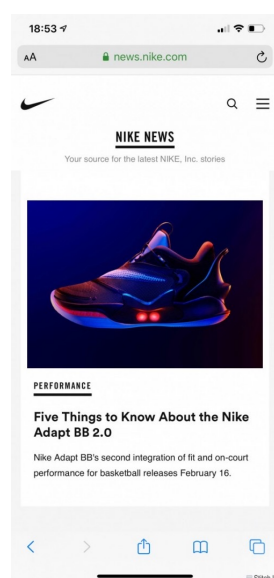
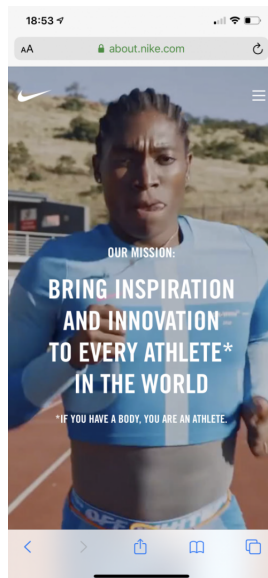
From .press to .newsroom

In our digital days, the audience for the newsroom and for both departments is broader. Your external communications are not limited to the power of the press anymore. As a brand, you become your own publisher. Communicating with the broadest audience thinkable. From the traditional press, financial stakeholders, to interested customers, fans and followers, up to the skeptic frenemies. No need to further explain this, is there?

The impact on how you communicate is accordingly. You use your newsroom to show and tell your passion and why you do what you do as a brand. The most convenient way to bring structure to your newsroom is to use the topics within your content structure.

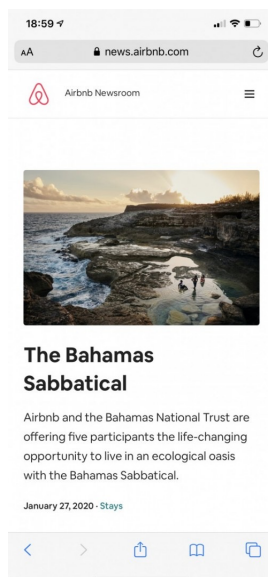
Nike newsroom

A great example by Nike with about.nike.com linking to news.nike.com. In the 'about' they bring their passion and their 'why' to life and explain what it means for them. Clicking on e.g. the topic 'innovation', it brings you to the latest news in the newsroom, arranged by tags.



Airbnb newsroom

Another best practice is news.airbnb.com. Mentioned before, they are doing an amazing job by arranging their content with tags. Up to date with recent content. Easy to digest and navigate, and written in a consumer and press-friendly tone of voice. Next to all this, their newsroom is alive and breathing. Keeping an eye on them for several years, I notice changes in their tags and how they bring structure to their (news) content. In line with slight changes in brand identity, they adjusted their newsroom accordingly.



Have fun

A newsroom never is written in stone. You have your content structure as the fundament. Improve and optimize by learning and doing. If some tags do not fulfill the needs of your audience or by you, simply

change them. Play around, have fun in publishing your news and capturing your audiences' hearts.

Requirements for your newsroom

To get yourself going on the newsroom, a few basics have to be in place:

- Your content structure with tags, themes or topics.
- A modern and digital content savvy corporate communications and public relations department. Sounds like a no-brainer, in practice these two departments often tend to be a bit more traditional.
- A silo-agnostic mindset and culture. Use, abuse and re-use the content produced by all departments. You will be surprised how much of the content from marketing is relevant for corp or pr and vice versa. The same goes for HR and talent recruitment. Join the efforts with a central overview.
- A tool. You can build a newsroom yourself, or get some SAAS software for a fraction of the price. In all honesty, a bit biased, I am a big fan of PressPage. I stumbled upon them in my search for newsroom software and pleasantly surprised by the platform and features. It takes a few weeks to set up your own design and UX, some days to learn all the tricks and then you can start publishing right away. From start to finish you can be live within 6 to 8 weeks.
- Distribution. The great thing about a tool like PressPage is that you can integrate your distribution in one-click-go. And you can make use of their worldwide press database, GDPR compliant.

Visual mindset for newsroom content

Publishing via a newsroom needs a different mindset and assets. It is visual. Therefore you need visuals. And getting engaging qualitative visuals can be a burden. And to combine the visual with the text, that's a skill. One that makes the difference.

This all sounds pretty simple and straight forward. In reality, it is a shift in mindset and ways of working. This takes time to learn, yet is absolutely worth the effort. And please... please stay away from the stock. Using the usual suspect stock photography does more harm than good. Insider tip: give communities like [pexels.com](https://www.pexels.com) or unsplash.com a try for free amazing visuals.

As you are sending out your news, use this moment to inspire your audience in the broadest way. Not only with your news item itself, but you can also combine it with related relevant content items. To touch, to educate and sometimes even to sell. For example, if you send news about a new travel destination, combine it with the top 10 tips for great restaurants at the same destination. Or combine with a long read on the cultural history of the destination. Easy does it. The more information you provide your (press) audience, the easier it is for them to write about you.

Next step

Once you have made the internal decision to embrace this new way news distribution, just start. Inspire the corp comms and public relations department with those best practices. Deep dive in the PressPage information to educate yourself.

Setup the requirements as mentioned above. Get a dedicated content consultant on board to get you started. After the newsroom and structure have been set up, this consultant is obsolete and can hand over the work to the daily team.

Steal with pride, learn from the best, and copy-past what works for you.

Not affiliated

In all honesty, I am a bit biased. As I publish my content via the PressPage platform. They provide me with their software for thinklikeapublisher.com. Yet, me being enthusiastic about their services, is not affiliated in any way. There is no fee, no kickback or any financial compensation other than me being the lucky bastard using their software for free.

Read more on [PressPage](#)



How to find great visuals

Tips and tricks to get your images

There is no need for me to explain to you the importance of visuals for your content, do I? If so, crawl from under your rock into 2020. The content magic is in the combination between the image and your words.

Finding great visuals is one of the most difficult parts of writing. You want to stay away from the obvious usual suspect stock imagery. Your own supply is limited or, even worse, outdated. And create new bespoke visuals takes time and eat budget. How to get great visuals, by preference something original and for free?

Free stock images

For sure there are a lot of other websites for free stock. My go-to website to find stock images is [Pexels](#), if I cannot find it there, my back up is [Unsplash](#). For free. Original. High quality. Daily updated. Videos included. No more words needed.

Search for images

If you are searching for images on a regular basis, I recommend having your search-list in place. A search-list is a simple list with requirements and guiding principles. I always start with a keyword in line with the key message of the content item.

Taking off from there, using synonyms, clicking on suggested tags by the image website. And do not forget to browse the other images by the photographer of the images you like. You can add some of the magic and special keywords you use to the search-list for when you are stuck.

To make this a bit more tangible and operational, my list:

- Requirements: Happy. Light. Fresh. White. No people, nop portraits, no children, no bodyparts, nothing human, except for the interviews. No buildings, no city images. No words as these are an awful UX combination with my headlines
- Guiding principles: beach, dunes, sea, water, (tropical) animals, happy nature, botany, white

flower, spring, white or pale tones, vintage. Feeling happy, bright, exciting, passion, sparkle, white, sunny, colorful

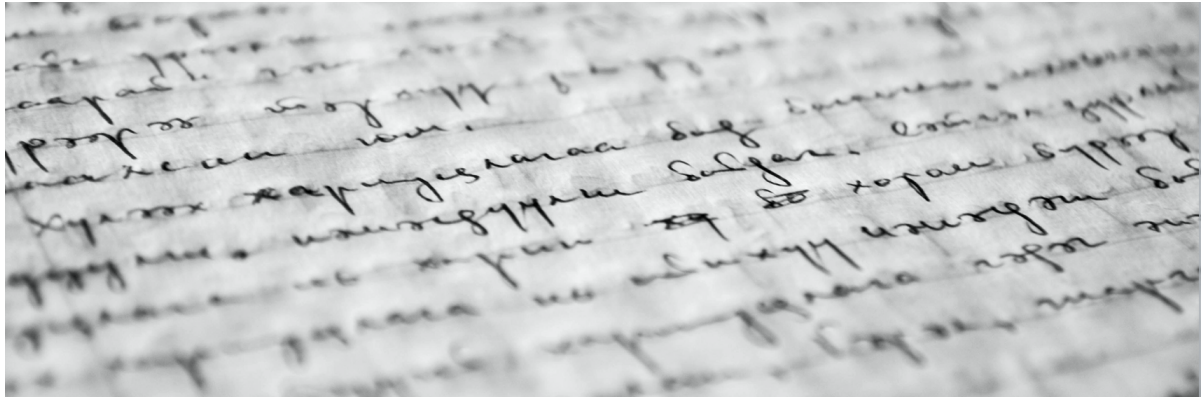
- Keywords: vintage, toys, white, minimalism

Edit stock images

My final tip for great visuals is to be consistent in your editing. By enhancing the lighting, shadows, saturation, and other colors, you can create your own style. Next to that, be consistent in the cropping. Always applying the '[rule of thirds](#)' for a more exciting visual. Just google on 'Photography rules'. What works for old school tradition photography, for sure also works in digital.

I have my (Keynote) template in place to crop and size. As a regular website does not need high res visuals, I simply edit the visual and make an export. Adjust the name and upload it into PressPage newsroom software. You can build a template in Photoshop. For me, being a bit lazy and cutting corners, Keynote is easier and quicker.

Last not least, have fun. Do not be too serious. Play around with the cropping. With the colors. Try and experiment. Surprise yourself and your audience with creativity. Having fun shows off and people do notice.



To blog or not to blog

It is all about being distinctive and adding new value

'They told us 'not to blog', because 'it is an absolute waste of time and energy', 'what is your opinion on blogging and why do you do it yourself'? A smart question by a student during my college on 'Storytelling and Content' at the Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences.

