



Organizing for Content:

Models to Incorporate Content Strategy and Content Marketing in the Enterprise

April 25, 2013



By Rebecca Lieb
With Chris Silva and Christine Tran

Includes ecosystem input from 78 corporate practitioners, content service providers, and domain experts

Executive Summary

Despite an overwhelming trend toward content marketing and the need to continually feed an ever-increasing portfolio of content channels and formats, most organizations have not yet addressed content on either a strategic or tactical level. This report explores scalable organizational models for addressing content needs across the enterprise and makes recommendations for a holistic program.

Methodology

This report is based upon 78 interviews with executives actively engaged in the evolution of content strategy and/or content marketing in their organizations. The qualitative interviews were conducted with representatives from B2B and B2C companies between October and December 2011 and January and March 2013.

Of the 78 interview subjects, 41 (53%) represented 27 brands, 14 of which are included in the American or Global Fortune 500. Thirty-seven (47%) agency employees, consultants, and thought leaders from 27 content service providers were also interviewed. Additional information about interview questions is available on the Altimeter Group blog at <http://blog.altimetergroup.com>. The link to the blog post is <http://www.altimetergroup.com/2013/04/new-research-new-research-organize-for-content>.

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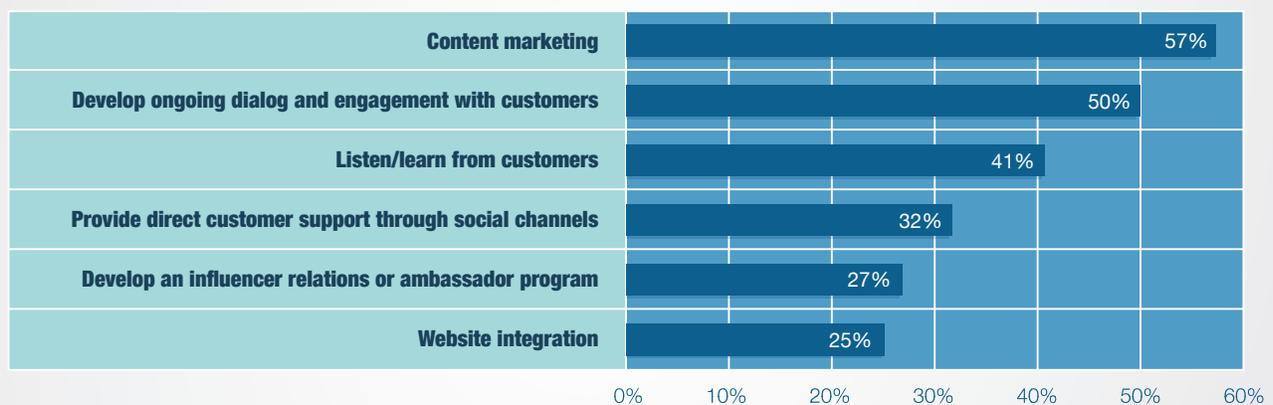
The Content Challenge: Feed the Beast

Brands have evolved into media companies. As content marketing steadily encroaches on the budgets and resources allocated to paid advertising (a trend that has accelerated for years),¹ brands suddenly find themselves in the media business in a very real way. The average organization is responsible for continual and increasing content demands of 178 social media properties,² to say nothing of a myriad of other owned media properties, from websites and blogs to live events.

Fig. 01

Content Marketing is the Top Go-To-Market Priority in 2013

In 2013, what is your top external social strategy objective?



