# Content Strategy Trends

As we approach the final Quarter of 2015, I thought it would be interesting to review predictions that had been made as hot trends for Content Strategy in 2015 to see how accurate they were. My first installment is from [SmallBizTrends](#), entitled "[7 Hot Trends Defining Your Content Strategy](#)." I like reviewing information about Small Business as I find these companies are often more nimble and willing to act upon the innovative recommendations. They push the envelope to remain competitive and find creative ways to stretch their budgets. Implementing a strategic approach to content is something even a small business can easily invest in. So here are some of my thoughts on these topics.

## Buyer Personas

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## The Rise of Adaptive Content

While most of the clients I have worked with in recent years don't employ robust personalization engines, some have seen the value in developing targeted content for segmented users and trying to entice them with the correct CTAs. Others have had a single-minded focus on a particular types of user they want to or think they attract, rather than the diverse audience of that actually visits their sites with varied purposes in mind. It's a wonderful thing when you can develop content for different personas and demonstrate the value of that investment with analytics indicating better user engagement. Users want a personalized experience that speaks to their motivations.

## Expansive Content Platforms

I still see a gap here with many clients and organizations, in general. I think it is easier to bridge that gap within smaller organizations where an individual or small group of employees can align all of the media outputs. However, in larger ones it seems that there are too many departments working in a vacuum. Print, web, social media, PR, sales and marketing materials don't always have the same focus. Oftentimes, it's a disjointed communications effort that is difficult to overcome if it has become the cultural norm in an organization. A cohesive messaging strategy across all media should be the goal.

## Mobile Content

Most organizations understand that much of their traffic is now coming from mobile devices. Most are optimizing the user interface to adapt to that. I am not sure their Content Strategy always follows suit. Information presented on a mobile device should be concise. It really should be edited in a way that breaks up the points into small, digestible sections or bulleted points. The proper IA can enable the content to be published to different platforms in a meaningful way.

**Ample Visual Content**

This is one area I struggle with. While I admire a beautiful User Interface (which can only enhance the content that lies within), I find that some sites overdo their visual content. There is nothing more annoying than a video pre-roll when you just want a simple piece of information. Some sites are jarring to view in an effort to be edgy. Less is more.  However, I do think that this is a trend that is not going away as people increasingly turn to the web for entertainment with streaming media rather than traditional TV.

**Website Content Optimization**

I think both small and large organizations alike understand the value of Website Content Optimization and have embraced Best Practices when it comes to SEO, I am not as sure that they know what a clear CTA is. They often invest in drawing users to their site with improved keywords, only to find out that the user is not quite sure what to do when they arrive. Spending money to drive traffic to a site is of little value if the users are confused by the content and UX.

**Going Inbound**

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So, in conclusion, I do believe that we have seen most of these trends at work in our industry. We still need to be cognizant of our clients' particular needs and not propose a strategy just because it is trendy. However, it is important to stay abreast of these developments and employ the most useful ones to our work. I look forward to blogging again about Content Strategy.

Resources

http://smallbiztrends.com/2014/11/2015-content-strategy.html

http://www.toprankblog.com/2014/05/digital-marketing-2015/

http://www.fourthsource.com/content-marketing/7-content-marketing-trends-2015-18170

Personalized content
Consistent message across all channels
Brands as publishers
Good writing (economy of words, effective messaging)
Offering resources instead of just selling/Informing customers rather than pitching
Customer Journey/Storytelling
Visual storytelling/video/humans peak/humanizing communication/humor
Marketing & sales merged into one content-creating department
Taking action via mobile
ideation/publication/performance/effectiveness to inform re-use, etc.
Marketing is everybody's job and more companies will leverage internal resources through social business and collaboration platforms as well as participation marketing with their community to integrate scaled content creation and social media engagement.
KPIs attached to content & tracking to optimize/create effective content
Focus on quality over quantity of content - crowded landscape, value of content measurable, a glut, consumers willing to pay for content
freelancers - specialized freelancers
24-hour content responsive to events, empowered to act upon behalf of brands
Content marketing will mature to be high quality programming. Interruptive "commercial time" or disruptive advertising will give way to marketer content living alongside journalistic or entertainment content, transparently labeled as created on behalf of a brand, and winning attention anyway on the quality of the work.

**P2 Blog -**

**Which Predicted Content Strategy Trends Actually Materialized This Year?**

**How Accurate Were Predictions About Digital Content Trends This Year?**

As we enter the final Quarter of 2015, I thought it would be interesting to review the trends that had been touted as the future of digital content. After revisiting a number of articles and posts that I had eagerly consumed back in January, I found some common themes put forth by the prognosticators. Not much that had been proposed was revolutionary in nature. Instead, I found fresh perspectives on tried-and-true methods. But has anyone heeded the clarion call to get back to basics? Let's review some current movements in digital content strategy.