Stand out with your blog

If you want to blog, you have to have an outspoken opinion and vision on the subject. Be distinctive. Add value by giving knowledge and insights that are not out there (yet). Quality over quantity. Spend the effort to create the content. Do not talk about yourself. And for sure do not try to sell something.

Blogging is providing information that teaches your audience something new. And is best done in a sequence to create impact. Give your audience a reason to return for more.

If you cannot fulfill all of these requirements, it indeed is a waste of your time and energy.

Blog or vlog

Everybody is all about video. Yet... N=1, based on my own preferences, I prefer written blogs over video vlogs. Maybe I am too lazy. Maybe I am too impatient. Maybe I 'consume' content better in writing. I don't know. I do know I like to select my own pace to get the insights. In a text, you can scan and cherry-pick. In a video, you need to align with the pace of the producer. Next to that, it is pretty damn difficult to produce an engaging video that is beyond the 'talking head'. Not even to mention the challenge to have a clear qualitative and pleasant sound that is 'easy on the ear'. And what about those subtitles?

Keep in mind where and how your audience likes to consume content. Be rigorous and honest about the quality of your vlog. If you have the slightest doubt, probably, so does your audience.

Last not least, for SEO you need those written words as the Google spider cannot access a video. Hence, if your preference is a vlog, do not forget to write down the essence if a few sentences to be found via Google.

Why I blog

Why I run this sort of blog on thinklikeapublisher.com? Easy. I want to share that great knowledge and those amazing insights into the content industry. In one place. Only the best from the best. I decided to give them my stage. Instead of me reinventing the wheel, becoming vanilla, and battling for attention in the overcrowded content world. By collecting and sharing the knowledge from others, I claim my leadership that I know what is trending and what is next.



Share content from others

Why and how to, make use of the excellence that is already out there

You are quite an egocentric prick if you only speak and write about yourself, with an 'I know it all' attitude. To claim leadership is to acknowledge and to share those great insights, opinions and valuable information that is already out there. Why not share that excellent content from credible sources that benefit your audience.

Frame It

Sharing third party content is quite simple once you know the trick. You just need to frame it. Tell your audience in your own words why this content item is worth reading or watching. Quote that golden nugget and highlight what is the most valuable. Stick to a few words, very short and simple to trigger your audience to read the entire content item.

Keep your audience in mind and make it easy as possible for them. If it has an excellent video that captures the essence, share only the video with the credits and the link to the original source. Don't be lazy and make an effort to why and how you share this content.

Give credits

Don't be an asshole. Always give the producer of the content the credits. If feasible, let them know in advance you are referring to them. 'Giving credits' sounds like a no-brainer, in reality often forgotten. Intentionally or not, once discovered you not giving the credits, you have almost unrepairable reputation damage by breaking the trust.

Practicing what I preach, a big chunk of this book consists of content by others. Over the last 10+ years, I collected, resumed, framed and structured all that great knowledge on content. Why reinvent the wheel and doing the same as everybody else? I am being distinctive by bringing a different angle and claiming

my leadership by giving a new or overarching vision.



'How to keep your CFO on board for brand-building' by Les Binet

Too significant and good, not to share. Three shameless copy-paste Q&As from the WARC interview

Challenge to make the case for long-term brand investment

WARC: One of the things that we've heard out of the WARC Toolkit survey is that (marketers) have a challenge making the case for long-term brand investment to convince the CFO, who is dubious of giving that money for something that they can't see is working straight away. How do they make that case?

Binet: "The first thing is to start talking the language of finance. We don't help our case when we talk about brand-building in terms of awareness, image and 'touchy-feely' terms. Brand building is about selling. It's about revenues and cash flow, but it's about durable revenues and cash flow, over longer time periods. We have to help CFOs to understand that some marketing activity gives you an immediate short-term delivery of sales,"

Over-reliant on performance marketing

WARC: We've recently seen Adidas and eBay acknowledging that they had become addicted to performance marketing and were looking to make a change. How do you think some of these enormous brands have become over-reliant on performance marketing?

Binet: "The addiction to the short-term is not a new phenomenon, but it has got a lot worse. One of the problems is that (for) short-term activities, you get immediate feedback: responses, clicks, or short-term sales. If you are a marketer who's spending money and nervous about what you're getting for your money, you can immediately see that this stuff pays back. It's become easier and easier to see these short-term effects because we have more granular short-term data that comes through faster and faster.

With the arrival of e-commerce in particular and digital metrics in general, all of the business is now afflicted by the same problem. All businesses now have short-term metrics, which can distract them from long-term growth. I think that's the real reason why business is becoming a short-termist. It's not quarterly reporting. It's not the short tenure of marketers. It's the data."

Key metrics

WARC: Is there any specific metric that a brand should be looking for as an indicator that they should make a change? And if they do make that change, what type of metrics seem to see the most improvement?

Binet: "The most important metrics to look at first are financial and business metrics... If you got a strong brand, you will see it in the financials. If you've got a weak one, you'll see it in the financials. The most important brand metrics are to do with sales, profit, price sensitivity, and hard financial spend.

WARC.com

These and more great insights in the [interview](#) by [WARC](#). For those who are unfamiliar with WARC, it is an amazing research platform with the best insights and publications on everything that's happening in the marketing world. As they say themselves 'Let's save the world from ineffective marketing. At the heart of all great marketing is an insight. At WARC, we have the most trusted insights based on evidence enabling your work to be effective.'

From own experience, not cheap to get a subscription, worth every penny.

This is a non-sponsored nor an affiliated post. Sharing this because these insights and this platform are too significant not to know.

Source: https://www.warc.com/newsandopinion/opinion/les-binet-on-why-long-term-marketing-matters-in-the-age-of-short-termism/3307?utm_campaign=Toolkit+2020&utm_content=PostID-0048ayfylqfadv6&utm_medium=social&utm_source=linkedin



Your why and leadership

Can you capture your reason for existence in 5 words?

'Why do you do what you do' as a brand? The fundamental question in the heart of Simon Sinek his book 'Start with Why' and his famous TED talk. When you ask a random marketer for the 'why' of their brand, mostly they give an extensive answer full of marketing bullsh*t bingo wrapped in beautiful complicated words. A shallow shell that doesn't really tells the origin and 'the why' of the brand and what problem it solves for their consumers.

Use 5 words

Made simple, if your consumer is standing in the supermarket to buy a product, they look at the shelves and have an overkill of choice. Why should they pick your product? Explain this in a maximum of 5 simple words that even a child can understand. If you cannot explain your 'why' to a kid, you maybe don't understand it yourself.

If I wanted you to understand, I would have explained it a little bit better, Johan Cruijff

Ask 5 times 'why'

To get to the real core of why you do what you do, ask five times why the brand produces the products they sell. Once you get the first answer, ask it again, and again, and again, and again. Not easy and pretty annoying to answer. You will notice that by the fifth time, you get a very operational, clear, free of jargon answer that captures the core. This is the fundament on which you build your story and content to showcase your passion and enthusiasm for your brand and its products.

This technique is originally developed by Toyota to get to the core of a problem. Why not apply this to get to the core of why you do what you do? Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/5_Whys

Leadership

'You do not lead by hitting people over the head. Any damn fool can do that, it's usually called 'assault' -

not 'leadership'...I'll tell you what leadership is. It's persuasion - and conciliation - and patience. It's long, slow, tough work.' By Dwight D. Eisenhower, stolen with pride from Epic Content Marketing by Joe Pulizzi.

'A thought leader is an individual or firm that is recognized as an authority in a specialized field and whose expertise is sought and often rewarded.' (Wikipedia).

First step: know

The first step to claim this leadership you have to know your 'why', and needs to be in line with your purpose or mission. Pretty obvious you cannot claim to be the expert in a specific category if you do not have this in the heart of your 'why' and the brand.

Second step: claim with content

The second step is to claim it with the use of content. If your audience is looking for information on your category or industry. Create that content based on their needs and just make sure they can actually find it on the world wide web.

Be that leader and demonstrate your knowledge. Show your authority, help potential consumers to find what they need and empower them with your knowledge (to get their business). The key in this is to produce content that breaths your passion and enthusiasm in a non-commercial way. This type of content forms a part of the 'Help' layer of the YouTube HHH model. Content with a very long lifetime, with a solid basis in your website, easily found via Google with a solid presence on YouTube. This content is also the basis for your 'always on'. It can be reused, and republished time after time. Worth the effort and investment.

Third step: consistency

The third step is to be consistent. Claiming your leadership is not a one-off. Nor is your leadership build on one campaign. It is all about your continuous effort to 'prove' your claims with content.

The ROI of content question

What if the C-level asks you for the 'ROI of content'? The answer is not what they want to hear, it is that you cannot measure exactly what the return on investment is for the content, there is no 1:1 attribution, probably you do not have a model in place to measure this attribution, just because it does not really exist. You can measure hard sales conversion coming from a (social) post of the content item. However, the growth in your likability by showing your passion and enthusiasm, your 'why you do what you do' as a brand, that is something you can not measure in short term hard data.

Why not answer this ROI question with a straight answering question: 'What is the value of thought leadership for our business?'

You do not lead by hitting people over the head. Any damn fool can do that, it's usually called 'assault' - not 'leadership'...I'll tell you what leadership is. It's persuasion - and conciliation - and

patience. It's long, slow, tough work. Dwight D. Eisenhower

Practical, Easy and Low Budget Tips

- Use customer feedback, surveys, comments on social media posts and insights by the webcare or customer care team to create more content on your category or industry. Include these departments in your Editorial Board.
- Use Google and YouTube keyword search queries. What are the first and second keywords your customers are searching on in your category or industry? Make sure you implement these in your actual content themes, see chapter 2 on 'Structure'.
- If you are having problems to convert the marketing sales message into leadership content, shift your perspective from 'sales' to 'teaching'. Teaching through content is one of the easiest ways to connect and to give empowerment to your customers. Simply by adding value for them.