Source: Altimeter Group survey of 130 social strategists; *Organizing for Content*, Altimeter Group, 2013



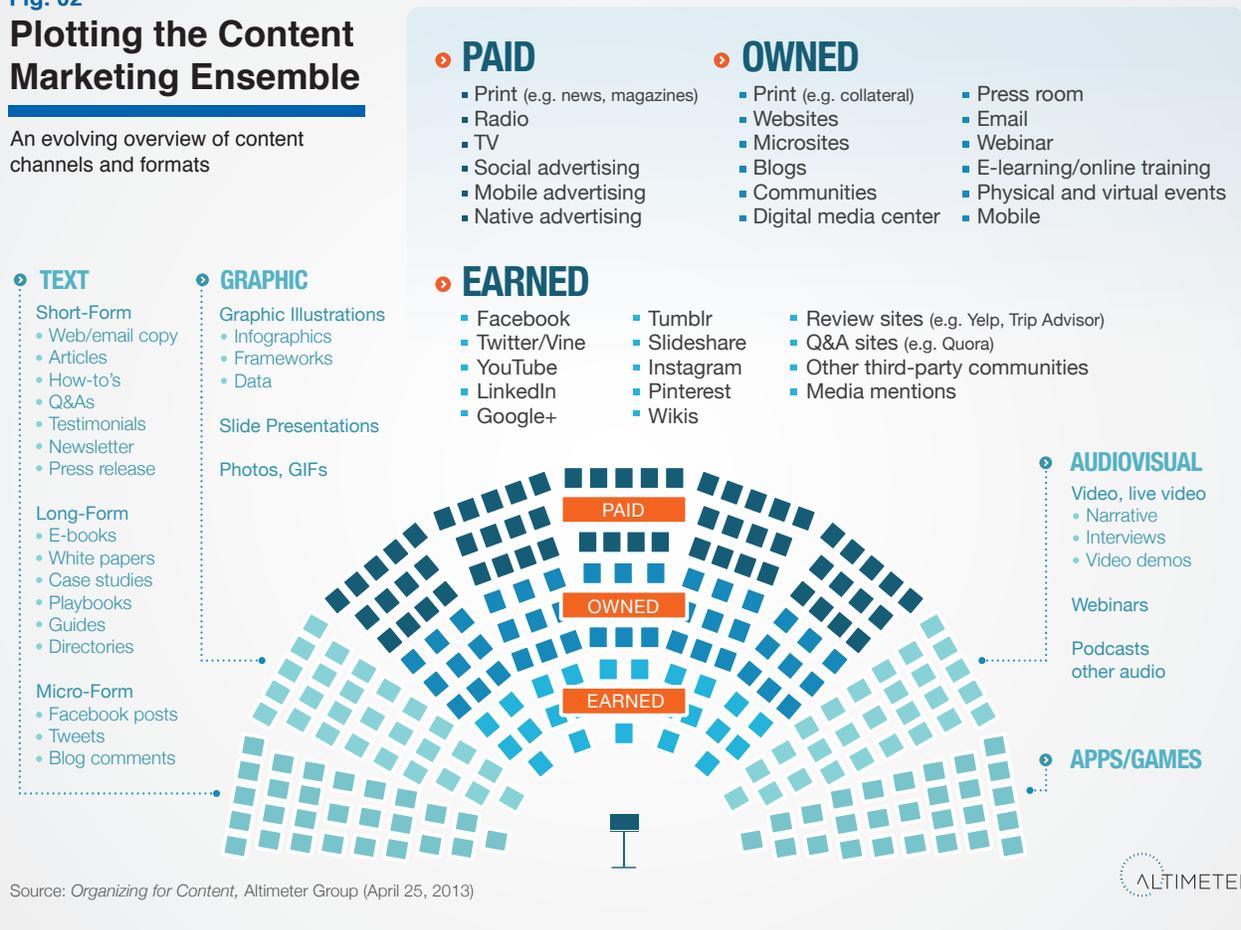
In addition to content in purely owned media channels, many brands are challenged also to create content for converged media.³ Native advertising, advertorial, paid influencer, and sponsored content are just a few examples of paid/owned hybrid content models brands are exploring. Content must also be created for an ever-expanding spectrum of media, screens, and devices, ranging from smartphones and tablets to emerging platforms, such as augmented reality, Google Glass, and quite possibly emerging devices like smart watches.

