

Content marketing trends

 By Louise Marsland

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The lines are blurring between what is branded content, embedded content, public relations and native advertising. What is clear is that since advertising agencies 'discovered' content about 18 months ago, a whole new content ecosystem is being developed that includes real journalists and editors.

International content marketing site, [Contently](#), says that trends are evolving so rapidly in content marketing that it has updated and published a further 2015 trends, only six months after its first 2015 trends predictions.

In *The Guardian's* predictions on content marketing this year, it believes that the branded content industry will bring about real change in the media landscape, creating their own editorial voice, creative collaborations with artists and film makers, and breathtaking storytelling to engage consumers.

It is all about finding the right content model and experimenting until you get it right for your community each and every time, building and retaining audiences, creating engagement and deepening relationships.

As *Forbes* stresses in its [content marketing predictions for 2015](#): "Content marketing may be bigger than ever, but marketers need to be strategic and adaptive in how they carry out their content strategies. 2015 will be the year when

content distribution moves to the forefront, while SEO becomes more about working behind the scenes to ensure technical compliance. Social media and email marketing will need to become more sophisticated to reach an increasingly wary audience, and will come to be seen as amplifiers of distribution for content strategies."

This is the storytelling trend, but it is also consumer-focused marketing, "marketing that has everything to do with the consumer, not the product," reports Salesforce on the ['Power of Storytelling'](#), citing examples like Airbnb. In [Airbnb's new video campaign](#), it focuses on the "joys of travelling", of "belonging", nothing at all with booking with their service.

"Native advertising is for people who read things," reports [Nieman Labs](#), and can enhance the offering of serious news organisations as a lucrative revenue stream, not just a sponsored story from an advertiser. Media owners should look to creating products that leverage data and help advertisers communicate to news audiences with intelligent branded content. This "native economy" could fund the news for the foreseeable future - what trend could be more important in our struggling media industry?

These are the latest trends, sourced predominantly from Contently: [21 Content Marketing Predictions for the 2nd Half of 2015](#) and [17 Content Marketing Predictions for 2015](#); *The Guardian*: ['Content Marketing Trends for 2015'](#); [The Content Marketing Institute](#); [Advertising Age](#); Hubspot: ['2015 Driving content Marketing Success in Europe'](#); B2C Community: [8 Content marketing Trends to watch 2015](#); Inc.com: ['Content Marketing Trends every leader should know'](#); Adweek: ['4 trends in content marketing 2015'](#):

1. *The Guardian* reported that 69% of brands reported creating more content year-on-year, and predicted that 2015 would be a year of real-time newsroom innovation, improved effectiveness and user-experience. The 24-hour newsroom will become a reality as brands realise that they cannot take 24 hours to respond, but need to do so within minutes. For this to work, brands need to have a strong "tone of voice" that is understood by everyone who works on the brand and acts on behalf of the brand.
2. Brands will, like media, turn their attention to the generation that will hit the workforce by 2020-2025: Generation Z, their future audience and future consumers. Generation Z are smart, empathic, colour and gender agnostic, want to change the world, expect brands to change the world, and their lives are conducted on as many as five electronic devices simultaneously (laptop, TV, iPad, Smartphone, desktop).
3. Storytelling will involve strong multi-media elements across a variety of platforms to engage audience fully and Instagram will increasingly be used by brands to enhance their visual storytelling.
4. 2015 is the year that content marketing will mature to become "high quality programming", prized above disruptive advertising that interrupts because it will live alongside independent journalism and entertainment because of the high quality of the crafted branded content.
5. Content marketing will allow brands to 'own' certain subjects and topics, engaging in thought leadership as well as social media dominance, according to Inc.
6. Content marketers will increasingly use the same brand metrics to measure ROI and impact as their advertising colleagues do.
7. Content strategy will become more important as brands formalise content marketing programmes, yet still need the customisation that comes with targeting each consumer segment.
8. Content marketing is hyper-competitive and marketers are increasing investing in tools and people, including agency resources, to take advantage of content marketing opportunities.
9. "Influence is as important as sales" when it comes to connecting with consumers and those agencies specialising in content and which understand the difference between content marketing and true storytelling, as opposed to PR fluff and advertising, will win in this market of the future.

10. Marketers need to guard against "content blindness" and refrain from bombarding consumers with copious content and ensure that content is relevant and of a high quality.
11. Managing content creation and quality is an area that will get increasing attention this year and marketers will look at additional resources, either in-house or through their agencies to assist with content curation and creation and distribution.
12. Authentic storytelling must be understood to be executed properly: "Storytelling is going to require brands to think and act differently. They will have to be even more customer-centric. They will need intimate knowledge of their customers that goes way beyond product. At the same time, brands need to be creative, flexible and agile to deliver stories that are personal, relevant and timely," reports Salesforce.
13. More brands will hire full-time editors, but will upgrade them to something more buzzworthy, like "global audience strategists".
14. Experienced journalistic talent, downsized by a struggling media industry, will be recognised by brands when they realise that algorithms and apps cannot produce great content, as Contently quotes [content strategist Neil Chase](#): "Journalists, after a decade of worrying that their careers will end any day now, will take the National Truck Driving School's phone number off the refrigerator and instead set up LinkedIn searches for leadership roles in content marketing."
15. Having said that, news curation apps and app features and proprietary software products will be the hot communications products for the next year as media companies look for alternative revenue streams from content marketing and content curation.
16. Watch this space: Snapchat, Facebook, Flipboard and Apple are all giving news curation attention.
17. And lastly, there were hopeful predictions that the rise of content marketing would put to death, terms like ["snackable content"](#).

ABOUT LOUISE MARSLAND

Louise Burgers (previously Marsland) is Founder/Content Director: SOURCE Content Marketing Agency. Louise is a Writer, Publisher, Editor, Content Strategist, Content/Media Trainer. She has written about consumer trends, brands, branding, media, marketing and the advertising communications industry in SA and across Africa, for over 20 years, notably, as previous Africa Editor: Bizcommunity.com; Editor: Bizcommunity Media/Marketing SA; Editor-in-Chief: AdVantage magazine; Editor: Marketing Mx magazine; Editor: Progressive Retailing magazine; Editor: BusinessBrief magazine; Editor: FMOG Files newsletter. Web: www.sourceagency.co.za.

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