Sources: [Content Marketing Institute newsletter - May 2017](#), <https://marketeer.kapost.com/build-authority-content/>



The content basics and fundamentals

First things first. No exceptions

'Brands get rose-tinted glasses about entertaining people and think that is all consumers want', 'What brands need to do is break down their content, take a step back and ask, for their industry, what the role of content is. Whether it is to inspire, educating, help, reward, inform or entertain then rank them and work out what is a 'must-have', where the opportunities are and what they should not be focusing on at all.' Source: [Marketingweek](#)

The icky sticky truth is that you have to start with your basics. Without those, you are on your way to failure.

60% of content created by brands is 'just clutter'. The majority of content created by brands is having little or no impact on business results or people's lives, according to Havas' latest 'Meaningful Brands' study. A study from 2017, my gut feeling tells me this has gotten even worse with the rise of content. Creating content is like learning to walk before you start to run and go for that marathon. A long term effort with learning by doing, continuous training, ongoing evaluation, and improvement. With a 'fail fast, adapt faster' mentality and with some 'stealing with pride'. If you start in a sprint, for sure you will not make it to the finish line.

Hence... First thing first.

Before you even consider creating content, please make sure you have your basics and fundamentals in place. Failing on those basics, it is like building a straw house that gets blown down by the first storm. Or even worse, your little content straw house might even collapse by itself.

What you need for content basics

Stay tuned, the articles on how to do this are soon to be released. An overview of the basics and fundamentals for effective and efficient content:

- Your why: why do you do what you do as a brand
- Your leadership: the domain you want to claim
- Who you are: develop your brand persona
- Audience first: add value for them and solve their problems

- Business objectives driven: content should always contribute to the business objectives.
- Budget: content follows your media spend
- Create a threesome for budget optimization: brand - media - creative
- Why content fails with the most common content mistakes



Cross-silo content

Your customer doesn't differentiate, why should you?

'Content (marketing) is a funny discipline. It's been a major movement for the past years, yet, some companies are just starting to take it seriously. And once they do, marketing leaders panic. They turn to the closest living creature and scream, 'We need to do content! Now! Someone start typing!' <https://contently.com/strategist/2017/10/25/write-blog-posts-without-strategy/>

More than marketing

Content is more than marketing. Content is a combination of all (digital) communication efforts to create effective and efficient storytelling to capture the hearts and minds of the customers. Content is to show and tell who you are as a brand, why you do what you do, what excites you and makes you ticks. It's a bit like tutti frutti, pick and mix and make the best combinations.

The Wikipedia definition of 'content marketing' has two major elements, ignored by most brands:

1. It builds trust and does not involve direct sales
2. The main focus is the need of the audience

Department agnostic

Content is department agnostic. Meaning, the customer does not differentiate between content from Marketing, Sales, Corporate Communications, Public Relations, or even Human Resources for talent recruitment and last not least Customer Care. That is why you need to include all these departments in the content strategy, planning, and production. Depending on your industry, your size, and scale, your maturity, add or drop departments accordingly.

How to make cross-silo content

Stay tuned, the articles on how to do this are soon to be released.

- Organizational configuration with a central content team directly reporting to the CEO

- Work with an Editor in Chief and dedicated team of producers and an analyst
- Centralize planning with a strategic Editorial Board and operational Editorial Calendar
- Include the departments, or silos, as stakeholders in the Content Board
- Departments are and stay the owner of the content
- Mutual responsibility for fetching and delivering content ideation

‘Advertising is not dead, but content (marketing) is the driver that leading companies now use to capture the hearts and minds of their customers.’ Joe Pulizzi



Long term brand building content

Balance between long term brand building and short term sales activation

Great content is a balance between long term brand building and short term brand activation. In recent years there has been more focus on the short term activation and generating sales. This is a logical consequence of the crisis. Invest your budget on what immediately generates sales. However, moving forwards and the changing economics, now it is time to balance.

According to Les Binet is about a 60-40 balance between brand building and brand activation. Brand building takes over as the primary driver of growth from sales activation after six months. For more information, I kindly refer you to Les Binet and his work for the IPA. Boldly I am making the assumption that what goes for the overall communications from a brand, also goes for 'content'. Hence, I embrace their work and love their research.

Universal rules

Copy pasted from [IPA](#) as they explain this excellently.

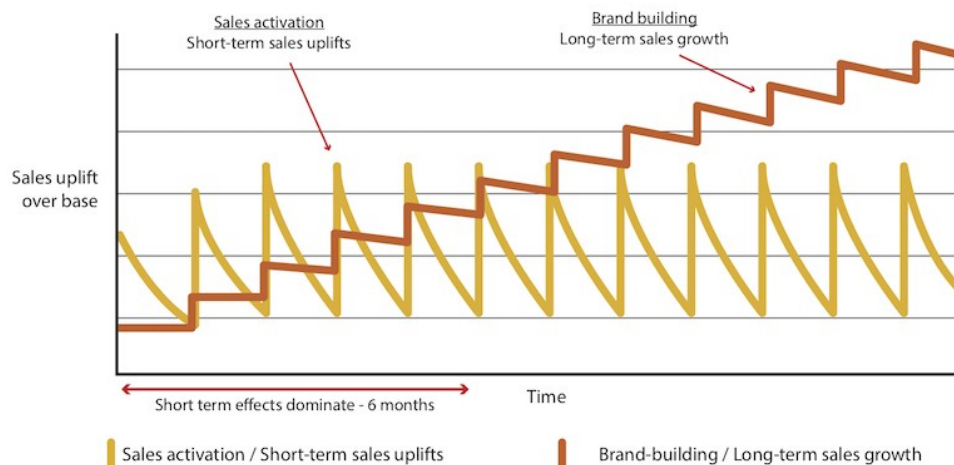
According to Binet and Field's research, there are some universal rules for all brands in all contexts.

- All brands need brand building – the Brand building is the main driver of long-term growth and involves the creation of memory structures that prime consumers to want to choose the brand. Without brand strengthening, growth will be weaker, activation will be weaker, pricing power will not improve and profitability growth will be severely reduced
- All brands need sales activation – Sales activation dominates short-term sales uplifts and involves behavioral prompts to encourage consumers to 'buy now'. It is strongly boosted by brand building and is essential for efficiency. Without it, the investment will be weaker and growth will suffer
- The optimum balance between brand building and activation varies by context depending on the relative ease/difficulty of the two tasks
- The key factors that drive the optimum balance are the relative levels of emotional and rational consideration in consumer choice – where emotional consideration is high, brand building is easier; where rational consideration is high, activation is easier; where both are high, the budget should be shifted towards the more difficult task.
- Penetration growth is always the main driver of growth for all brands. While penetration and loyalty go hand in hand, loyalty doesn't increase without penetration

In addition, this latest research reveals that there are six contextual factors that brands must also consider and offset accordingly:

- Which sector your brand is in – e.g. Durables, FMCG, Financial Services, Other Services, Retail
- How consumers purchase your brand – e.g. offline, online, serial, subscription
- How your brand is priced – e.g. value/mainstream, premium
- The level of innovation applied to your brand – e.g. none, any, new variant, new sub-brand, entry into a new category
- The life-stage of your category- e.g. new, established, declining, stagnant or low growth; medium or high growth
- How big your brand is – e.g. launches in first 1-2 years, launches after the first year, small brand, medium brand, large brand.

Brand-building and sales activation work over different timescales



Source: Les Binet and Peter Field, *Media in Focus: Marketing Effectiveness in the Digital Era*, IPA, (Figure 02)

My focus on the long term

The focus of my articles and content philosophy is all about the long term content. This is a different ballgame. It is about showing and telling your why and your passion as a brand and for your products. For the short term, activation tips check out all the amazing tricks webinars and seminars on how to develop a kick-ass effective activation campaign for social media.



Content pledge

How to have content contribute to your business objectives

'Life is simple, but we insist on making it complicated. Keep it simple and focus on what matters' [Confucius, 551BC]. This also applies to content. Fleur Willemijn van Beinum

To think like a publisher means to produce the 'best content possible'. For once and for all, cut the subpar non-effective content and please focus on these open doors:

- Put your customers first
- Add value to touch hearts, minds, and souls, inspire or educate
- Show and tell why you do what you do
- Show and tell how your product solves their problems
- Fix your basics and set up fundamentals before your start
- Use research and data
- Implement KPIs in line with business objectives
- Align media buying with creative production for effectivity and efficiency
- Create a central Content Department with Editorial Board
- Create a digital brand persona
- Realize integrated production, with one Editorial Calendar and digital eco-system
- Be prepared for crisis management for when the sh*t hits the fan

Sense of urgency

What is the sense of urgency to 'think like a publisher'? Good question, easy answer.

A new era, new times, new ways of communicating with your audiences. It still is not about you, it is about the customer, to connect and to add value. If you do this, you become more likable, with the result people are more eager to buy your products. Simple as that.

You can choose to continue as you go by producing inside-out content with a focus on brand activation, stick to broadcasting your sales messages and with a reactive ad-hoc PR approach. Nothing wrong with that.

Realize it is your customer and their expectations that are changing, due to innovations, technology developments, and sociological trends. You keep up with them and play on, or you stand still, and lose in the end.

Let's be honest, if you are not already convinced of the sense of urgency of content by now, deep dive in Google, go to marketing blogs and do your homework before reading these pages.

Don't be old school

Keep in mind that there is no such thing as digital and non-digital, your audience really doesn't differentiate between the online and offline channels. All communication efforts from a brand should be seamless and not based on one channel. Digital is just another channel in the mix, like TV, print, OOH or radio. Nothing more nothing less. Don't overcomplicate. Combine, integrate all channels.