New channels and platforms, coupled with a trend that de-emphasizes the written word in favor of visual and audio-visual content,⁴ creates new skill demands. “Hire a journalist,” a tactic many organizations adopted with the rise of blogging, now is in no way sufficient to address more technical requirements involving higher knowledge of technology, production, design, and user experience.

Fig. 02

Plotting the Content Marketing Ensemble

An evolving overview of content channels and formats



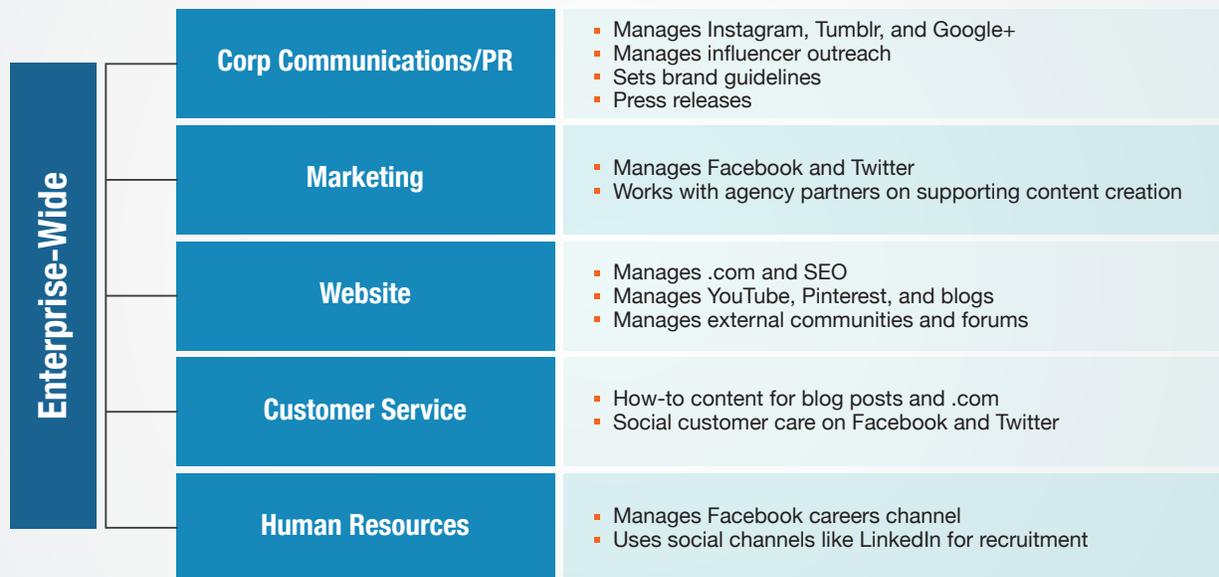
Content responsibility and oversight tends to be both reactive and highly fragmented, as illustrated below in Figure 3. This highly typical diagram portrays how one major retail brand divides up content responsibilities between divisions that are not necessarily interconnected or in regular communication with one another. This fragmented approach leads to inconsistent messaging, huge variations in voice, tone, brand and messaging and an inconsistent customer experience. The channel divisions themselves tend to be ad hoc, assigned primary on the basis of hand-raising than any overarching content strategy.

Brands find themselves ill-equipped and scrambling to create content that meets both company and user needs. This is no mean feat, particularly with content channel responsibility, ownership, and creation dispersed across the enterprise.

Kelly Colbert, Staff VP, Advertising and Social Media, WellPoint: “We need to fill a gap in content marketing. We’re not an editorial organization, but now we need to create content. Short-term, we’re looking at repurposing other content from other departments. But there’s still a shortfall. We’re turning to our agency partners, but that’s not sufficient. How do we feed the beast, get the engagement for members, and make sense for the brand?”

Fig. 03
Where Does Content Live Inside the Enterprise?