**The future of digital content: quality vs. quantity**
It is widely acknowledged that there is a lot of "noise" in the digital marketplace, which makes it difficult to distinguish oneself from the pack. The immediacy provided by digital media has spawned an overwhelming number of choices for information consumers. The pressure to the the first to post, tweet or publish in an effort to garner eyeballs has not always resulted in the best content experience for the user. The push for a steady stream of information to drive impressions has often diluted the message and disregarded true user engagement. Earlier this year, pundits had been predicting the triumph of quality over quantity. The philosophy is that consumers of digital information are becoming fatigued by the cacophony. The belief is that they will seek out better content that resonates with them rather than accept the drivel produced to simply drive traffic.

While I would like to see this trend come to fruition, I think it is a long way from becoming a reality for a number of reasons. First and foremost is the fact that generations of digital natives are coming of age. They have grown-up with the 24-hour news cycle being the norm and a variety of media options at their disposal. While older demographic groups may feel a sense of information overload, the target audiences prized by marketers simply do not regard constant media outreach as bombardment. They are often happy to be the first to know in whatever form it may come. We can hope that with a little maturity these users become more discerning in their information consumption. However, it is doubtful that "quality content" will be defined by younger users in the same way it had been by their predecessors. I think the type of "quality" for younger audiences will center around a more personalized experience targeted to their interests, but not necessarily beholden to journalistic or even writing standards regarded as sacred to their parents and grandparents. In a world of text speak, hashtags and instantaneous news, those standards of quality are diminishing.

Aside from the apparent inertia of users to demand better content, there seems to be very little effort on the part of organizations to create great content. While organizations make large investments in technology, they often give short shrift to content creation. The idea in recent years that everyone can be a publisher has engendered a reliance on low-paid freelancers,

unpaid contributors and user-generated content that is given little oversight, resulting in digital properties with almost no editorial direction. For every company that is willing to pay a group of people to brainstorm and tweet clever things during the Superbowl, there are thousand others operating on shoestring budget with a skeleton crew of inexperienced writers and editors. The idea that a journalist might spend several months researching and writing a solid story is anathema to recent digital strategy. Compelling content should be the lure to attract repeat visitors, but it is difficult to make that case when websites have found success offering an abundance of information that is less than stellar. As the digital marketplace also relies more on visual content and mobile devices, the definition of quality content will also evolve to meet those needs.

However, I am not altogether pessimistic about the future of quality content. Millennials are savvy media consumers, and research has demonstrated that they are not shy about making demands of marketers & publishers. If they feel that the message being delivered is not authentic, they quickly disengage. This demographic wants to drive the conversation, rather than be mere consumers of information. So, in that respect, there is hope that content producers will be kept honest through the vigilance of this audience.

Like anything else, it really is the market that will compel producers to respond in kind. Let's hope that the predictions are true, and that the pendulum will swing back in favor of quality. True and earnest investment in content strategy is needed to further the cause. For the time being, the jury is still out.

They quickly recognize when the lines are being blurred between marketing and editorial.

may demand altrustic sociallly conscious sustainable not blurred lines between marketing and causes, etc.
 think the only way we will truly see quality become the norm is if the
the pendulum may swing back
what is old becomes new again


Again, I have a strong belief that content, however it is presented, should be at the center of every digital initiative.
o many digital war rooms/
endeavor incentive proactive action
created by a lack of demand for quality complacency clamoring


The trend in recent years toward Unpaid contributors, freelance, not dedicated staff, etc.
The thought being that

drive traffic/

communication messages
In a race to be the first to issue a clever tweet

organizations to distinguish themselves from others. oneself from

It is difficult to argue that there is a not a lot of "noise" in the digital marketplace.

Understanding the Audience/User Personas/Demographics

Personalized/Targeted/Adaptive Content

Mobile

Visual

SEO/KPI/Metrics

There was a general acknowledgement that the fundamentals of effective communication have not changed; you must engage your audience in a clear and meaningful way.  but rather a more savvy approach co

Most of the recommendations really focused on making better use of existing technology and communication methods. Perhaps it is time to get back-to-basics while still leveraging evolving

There weren't many surprises, nor anything truly revolutionary proposed. Most of the recommendations

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The recommendations focus on harnessing the power of technology to

The fundamentals of effective communication remain the same, it is the

Fundamentally, there are

Digital content continues to evolve  / reliable / effective

While some predictions have gained a foothold, others have a way to go before truly being embraced as the standard.

Every January, media outlets are rife with predictions for the new year.

as the method fashion

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