Don't be old school. Content first, channels second.

Less is more

Common sense is that is all about producing 'more' content. Quantity over quality with an inside out message. Social media timelines are getting more and more cluttered, websites become patches with superficial non-findable content and overflowing mailboxes with meaningless newsletters.

As a result, we, even more, hate the ads, developing stricter filters with ignoring faster and faster the non-relevant no-value-adding content. Our attention span on Facebook or Instagram is just 1.7 seconds for mobile, 2.5 seconds for desktop. (Source: Facebook BluePrint 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/business>)

Not even to mention those Millennials and Gen-Z's. They are different. With their love for authenticity, their values are shifting from the common values 'class, status and luxury' into 'identity, purpose, and energy' with fun and engagement. As non-millennial, I am shifting my values as well.

The solution is with the brands. Let's vow to produce less content and focus on what the consumer actually wants to view and read. Quality over quantity. Content that adds value based on your audience's needs.

Yes, this takes time, it is pretty difficult and expensive to produce. However, this resonates more, the content assets can be reused, it saves on media budget and can actually attribute to the long term business objectives. More effectivity and efficiency in the long term.

Use data

It sounds like such a no-brainer to use data. Data is quite a bubble and everybody talks about it and wants it. Few brands really know how to read and use big data in favor of the customer. A lot of brands struggle and do not know where to start. True. It is complicated and I do not have an answer as data is an industry by itself.

What I do can suggest, is to do a deep-diving in Google and YouTube and to do a search query to discover the needs of their audiences. What are your, potential, customers fans and or followers actually

looking for in relation to your brand and industry? What are the keywords they use?

Do a deep-dive into the analytics of the brand website. What are the top 10 best and worst pages to discover how the website is used and what content gets consumed and what not?

Use the data from your customer care department? They are the department with the first line of contact with your customers and an amazing source of information. Find out why are people contacting the brand, what is the top 10 asked questions in the webcare, email, and phone.

This data is more or less for free and already available. All you need is an analyst to do the research.

Solve problems

Keep in mind, we as consumers want a solution to our problems, fulfillment of our needs and wishes. Your product is their solution. Sometimes they are aware of their problems, sometimes it is triggered by your advertising.

So tell them how your product and brand solves their problem instead of listing solely the product features. And if possible, please explain why I should like and prefer your brand over the competitors.

Be likable

Nowadays there are hardly any bad products. The really crappy and shitty ones phased themselves out. The main reason why consumers buy your product is that they like your brand. Even with a big price difference, that can be the reason why they like you more than your competitor. That is why the 'why you do what you do' is so important in your content strategy.

This works the same in the offline world with bricks and mortar shops. If the shop has great products but the staff sucks, is lazy or even rude, you do not even hesitate to buy anything. No way you gonna spend your hard-earned money with someone you do not like. Especially if you can get more or less the same thing next door for a comparable price. The other way around, if the staff is really nice and likable, you probably buy even more than intended and perhaps you make a return visit.

Same for brands. Why buy a BMW or an Audi? Both are great cars, fantastic functionalities, shiny, amazing power, electrical, solid loud sound system, cozy leather seats, all got four wheels plus a steering wheel, both crazy expensive and super fun to drive. Why one or the other? Because of your 'driving pleasure' or your preference for 'technological advanced'.

It is about being likable. That people can relate to your brand, share your values and they like you why you do what you do. And that you provide a solution for their problem.

'People like doing business with people they like'

'People like doing business with people they like'. It is about being likable. That people can relate to your brand, share your values and they like your 'why you do what you do'. And that you provide them with a solution to their problem.' Fleur Willemijn van Beinum

Content excellence rules

Some rules for content excellence

- Show your passion and pride for why you do what you do: is irresistible
- Learn to walk before you start to run: fix the basics and set up the fundamentals before you even think about starting
- Content is a like a marathon, if you sprint at the start you will not make it to the finish line
- Nothing wrong with being real and authentic: sometimes it just shows the passionate people behind the brand and nothing wrong with that
- A little unpolished raw and human touch with an edge is fundamental for the connection, perfection in every content item and social post is pretty boring and lacks character
- Manage beforehand that you can make mistakes along the way, fail fast learn faster
- Put your audience first and put your ego aside, it is not about you, it is all about them

Last, not least,

- Have fun :)



Content pain points

A list of the most shared hurdles and issues for content by CEOs and CMOs, sure you recognize some of them

How can a brand reach its audience? Without being too marketing and sales focused. Without being too dependent on Google and social for reach. Besides, as a brand, you need to prepare for a future without Facebook. Last, not least, you want to be agile and nimble to be able to keep up with the fast-paced always-changing digital industry.

A few familiar pain-points within the C-suite on content

- Having a team of 30+ content producers and content / social media managers is not an exception for a big brand. Without real insights on the effect for the long term business objectives, is the content actually worth the investment?
- Disputes between the marketing, sales, corporate communications and public relations departments. More often than not, the marketing and sales department win the battle for the content. They get the mandate and ownership, with their focus on short term sales-driven KPIs.
- Marketers often focus on the short term shiny award-winning hero campaigns. Based on their KPIs that are given by management.
- The human resources department has similar content needs as the marketing department. To sell the brand and organization to new talent. But, seldom there is a cooperation to create content together.
- The Customer Care department is no part of the content game. They are not involved as a stakeholder in the Editorial Board. A missed opportunity as the (webcare) agents are in the first line of contact with your audience.
- How to reach your audience with the growing 'ad-blindness' and shorter attention span?
- It is a common practice to develop a digital campaign for one channel. There is no integration between social, Google SEA SEO and website content.
- Huge dependency on Facebook and Instagram for social reach. What if these channels disappear, how to reach your audience in a new way?
- Most digital campaigns are start-stop with focus on marketing events or promotions. There is no long term reusable always-on content for brand building.
- No budget optimization by combining media buying and creative production.

- No real use of Google data to discover needs from your audience
 - No use of social algorithms to optimize budget allocation
-
- When 'the shit hits the fan', no profound preparation for crisis communications. How to freeze all your content? There is not one overview of all content published and scheduled, where, by whom and the media budget. And there is no process to restart your content after the crisis.
 - How to handle privacy, data and brand safety?

'If not feasible for whatever reason, no offense meaning, then just do not do it. 'Content' is no golden nugget.' Fleur Willemijn van Beinum

How to solve your content issues

First, start reading these pages and absorb these insights, knowledge, tips, and tricks. Second, create a plan. 'Failing to plan, is planning to fail'. Third, hire the experts, agencies and don't be a cheap bastard. Producing and distributing content costs money. A lot of money. There is no easy nor cheap fix to touch the hearts and souls of your audience. Yet, when done right, content is a valuable contributor to your business objectives. If not, indispensable and pretty essential to differentiate yourself from your competitors.

Last, not least. Do, or Do Not. There is no 'Try'. Go for it. Don't do it half, because for sure then you will not succeed. Content deserves your full attention.

If not feasible for whatever reason, no offense meaning, then just do not do it. 'Content' is no golden nugget and doesn't solve every one of your business problems. Sometimes, on rare occasions, the best answer is not to 'do content' and focus on your other activities.



'Epic content marketing tips' by Joe Pulizzi

Stealing with pride from one of the best content marketing books ever written

Joe Pulizzi's thoughts and rules for the success of content. Why reinvent what is already written with excellence? Copy-paste quoted his three statements and four benefits of content. He speaks about 'content marketing', I kindly suggest applying this to all your content efforts. Including Public Relations, Corporate Communications, Customer Care, Human Relations and Talent Recruitment, and Internal Communications.

3 Statements on content marketing

The three most relevant ways to 'Take the Media World by Storm' from Joe Pulizzi

'Make mobile your top channel strategy'.

Stated by Pulizzi in 2012, nowadays even more true. The numbers of mobile usages speak for themselves. Unfortunately, I still encounter not-mobile optimized websites or even emails send out by big brands and institutes that are not humanly readable on a mobile phone.

'Develop professional editorial practices.

Many brands today are leveraging employees and outside influencers as part of their content marketing programs. While I believe this is good, I see a gaping void in the editorial area. Simply put, brands are not investing enough in editorial and proofreading as part of their processes.'

'Make the reader your number one priority.

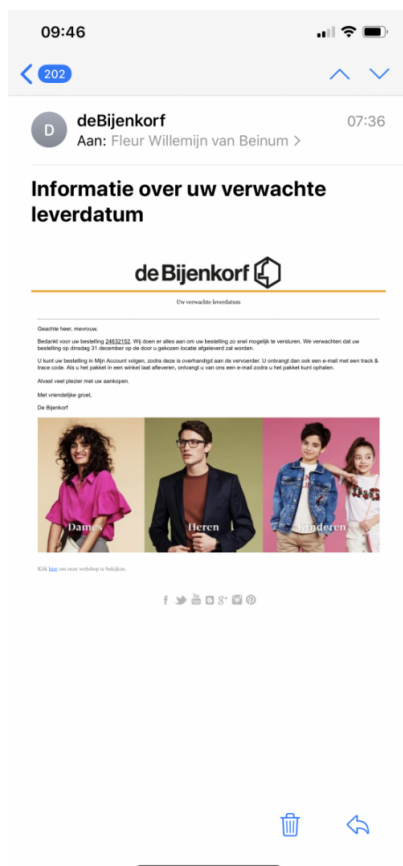
(...) As a brand (...), commit your stories to one epic concept - what's in it for them, your readers (that is, your customers). This is your critical advantage (over media companies), where you can and should focus all your attention.'