Fragmentation is the Current Norm: How One Major Brand Allocates Content Responsibilities



Source: *Organizing for Content*, Altimeter Group (April 25, 2013)



Defining Content

“Content” is owned media created by the brand and published or distributed on media channels the brand controls. Content marketing is the practice of creating and publishing in owned media channels, as opposed to advertising, for which media is always rented time or space. A radical shift in marketing budgets is occurring as companies shift spend from a legacy focus on advertising to investments in content. The trend is toward “pull” rather than “push” marketing and has been greatly accelerated by an explosion of owned media channels — both those “fully owned” (e.g., websites and blogs) and social media channels in which brands largely control their presence and must continually feed with fresh content.

Organizations Must Organize for Content

The overwhelming majority of organizations don't have content divisions in their organizational charts. Very few have staff with the word "content" or "editor" in their title. Only nine of the brands interviewed for this report have made explicit content hires (i.e., titles such as "editor" or those that contain the word "content").

Company divisions where content originates and/or resides, e.g., customer service, sales, and marketing and communications, are disconnected and, similarly, marketing roles have become heavily siloed. Organizations are not structured to act in concert with regard to content. This lack of orchestration results in duplicative efforts that waste time and money while producing inconsistent messaging. Simultaneous rapid growth in channels and platforms require an ever-greater degree of internal harmony, as well as new skills and strategies around content.

As the need to address content, both strategically and functionally, grows exponentially, internal dissonance is coming into tune, albeit slowly. Like news or entertainment enterprises, companies are challenged to "feed the beast" on a daily basis. At the enterprise level, a company may have literally hundreds, if not thousands, of websites, product sites, blogs, and dozens of social media channels in which they're active. Large enterprises might boast 5 million email subscribers and multiple millions of unique visitors per month to their websites, even if they aren't yet active in social media.

Social media only escalates the issues. Red Bull, for example, tweets up to 200 times daily.

Content activities include touch marketing, communications, social media, community, IT, creative, agency and vendor relationships, customer service, product groups, PR, and possibly dozens of other internal and external stakeholders. Content marketing budgets have been increasing for years.⁵ Yet few organizations have actually made a place for content. Instead, most toss content duties or assignments to already-busy employees who are untrained, ill-prepared, and lack a strategic mandate or incentives to source, create, produce, disseminate, benchmark, measure, or manage content.

The demand for content marketing, as well as for the underlying governance of content strategy, has become impossible to ignore.

While this need often originally arises on content's front lines, i.e., communications or social media divisions, content's reach exceeds far beyond these departments to embrace the enterprise as a whole, particularly marketing, advertising, community, CRM, R&D, IT, knowledge management, and PR.

What resources are required, internally and externally, to create a foundational content strategy, as well as to execute tactically on production, execution, publication, dissemination, and measurement? The C-suite (or board) must understand and recognize that content is needed and is growing in importance. It cannot be an afterthought or something fobbed off on junior, untrained, and already-busy employees. Content initiatives must be efficiently organized and financed, efforts cannot be reduplicated across divisions, and strategy should be aligned company-wide.

Organizational Content Requirements

Orchestrating effective and efficient content requires understanding and planning for the essential elements of content marketing and content strategy. Often, many necessary divisions and skill sets already reside in-house, e.g., IT and analytics. Yet these operations have little knowledge of or training in content goals and requirements. Other requirements, both strategic and tactical, necessitate bringing in new resources.

Listed below are the essential elements of content that must be considered by any organization creating content on a regular basis, as well as the organizational models for orchestrating these disparate skills and practices.

Strategy: Content strategy is the framework within which content marketing initiatives are executed. It embodies all content-related objectives, processes, and governance, from the selection of tools, technologies, staff, and partners, as well as the how and what content is produced, to its approval and publishing processes and maintenance. Without a centralized, strategic alignment to why and how content is being produced and the resource allocation for that production, companies too easily fall into the trap of “we need a blog, or a Facebook page, or a microsite.” Efforts are unaligned with goals and appear scattershot.

“One thing you want to have is a content strategy so you understand what content you’re producing and how it’s going to support your overall mission.” –Alisa Maclin, Vice President of Marketing at IBM’s Smarter Commerce Initiative

Authority/Management: To establish both content strategy and ongoing governance and oversight of content initiatives, a content authority is required within the organization. This executive role or governing body must have cross-functional and multidivisional visibility and purview to efficiently operate, as will be examined in the organizational models described in the next section (See Figure 4).

“Content is a team sport. All the content has to work together; all the groups need to work together.” –Karen Pate, VP, Content Strategy at iCrossing

“It doesn’t live solely in digital. Content development is a multi-stakeholder process and it needs to be neutral, like Switzerland.” –Stephanie Agresta, Global Director, Social Media and Digital at MSLGROUP

Staff: Many organizations are coming to realize that assigning content duties to untrained and already overburdened staff is not efficient, realistic, or capable of creating a scalable solution toward addressing growing content requirements. Marketing organizations active in content marketing say they have roles with content in the title. Those in these roles are either dedicated to or spend a majority of their time on content creation and publication. At Dell, Marissa Tarleton, Executive Director, Marketing, says: “Over half of my organization is responsible for content.” It’s critical to map appropriate skill sets (copywriting, journalism/reporting, video production, graphic design, photography, etc.) with channel and media requirements.

Technology: Content requires a plethora of tools for production and measurement, collaboration and management, curation, aggregation, publishing, and more. Overwhelmingly, we found a disconnect between marketing and IT when it comes to tool selection, capabilities, requirements, and cross-functional buy-in. Without content oversight, staff active in content are often expected to work with technology selected by IT. They are end-users rather than stakeholders in the selection, implementation, and feature set of the Content Management Systems (CMS), Digital Asset Management (DAM) systems, and other foundational tools. In fact, the bigger and more fundamental the tool, the less input content staff says they have. This leads to a rogue, workaround culture that inhibits collaboration and sharing. The end result of these workarounds is teams buying consumer-grade solutions with capabilities they already have. A common refrain: “We launched it on a WordPress blog instead of on the dot-com, which would have taken over a year.”

Measurement: “It’s all over the board” is a common refrain when marketers are asked if, or how, they measure content. This is partially due to a lack of overarching, cross-divisional strategy, but the multidisciplinary reach of content initiatives creates diverse and often conflicting metrics, ranging from “engagement” from one group to hard leads or sales for another. This lack of a holistic approach is more apparent in organizations that have no central governing person or body for content.

Audit: In addition to regularly assessing content effectiveness, quality, quantity, channels, and a host of other criteria, regular content audits also help organizations track what content assets they own and where they reside. Larger enterprises are increasingly at a loss to know what content exists where in the organization, leading to resource inefficiencies and reduplication of efforts.

Unified Guidelines and Playbooks: Defining what content should and should not be is an essential strategic element. Editorial calendars, workflow maps, editing, style and brand guidelines, rules for voice, tone and brand, and a persona map are foundational for alignment across the groups creating content, both internally and externally.