'Make mobile your top channel strategy.' Joe Pulizzi

A little note on mobile-first content

It sounds like a no-brainer. Yet, still in 2020, I am receiving emails from big brands, international companies, that are not mobile proof. One of the possible reasons could be traditional CRM systems, lack of overview of all emails by the brand and every now and then one little desktop bastard email slip through.

How to fix it? Just check your customer journey with its entire email flow. Including the purchase confirmations, the exceptions, the escalations or emergency communications. Be precise, be strict. No exceptions. Go mobile or go home.



4 Benefits of content marketing

'The four hidden benefits to content marketing' by Joe Chernov, Vice President, Content Marketing, Kinvey (and 2012 Content Marketeer of the Year)

Content can give you a recruiting edge.

In a competitive industry, recruiting top-caliber talent is a priority of the highest order. (...) Recruiting top talent is one of only three priorities for every CEO. Yet despite the importance of recruiting, it would be easy to overlook the impact an engaging content marketing can have on this business-critical priority.

Content can help boost company morale

Back when I worked at a PR firm, I recall challenging a client who wanted us to help his company secure coverage in a publication that didn't necessarily influence its buyers. When I pushed back on the priority, the CEO told me, 'The article isn't for our customers. It's for our staff. The place lights up when we get covered in the press... and I know a lot of our workers read this magazine; I've never forgotten that lesson, and content marketing can accomplish this very same goal.'

Content opens up lines of communication

Remarkable content doesn't just get customers and prospects talking; it also gets your internal clients buzzing. It gives colleagues something to share with one another, something to debate, or something to challenge. It opens doors, rings phones, and makes heads gopher over cubicle walls. It also provides you with an opportunity to recruit advocates and participants.

Content fosters trust

In a recent Fast Company article, marketing leader Don Peppers convincingly argues that the key to competitive advances is 'being proactively trustworthy'. 'Creating content that is so valuable that people would pay for it, yet you give it away for free, is a reliable way to earn the public's trust'. This is precisely why the value transfer in content marketing should be from institution to individual, which is an upside-down model for traditional marketers. In other words, when trust is the goal, companies should strive to 'sell by not selling'.

Source: [Epic Content Marketing](#) (page 37-39), (page 45, 46) by [Joe Pulizzi](#)

'Make the reader your number one priority.' Joe Pulizzi

Start-up to scale-up

My advice is to 'just do it'

'Learn and improve by doing, with a 'fail fast adapt faster' mentality.' Fleur Willemijn van Beinum

From strategy and plans into execution is a big step. Setting up the basics and fundamentals is a lot of work and takes time and effort.

It is a challenge. Where to start, what do you need first, how to get the budget, what talent needs to be recruited, the stakeholder management, selecting and briefing the agencies, get the reporting? Let's be honest, going into the content business is hard. ... Planning paralysis ...

Just do it

There is no 'Try or Try Not'. There is no middle of the road. Go for it, or don't. The choice is yours. Just don't do it half.

My advice, 'just do it' and start small. Be brave, make a plan for the first 3 months. Scale-up slowly. Steal with pride on what works. Learn and improve by doing, with a 'fail fast adapt faster' mentality. Iterative is the way forward and it will never be perfect from the beginning. It is about the progression, not perfection. 'Perfection is the enemy of progress'.

| Progress | Perfection |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Endless: Always there | Endless: Never get there |
| Focus on improvement | Focus on flaws |
| Energizing | Tiring |
| Results = Learning | Results = good/bad |
| Ourselves | Others |

by [BenBergeron.com](https://www.instagram.com/benbergeron/)

Greatly inspired by the book *The Science of Breaking Out of Your Comfort Zone: How to Live Fearlessly, Seize Opportunity, and Make Each Day Memorable* by Peter Hollins

Image credits: <https://www.instagram.com/benbergeron/> and [BenBergeron.com](https://www.instagram.com/benbergeron/)



Sense of content urgency

It's about time to wake up and get into 2020 and beyond

Sometimes you have to look to the past to find the answer for the future. To excel in the digital content game, you sort of publish your own daily newspaper or weekly magazine. Brands become their own publishers.

In the next pages, you will learn and understand...

- Why your brand needs to think like an old school publisher to prepare for the content future without a Facebook or Instagram. Improve the effectiveness of your content with your audience at the core. Become agile and nimble. And to speed up whilst you gain efficiency in production and media budgets.
- What are the basics and fundamentals you need before you even consider participating in the content game? Spoil alert, your 'why' and your brand strategy are the backbone. Measure your content efforts in line with your business objectives. And please do create a brand persona for consistency and speeding up the production process.
- How to set up the content structure to merge content from all silos like Marketing, Sales, Corp Comms, PR, HR, and Customer Care. You will gain efficiency in your production budget. Use free Google data for insights on your customer needs. And why 'help' content is mostly overlooked, the least sexy and your most important plus effective content investment.
- Setting up a central content team, including the JDs. Keep your stakeholders on board. How to tackle brand safety and be prepared for the crisis when the sh*t hits the fan.
- Last not least, what are the processes and tools to have in place to speed up the team and shorten timelines?

Time to make a change

Shift from ad hoc performance campaigning to continuous brand storytelling. Use the 'softer' content to fill the top of the funnel. Create an overview of what is published, when, where and with what media spend. Decrease your dependency on social for reach. Integrate all digital channels for consistency. It is a bit like publishing your own daily digital magazine.

My aim is to give you insights on why you should embrace this change, how this is done and what you need. With the science in these pages, the art is in your own adjustments and implementation. Stay curious and dare to be bold.

Don't BS

Just do it. Don't say you want to build your content base, build it. Lots of my clients are saying they want to make the change, yet in reality, they are driven by the sales numbers and activation campaigns. Brand building with content takes time and investment. In the long term, it pays off. Very clear with your 'help' content used to tell your brand story. It also generates more and hotter leads that are easier to convert to sales.

4 Elements you need for content

Some of the concepts in this book are new, some are familiar. Each is different in length, depth and amount of operational details to explain the concept.

In a nutshell

- It's a belief: First things first. The belief and the support from the C-suite are non-negotiable.
- Element 1: Basics and Fundamentals. What do you need before you can even think about content?
- Element 2: Structure. How to bring structure to your content and use data to make decisions.
- Element 3: Organization and Content Team. Why and how to set up a central content team. From the roles, organizational structure to stakeholder management.
- Element 4: Tools and processes. What you need to speed up. Added bonus: how to improve your brief to the agencies. 'Sh*t in is sh*t out' and having great content starts with yourself.

These pages apply to all industries, brands, and organizations. From international corporates to smaller brands, start-ups or even independent consultants and artists. With a focus on digital channels as that is my area of expertise and experience.

My experience and 20+ books

Bringing together my experience, my knowledge with the best books on content, I aim to give you a vision for the content future. I create the overview, you do the deep-dive in the sources to learn more about all the details.

Interviews

With huge pleasure, I got the opportunity to interview the most amazing peers in the content industry. From the top international agencies to the most inspiring brands. Their insights absolutely blew my mind. Incorporating these was a challenge and I hope to have done justice to all the great minds that shared their experiences and knowledge.

Books and sources

Sometimes I do a shameless copy-paste, not reinventing what is already written with excellence. Other

times I adjusted and combined for the readability and tone of voice. Always giving the credits and linking to the original sources. See the overview of all references and credits at the end of the book. With my shout out for their excellent work, amazing knowledge, insights and how to's. Crediting their leadership within their industry.



We Hate Ads

We hate ads

Yet we don't hate all ads

Let's be honest, we all hate ads. If we get the chance, we skip, decline, take a break and try to ignore it. Overcrowded, jammed and packed social timelines and inboxes with sales focused try-me buy-me messages. Google search is not much different. Blindness for the upper part with the ads, knowing by own experience these ads seldom provide the answer to my search.

Still missing that focus on the customer needs. Still missing out on the relevance. And that in these days of data abundance. We should be ashamed of ourselves as marketers.

Advertisers and agencies are hellbent on the idea that creating better advertising will make people hate ads less. But in recent years, with ad blockers and Netflix and paying for Hulu or Spotify without ads, people have become accustomed to the idea that there can be a world without advertising — that they can get their entertainment without the interruption. If the ability to opt-out of advertising is available, people are going to take that option. It's a better experience — and not one that better ads — Cannes Lions creative or not — is going to solve. <https://digiday.com/marketing/rundown-weve-always-hated-advertising/?DM2=764622>

'People hate BAD ads, people do not hate advertising in general.' Dick Buschman, Partner at ACHTUNG! Amsterdam

Yet we don't hate all ads

'That isn't true' Dick Buschman, Partner at ACHTUNG! Amsterdam corrected me during the interview. 'People actually love advertising'. 'It is in human nature to love stories' he continues, 'people are hungry for stories to tell and to share. For inspiration and a laugh.' 'Stories that touch their hearts and soul. Stories that make them smile or even drop a tear or two.'

He explains 'advertising is the truth well told [McCann]', 'with the cultural and local relevance that creates Magic and sparks Joy.'

The stories Dick mentions 'are the stories that are coming from within', 'your true history and your heritage of the brand and products.' It is about 'a long term vision with the same (core) story told for

many many years.' 'Stories that bring your mission to life and explain why you do what you do.' 'Stories that show your vision and underline your values.' He continues 'and only if you have that (long term) in place, then think about the (short term) commercial advertising for activation and sales.'

'Therefore, if you create advertising based on your authentic story, people actually do not hate it.' Dick adds 'actually, one of the reasons people follow brands on Instagram, is to be inspired by their stories.' A few examples of brands that create such advertising: Volkswagen, Patagonia, Google, and SuitSupply. 'They own their story. And that story directs the content. Not vice versa.'

Dick Buschman: 'People hate BAD ads, people do not hate advertising in general.'



Be distinctive

Dare to be different and to stand out

Nobody likes everything and everybody likes something. Avoid being vanilla. Dare to be different and to stand out.

Don't claim the obvious leadership elements the others in your industry are claiming. That is the recipe to be forgotten. There is already more than enough of the same. There is already more than enough clutter. Find your own expertise and create a unique combination or take a different approach.

'Don't be afraid to be you. If you want to do something truly creative, don't jump on the bandwagon and do chapter two of someone else's chapter one.' Dolf Bekker

Nobody is as interested in you as you are

'Marketers, like all humans, believe everyone is as interested in their work as they are. Leading to ads that fall at the first hurdle by taking it for granted that they will be noticed.' 'Prioritise being noticed above other goals. If you fail there, everything else is academic.' And 'smash your category's norms'.

Source: [MarketingWeek](#)

Don't give in to mediocrity

Go for excellence. Don't settle. Don't give in to mediocrity. Just 'good enough' is not good enough. Because there is already so much out there that is 'good enough'. Aim for something you are really proud of. Is your content something you would like to read, view yourself? And what does it do to you? If it doesn't touch you, make you smile or give you knowledge... think again and start over until it does.

Golden rules

A few golden rules to stand out and show your brands' personality, especially on social.

- Grab the attention from the first moment. In the social feed, you have like 1,5 seconds to stand out and be noticed.
- Have a super clear brand communication in those first 1,5seconds. By preference, your logo as this is a brand cue and distinctive recognizable asset.
- Make sure your message in your content is very clear. Don't be mysterious or pretend a cliffhanger. Social likes clarity. Easy to consume and digest. Spell it out. When you get a bit tired of it yourself, only then your message will probably land with your customer.
- Don't forget about a call to action. This can also be a feeling, provoking a sentiment or thoughts beside an action like a click. It has to be clear for your customers what you want them to do after consuming the content. Having a 'dead-end' in your content is a waste of budgets.

Together you know more

If you are not sure about your content, listen to your hesitation. Always do a check with someone else. Not only on the copy, typos, also on the message and the quality level of your content assets. Use our own common sense and ask yourself 'would I thumb-stop my scrolling social feed on the iPhone to watch this video?'

Be different

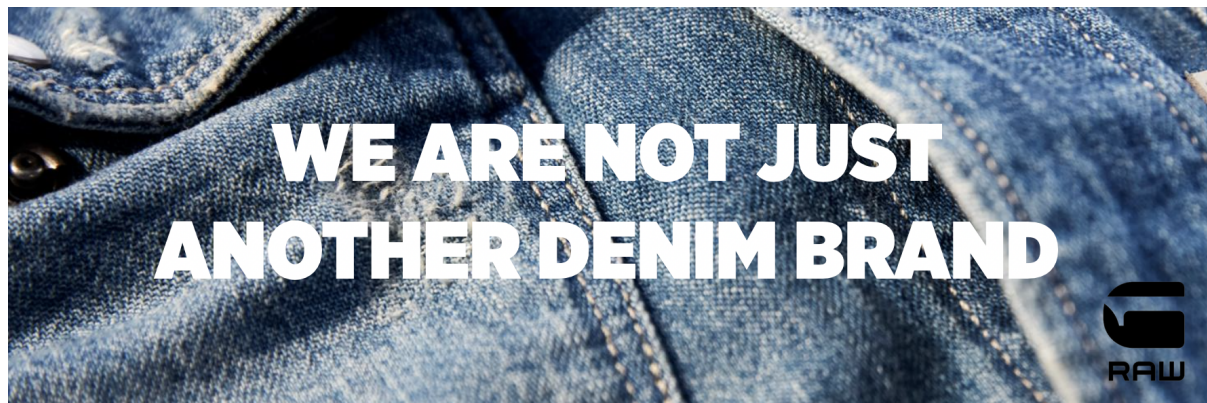
Most brands claim they are 'innovative', 'open', 'honest', 'caring' - to name a few usual suspect values. How does your 'innovative value' differs from the 'innovative value' from your competitor? You can be distinctive and different on the operational level; by the actual words you use, the language you speak and the visuals you post.

Bring your brand and your values to live in the content assets. Do not stick to the overarching value descriptions, get down to the operational level of the content producers. Give them real-life examples of the actual words to use and the hallmarks for the visuals and videos.

Be minimalistic

Stick to who you are and don't make it too complicated. Minimalist branding is a trend, connected to the art trend. Copy-paste from [Medium](#) 'Next to being clear, it is also visually appealing, with a focus on being straightforward en essential. With Marie Kondo's hit books (and her Netflix show, Tidying Up), brands are going to start asking themselves, "Does it spark joy?"

If you cannot explain your distinctive identity in a few simple words than you probably don't understand it well enough.



‘Character Gives Respect’ by G-Star RAW

Don't lose your distinctiveness to the sales figures

‘From origin G-Star is a creative out of the box brand. We stand out with our never predictable combination of art, fashion, and design’. ‘Keep it simple and don’t over-engineer it’ Dennis Woesthof explains, Global Go To Market Manager at G-Star RAW.

Some brands fall in the pitfall and turn into a sales machine once they grow from a start-up to a mature brand. They risk losing their distinctiveness to the sales figures. But, if you have a solid fundament of who you are and why you do what you do, it is easier to stick to your brand story. And let that resonate in your content. Consistent and recognizable.

‘Keep it simple and don’t over-engineer it.’ Dennis Woesthof, Global Go To Market Manager
G-Star RAW

The devil is in the content details

For G-Star, we strive for a combination of a recognizable basis enhanced with surprising creative freedom’. If you do not have your basics in place, your audience will notice and feel the inconsistency. They sense the clutter and messiness.

The devil is in the details. Make sure your fundament is described to the last detail, solid and very recognizable. Only then you can vary in your individual and local campaigns. Give each campaign its own creative character. Create freedom and diversify with the allocation of your budgets and resources. Not one campaign is the same and whilst the brand story stays recognizable G-Star.

Local relevance and shorten time to market

Once you have set up the global campaigns with master assets, you can roll out and localize to the different markets. Tune and tweak for local relevance and market maturity. Because you have this solid fundament for your brand character, you can maintain ‘the same’ identity over all the markets.

Another advantage of having your fundament and character in place, besides this creative freedom, is to shorten your time to market. And you can be more efficient with the (production) budgets. Not

reinventing the design wheel over and over again.

The work actually starts after launch

'Last but not least' Dennis adds 'the next step is to track and improve your individual campaigns based on sales data once the items are available in stores and online'. 'The work doesn't stop once you launch your campaign, it actually starts once you launch'. 'This is a common mistake within the fashion industry, the data is too often overlooked and seen as a burden on creativity.'

'Show your true character in all your content. Remember it is that personal creative touch that sparks the magic for a brand'.

'Show your true character, it is that personal creative touch that sparks the magic.' Dennis Woesthof, Global Go To Market Manager G-Star RAW



'Content to stand out' by Flinders

Use data to set your product and content strategy

'The more difficult to produce the content, the easier it is to stand out.' Geert-Jan Smits, Founder and CEO Flinders.

'Content is the heart of the Flinders strategy. As a multi-brand retailer, we should and can differentiate ourselves by providing the visitor unique and inspiring content. To help him or her make the right decision.' Geert-Jan Smits [Founder and CEO Flinders] continues. 'Consumers need inspiration, information, and advice. Especially when buying home furniture.'

'The more difficult it is to produce the content, the easier it is to stand out.' 'The more difficult it is to obtain content about products or brands, the higher the margin. And the less competition there will be...' And that is exactly what Flinders does. By stepping up and raising that bar.

The secret of success is the content Flinders creates. The numbers speak for themselves. In just 8 years from the launch of the website in January 2011 to the amazing flagship store in Zaandam (2000m²), Flinders Cafe Groningen, warehouse (9000m²) in Amsterdam, Design Studio Gent. Geert-Jan adds, all shiny and proud, that Flinders is awarded as the 'Best Furniture Shop' of the Netherlands in 2019. With an expected sales volume of € 24 million in the same year.

In-house content team

They mix the traditional product shots provided by the furniture manufacturers, with their own in-house produced content showing the room setting and giving inspiration. The problem with the traditional shots is that is lacking that information for the customer to make a well-funded decision.

'Yes, It is very time-consuming to make your own content. Especially the images. One shot of a nice room setting can take up to one day. But then again, that makes it possible to differentiate ourselves from the other furniture webshops.' 'The content you create and collect should be high res and flexible in size and form so that it can be used for every channel, platform, and social medium.'

The third source of content is the customers themselves. With the MyFlinders program, they collected

700+ inspirational user-generated pictures. Uploaded by the customers with #myflinders. Starting in 2017 the in-house photographer visits their most inspiring homes to extend this content. Used online and in the magazine. Priceless content to tell the Flinders stories and to help sell the products they love.

The Flinders extensive in-house content team consists off

- 2 Copywriters
- 1 SEO specialist
- 1 Visual designer
- 1 Social Media Marketeer
- 1 Trendwatcher and Photographer
- 1 Photographer

The Customer Care and Advice Department give advice to the content team. From insights on the type of interior and furniture advice, the customers are looking for, what information is missing on the website, to how the website should improve from the customers' perspective.

All these content assets are used in the online and offline formats. From obviously their website, with all the product content, trends and inspiration chapters, advice and room setting modules to their print magazines. They even provide interior advice at home. Including taking care of all the hassle that comes with buying and placing new furniture. Flinders is the data-driven e-commerce platform adding value by giving inspiration and providing 'retail as a service'.

Three tips

Use data to set your product and content strategy.

Flinders focuses on the data first. Not on the furniture. Do your research on what your audience is looking for to develop your product inventory. And use the brands to create the Google and YouTube search volume and traffic to generate immediate sales volume in your webshop.