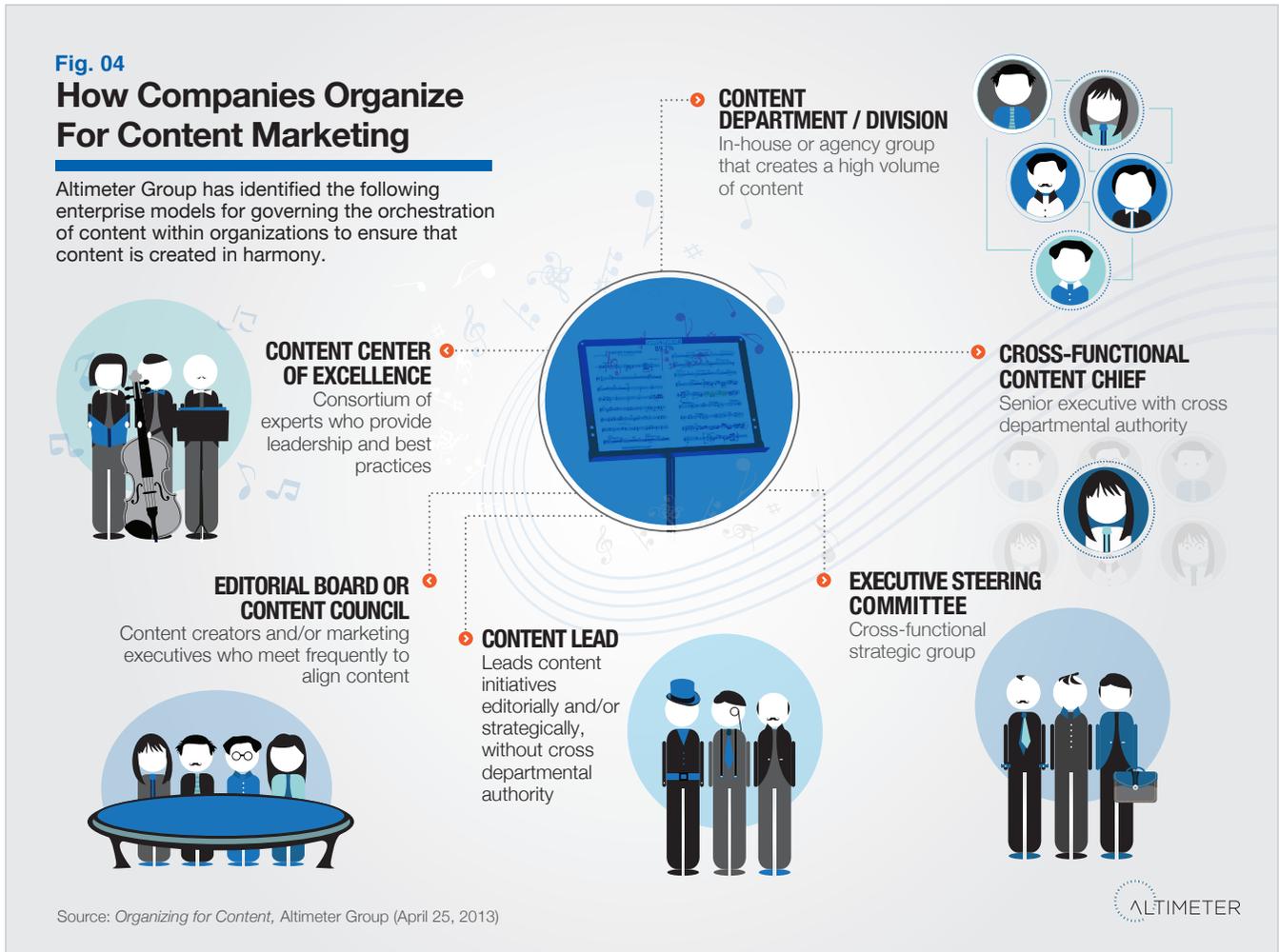
Training: “We’re putting more resources into branded content marketing than into any other area of marketing communications,” shared Linda Boff, Executive Director, Global Digital Marketing at General Electric. This holds true in many organizations, yet the majority lack formal content training. There are exceptions. Dell rigorously trains anyone who writes or publishes on behalf of the brand. Wells Fargo teamed with an industry trade organization to create a “university.”

Yet organizations interviewed for this report don’t have formal training programs dedicated to content staff. Rather, they hire experience (journalists, and also videographers, designers, etc.). Another model is to train outside of marketing, teaching sales, product, and customer groups how to recognize stories and write in the brand voice.

Content Orchestration: Organizational Models

To align and enable efficient, coordinated, cost-effective, and strategic content strategy, creation, and production, companies/brands must organize for content. Band-Aid solutions neither scale nor will work, except in the very short term.