Another really valuable often overseen source of immersive data is the Customer Care department. Involve them for the insights on the first contact with the customers. Align these two sources with the Google trends and the international Furniture Fairs — and you are setting up for success.

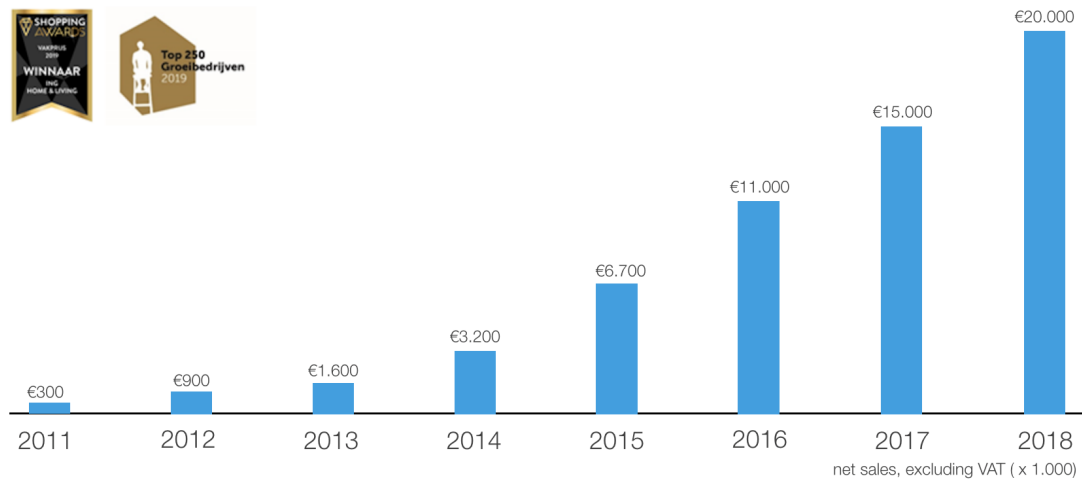
Have your PIM in place

The Product Information System is the heart of the brand. Filled with their own and supplier content. By working closely together with their suppliers, the basic content like pack shots and life pictures are provided in a format that can be uploaded/connected right into the PIM (API, XLS, feed).

Every piece of content is tagged with multiple labels and topics. This is a hell of a job, painstaking and a monumental task. This can be partly automated. However, with the devil in the details, the manual check of all the tags is what makes the difference.

Content needs attention

After a year your content becomes outdated and definitely needs to be updated. Plan this within the daily operation as it takes a lot of work. Do not only focus on the production of new content.



Flinders becomes market leader in luxury segment in 3 countries





‘Stick to your brand voice’ by WodBottom

Customer care that makes you giggle and resonates with who they are

Either you are a big brand, or a small one, knowing and breathing your own identity is what sets you apart from your competitors. Being distinctive works. Embrace your creative character, explained by [G-Star RAW](#). Or create your own content based on data, as done by [Flinders](#).

WodBottom sells booty shorts for CrossFit. For those who are not familiar with these bootylicious booty shorties, the special thing is the fit and if they stay in place during the workout. Next, a bit controversial, some people are quite opinionated about all shapes and size women wearing these short shorts. By a lack of shorties with excellent fit, high-quality fabric and with some sparkling designs, Emily Ruyle founded WodBottom. ‘WOD’ stands for ‘Work Out of the Day’ the name for the daily training in Crossfit. ‘Bottom’, well, that speaks for itself.

With a profound background in marketing and product development, Emily is very explicit about the brand voice of WodBottom. ‘What makes a person love it and buy again and again, is the emotional pull.’ In two years’ time, she developed the current slightly controversial and authentic brand voice. Sticking to it and standing firmly about it. In times of feedback, WodBottom showed that they were not stepping down due to negative comments from others about all women wearing booty shorts. Customers embraced the brand for being firm where they stood for.

‘Put your money where your mouth is.’ Strive to focus on the brand message and be who you are. ‘Sure you want to be profitable, yet it is not so much about making sales.’ ‘Focus on the long term game to keep customers happy and engaged.’

‘What makes a person love it and buy again and again, is the emotional pull.’ Emily Ruyle,
Marketing Director and Activewear Designer

Brand voice

In Emily her own words ‘Everybody has their unique way to shine.’ ‘I wish I could convey to people they should forget about the word ‘should’. I don’t like it when someone says ‘they should’. Whatever... Who created those rules what people should and should not do? Accepting what other people do, would make the world a better place.’

Key elements to her brand

- Create what people talk about. A lot. Online and offline. This has two elements. Design to show off your personality on the butt cheeks. Her first design sold out immediately, unicorns and rainbows. From there on expanding into florals and abstract. Nowadays, at request by the fans, also solid colors. The second is quality. Creating shorties that stay in place, cover your cheeks and are squat proof. No matter the workout.
- 'Don't be in the game for the money. Be there to create a relationship that matters.' Listen to what they want, what they love and are passionate about.
- 'Trust in the brand is essential. Give them a great product and even better experience. Value the customer more than their wallet.'
- Honest feedback shows her how valuable the customers are. Customers want to be heard and they like sharing their ideas and frustrations. What makes them happy or sad.
- Customers define your brand and give authentic feedback on how you are performing. Plus it is unique feedback on how to grow and expand your brand. Emily listens in several ways to keep up and to improve customer experience: Facebook Groups, email, and text, Ambassadors and Influencers program.

Content strategy

The brand voice comes to life in the content strategy. The fun and funky designs that show personality with humor and a sarcastic tone of voice define the assets. The visuals are a bit raw and unpolished. Authentic in the typical recognizable very not photogenic CrossFit box settings. Emily has made a deliberate decision not to use the professional-looking polished picture-perfect photos for her products. This doesn't resonate with who the brand is.

The customer-centricity also resonates in the posts. Honest, open and raw feedback. The reviews, quotes, and pictures taken by the ladies themselves are used on the website, on social and even in Facebook advertising.

Two types of content

The posts are split into two categories. Next to the bootylicious product posts, Emily speaks up via her blog. 'Supporting women' to 'accept the way we are' in 'all different shapes and sizes'. The blog that most impressed me is about 'Body Positivity'. This is a common topic amongst female athletic brands such as Nike, Under Armor and many others. The big difference in the brand voice of WodBottom is that she takes it a step further. In the second part of this particular blog, a big shout out for women themselves not to judge the other women 'What about how we treat others?'. Love this distinctiveness! [Read her blog](#)

Customer care the makes you giggle

For the sake of the great fun-loving and slightly different customer experience that makes you giggle, order a pair of booty shorts at WodBottom. Get onboard Emily's customer experience journey. Steal with pride that best fits your brand and your brand voice. For a small investment of \$42 you get a pair of

these shorties and you gain a great example by the book for customer experiences and the feeling there is a real person behind the brand. wodbottom.com/



Build a brand before products

Why it matters: to become relevant and make the emotional connection

'[NOBULL](#) is a footwear, apparel and accessory brand for people who train hard and don't believe in excuses. If you think gimmicks in your shoes make you a better athlete, NOBULL is not for you.'

They are taking over the CrossFit world by storm. With a strong and fierce brand, they make that emotional connection. Their base is in the USA and they have a dedicated EU shop. It all started online and expanding to pop-up and bricks and mortar shops. A basic collection with sold-out limited editions, excellent customer service, and strong social content and advertising, they rock big time. What is special about their brand, how did they develop it and what we can learn?

Key takeaways

- It is about a long term view and mindset. 'Make the pie bigger and not make our slice bigger. If we get more people doing this, our slice by definition gets bigger.'
- Build a brand and create content before you have products to sell. 'Once we had the name NOBULL, it became a filter that guided everything.'
- Recognize that the product specs are not enough to become relevant and to have an emotional connection. 'It is not about you, it is about them, your customers and their needs. Most of the times a product is created and then sold to people. Start the other way around, first the needs and use those as a filter to develop the product.'

Stolen with pride from the podcast '[Chasing Excellence](#)' 'The Origins of NOBULL' by Ben Bergeron, 'a show dedicated to dissecting what it means to live a life of excellence, both inside the gym & out.' I have written down a part of the interview, edited bits and pieces to improve readability.

Entrepreneurial long term mindset

'Reebok is coming back with an incredible offer.' Without the slightest hesitation, the response was 'go with them.' 'What they are offering, we cannot match.'

'And what is better for them, is better for the sport. And if it is better for the sport, it is better for us in the long run.'

'That is such a long term view. Instead of what is better for us this week, this month, this quarter, ... , it is about the long term. This is so refreshing because it is about making the pie bigger and not to make our slice bigger.'

'If we get more people doing this (CrossFit), the slice by definition gets bigger.'