Yet creating a content department, bringing on costly senior talent, is also not always immediately feasible. Altimeter Group has identified the following enterprise models for governing the orchestration of content within organizations. The model any enterprise selects is determined by many factors, ranging from budget to the types and volume of content produced, which is why it's important to stress these models are not hierarchical. Rather, each affords a more systematic, cohesive, and strategic approach to content marketing than the current "adhocracy" models prevalent in most organizations:



Content Center of Excellence (CoE)

Who: A consortium of experts from a variety of organizational divisions.

What: Provide leadership, evangelization, best practices, research, support and/or training from one place to the rest of the organization. The size of the group is contingent on the organization, but representatives from all marketing divisions, sales, customer service, and IT are highly recommended.

Why: Often an offshoot of a social media CoE, this model tends to bring together practitioners primarily from marketing divisions to serve the needs of content creators and producers. Content CoEs are few and tend to have little input from the IT/technology side of the enterprise.

Pros: A CoE is a go-to resource and can help identify and fill content needs, as well as establish the beginnings of a culture of content. The interdepartmental nature of a CoE helps to foster understanding and cooperation across divisions.

Cons: A bridge solution. Nearly all organizations are finding they require, or soon will require, more dedicated and full-time resources.

Editorial Board or Content Council (Intel, SAS, Dell)

Who: Content creators and/or marketing executives from divisions, including marketing, communications, PR, and social media.

What: Frequent (e.g., daily) meetings to align content around an editorial calendar, plan workflow, and make assignments, coordinate initiatives, share and repurpose assets, and avoid duplication of efforts. The council examines metrics and analytics on customer discussions and insights to develop the content that should be created based on those insights. A relatively short-term (two months) editorial calendar is built from these findings and decisions are made regarding how content will be adjusted or adapted for regional and/or international dissemination. “The council has been able to get everyone aligned on the top five things we’re talking about or the 30 different content pieces to create the message. Then we make sure we divide and conquer, and we pool and share it with a central repository,” shared Marissa Tarleton, at Dell. This provides visibility into where content exists across the organization, which creates efficiencies and economies. Another organization also shared anonymously that they no longer have two departments paying two different agencies to create practically the same video.

Why: More tactical than strategic. Keeps the trains running.

Pros: A board or council keeps content in focus, on the radar, and facilitates communication across departments and divisions, which can lead to real efficiencies and cost savings.

Cons: Without strategic oversight, an editorial board can get bogged in the weeds of tactics. It can lack executive authority and buy-in, creating the need for the board to spend undue time advocating for themselves across territories and divisions.

Content Lead (Dell, Intel)

Who: An executive who oversees an organization’s content initiatives. Titles range from editor-in-chief to global content strategist.

What: Takes a hands-on approach to content creation and execution and works cross-departmentally to coordinate initiatives with stakeholders, IT, vendors, and service providers.

Why: Helps prioritize initiatives, gets stakeholders on the same page, and brings strong editorial experience and expertise to the role. This position also goes far in creating underlying strategy documentation, such as voice, tone, edit, and copy guidelines, to unify content initiatives across the enterprise.

Pros: A strong editorial background coupled with workflow experience and a knowledge of needs and resources both accelerates and smoothens content-related operations while at the same time creating and ensuring adherence to a strategic framework.

Cons: Without cross-departmental authority or significant seniority, the Content Lead is often hampered by departmental barriers (e.g., working with IT). If lacking a more senior executive champion, the Lead often struggles to make themselves and the resources they offer known internally. Evangelization often becomes an overly burdensome part of the role in larger enterprises.

Executive Steering Committee (Dell)

Who: A cross-functional strategic group comprised of senior executives.

What: Focused on gut checking and approving content from the perspective of product/subject matter expertise, as well as marketing/creative.

Why: To provide more strategic leadership than an editorial board provides. This unit is contingent on there being an editorial board in the first place.

Pros: Strategic oversight and executive buy-in. Well positioned to integrate content with other marketing and advertising initiatives.

Cons: Can be removed from and/or have little insight into the more tactical, workflow aspects of content.