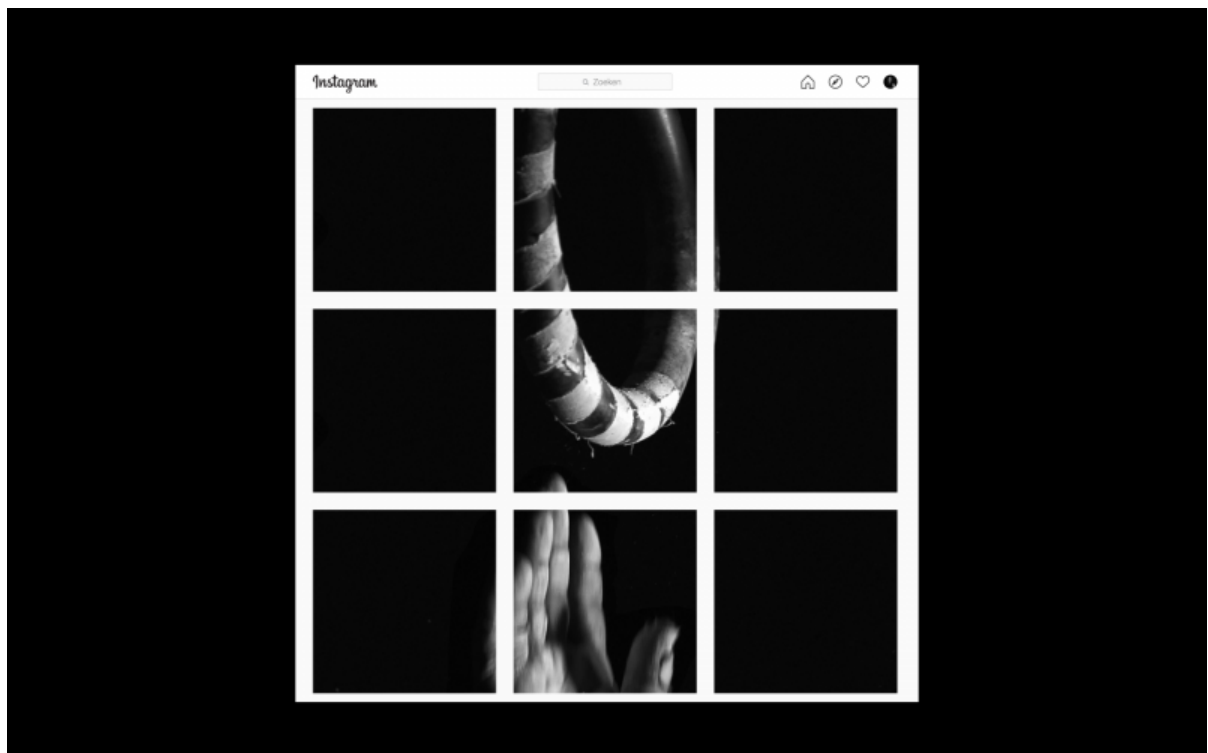
'They get it.'

Why NOBULL had to build a brand before they had a product to sell

[Ben asking] 'You were building the brand before you had the product. Most of the times people have a product and then start to build the brand on top of it. This is flipping it. You have the ethos first, and then find the product that fits. How did NOBULL do this?'

[Markus answering] 'It came from the name. Once we had the name NOBULL, it became a filter that guided everything. And that became the whole mentality about being a brand for people who train hard and have no excuses.'

'It is within the product. We try to keep the product simple and it performs with you the way you need it to - and nothing else. Once we had that then we could start to set that mentality. And that drives the content and everything else.'





Content creation before they had the products

'From the very early stages, even before we had the product, we developed content. You can be very creative in the way you shoot things. You could not see the shoes they were wearing, you can set the tone. You couldn't necessarily see what the product was, but you can feel it.'

'We did this a lot out of necessity. Because once we started working on it, we had the timeline for launching and we did not have the products. When we realized the product was going to be delayed even more, we were forced to be more creative around the way we talked about the brand and the mentality.'

'The very first piece of content we created was for the factory, a 60'' spot. Their response was 'wow this is different and this is exciting'. And from that moment on everything started top-pick up a lot faster.'

Become relevant, recognizing that product spec isn't enough

'How do we become relevant within the CrossFit space? We were not thinking about how we are going to compete (with other brands). We were always thinking about what we are going to say, and what connects with us.'

'One thing that was very clear for both of us (founders), ..., we felt like brands talk about 'where our products, our shoes can make you run faster, jump higher or make you stronger'. And we didn't agree with that.'

'The only thing that is going to make you faster, stronger, any of those things, is you to put in the work. That is where the NOBULL mentality 'no excuses' comes from. And that is connected really well in the

broader Crossfit community.'

Build an emotional brand connection

'Building an emotional connection to a brand and not relying on the product specs. Therefore you need to build a brand before you have the products. You have to fuse it with emotion to make it work.'

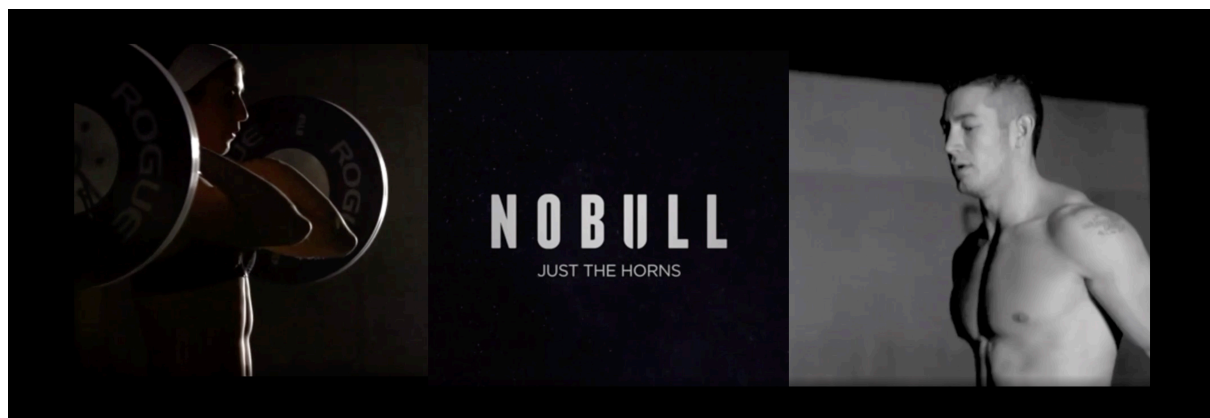
'It is not about you, it is about them, your customers and their needs. Most of the times a product is created and then sold to people. Start the other way around, first the needs and use those as a filter to develop the product.'

'For NOBULL the needs (of the athletes) are about stability, durability and there is no reason it can't look good. That was the filter for the materials.'

'We went to look for the materials, the upper for our training shoe, the 'super fabric'. It is a highly durable material, a military-grade material. It makes a lot of sense for everything we are doing in CrossFit with rope climbs and super stable for Olympic lifting we do. It came from a purpose around the need were going to be.'

'Above and beyond you need connection. That the people you are speaking to, feel that you get them. If your message is about you, there is no connection. Nobody is really excited to go out to lunch with somebody who constantly talks about themselves, they want to find about you and if you speak to them and their needs matter. That is where the connecting starts.'

Video and visual credits: <https://www.instagram.com/nobullproject/> , first posts June 2014





Reputation management

Have your content together for when the sh*t hits the fan

Content can and should be used to build and proactively defend your brand's reputation. Nowadays you need to have a strong brand story to explain why you do what you do, in line with the usual suspects as sustainability and inclusiveness. With the devil in the details, this is about all your content, not just the polished 'about the brand' pages.

Strangely enough, most brands do not have this basic content in place. A brand that claims to be sustainable yet doesn't tell about sustainability in their 'about' pages or in the job descriptions. A brand that claims the benefits of dairy consumption, yet they don't even tell why they believe drinking milk is good for you. A brand that is into coffee, yet does not even have the number 1 search query 'how to make a cappuccino' on their ecomm pages. Just a few examples.

When that sh*t hits the fan in times of crisis, or simply when journalists are just looking for a good story, the press deep dives into your content. Once they smell something juicy they dig even deeper. You better have all your content together because you will never know when this happens.

3 Simple rules

There are three simple rules for proactive reputation defending content.

1. In line with your 'why'. It is your core and explains your license to operate. If you lack this content, you are not credible and do not have the 'proof' of your reason for existence.
2. It takes time to build a solid base. And it is not a one-off or a campaign. Don't wait for the perfect story and the perfect pages. Small steps ahead. Just start, build and expand over time. Most often forgotten: audit and re-evaluate continuously to keep this content up to date.
3. Non-commercial. No discussion.

Business case

Due to the lack of a solid immediate business case, producing this type of content for your online reputation is a challenge. Keep in mind, the costs of a crisis always are much higher.

A few tips: developing this type of content is a long term investment and you don't have to do all at once

and go big. Next, this type of content is mostly in line with your help content. Joining efforts between corporate communications, public relations and marketing silos pays off in re-usable content.

‘When the sh*t hits the fan, the press deep dives into your content. The devil is in the details, it is about all your content, not just your polished 'about the brand' pages.’ Fleur Willemijn v Beinum



Brand safety and content

How to control your content distribution and prepare for if that sh*t hits the fan

'[Brand safety](#) is a set of measures that aim to protect the image and reputation of brands from the negative or damaging influence of questionable or inappropriate content when advertising online.

With the move towards digital marketing, and specifically programmatic advertising, brand safety has become a growing concern for marketers and advertisers, and its importance has increased. Major brands have responded by cutting advertising budgets and pulling their ads off online advertising and social media platforms after finding their ads were placed next to undesirable content.'

Often misunderstood

Brand safety is an important hot and often misunderstood topic. Explained in a nutshell: some brands avoid YouTube and other social user-generated content platforms to prevent that their content is placed next to extremists. Living out of fear, brand safety measures can limit your reach and disturb the success of a campaign.

Please, do take brand safety seriously, however, do not go overboard. Implement it in the right way and get the specialists on board. If you do spend the time and efforts for the setup, the limitations on your campaigns, brand safety can be negligible.

How to: white and blacklisting

You can control some of your distribution with the ad placements by white and blacklisting complimented by the keyword lists. These are 'living' overviews. Owned by the brand and are set up together with your agencies and must be updated frequently.

Yes, the obvious porn, cruelty, vulgar, rude, abusive and brutal must be avoided, the details and specifics for your industry, brand, and product are absolutely bespoke.

Be prepared

It is not a matter of 'if', it is a matter of 'when'. Some day your brand safety will be an issue. And the press will smell a juicy story... Better be prepared for when that sh*t hits the fan. Embed the brand safety in your content team. End responsible is the Editor in Chief, with direct lines to the Crisis Communications management.

You cannot control everything, you can control how you react to it.' Fleur Willemijn van Beinum