Cross-Functional Content Chief (Marketo)

Who: Chief Content Officer, Head of Digital Strategy. The title isn't as important as the mandate: a senior executive who is the Boss of Content.

What: Cross-departmental authority, able to set a global content strategy for the organization. May not necessarily have a staff, but does possess authority and buy-in from senior management.

Why: Authority, focus, expertise, and diplomacy to align the strategic and tactical aspects of content, as well as align initiatives with vendors, agencies, and other marketing, advertising and communication streams.

Pros: The buck stops here. The chief content officer is, ideally, a benevolent dictator who can align divisions while setting a real strategic agenda. Has chops in all of content's myriad aspects, from measurement, to technology, to creative.

Cons: It's tough to make the case to the CMO or the board of directors to hire another very senior executive.

Content Department/Division (Marketo, Ford, Nissan, Amex Open)

Who: In-house or agency (the latter particularly in the case of multinational initiatives when linguistic and/or cultural differences surround content).

What: Large-scale, high-volume content creation that's often heavily technical, with high demands for mobile, video, and higher-quality images. Global capabilities. Strategic and tactical.

Why: Demand exceeds in-house capabilities, both in terms of workflow, talent, skills, technological capabilities, and linguistic/cultural/regional/global levels.

Pros: The most scalable solution to meet diverse and wide-ranging content needs.

Cons: High cost and high commitment. It can be challenging to keep this larger, autonomous group integrated and engaged with non-content marketing initiatives, as a large degree of internal orchestration is also required.

Recognize it's Time to Organize for Content

Organizations with a digital presence, whether their own website or in social media channels, are compelled to produce and publish content, if not on a continual basis then frequently and consistently. This demand will only increase in the months and years to come. Organizations that don't review content needs as such, outside narrower parameters such as "social" or "PR" or "collateral," risk a haphazard, inconsistent, and unprofessional media presence. A scalable and systematic approach to content strategy and content marketing has become a must-have, not a nice-to-have.

Design Strategic Foundations, Not Just Production Capabilities

In their haste to feed the beast, too many organizations take a shortsighted tactical view toward content orchestration. They implement solutions aimed at systematizing and assigning responsibility for the production queue.

Organizing for content is both a strategic and tactical undertaking. Businesses that fail to seriously evaluate how and where content fits strategically and operationally within their organizations will suffer in the short term as they strive to continue to create content without cohesion. They will be at a greater disadvantage in the months and years ahead as content demands accelerate in terms of owned content and converged content hybrids in social media and advertising.

Orchestration and fine-tuning content organizationally is the next, most critical step facing marketing.

Recommendations Checklist: Make Room for Content

A. Lead with Process

- 1. Appoint an empowered cross-functional governor or governing body — a conductor — with executive support and/or authority.
- 2. Locate and identify existing content and content sources across the enterprise. Identify where it is being created, housed, and how or if it is shared.
- 3. Identify dotted-line reports (e.g., internal subject matter experts, customer service, sales).
- 4. Create and document efficient production processes, approval systems, and schedules.
- 5. Create governance documentation (style, edit, and brand guides, personas, voice and tone guidelines, and editorial calendars that also govern workflow).
- 6. Integrate content (owned media) with paid (advertising) and earned (social and PR) media.
- 7. Train: Make available and mandatory tiered programs geared to different stakeholders and managerial levels (creators, producers, managers, senior executives, technology, etc.).
- 8. Plan beyond “hire a journalist.” Graphics, video, and visual storytelling, as well as multiplatform considerations, are essential to most content strategies.
- 9. Hire the right people; bring them in at the right time. Writers, designers, and producers require involvement at the beginning of the process, not below the line.

B. Mate with Technology

- 10. Be a technology stakeholder, not a mere end-user when evaluating, updating, or scoping solutions.
- 11. IT integration — an IT partner or member of the IT department should be part of any content board or committee for mutual understanding of requirements.
- 12. Involve those stakeholders who will use specific technologies (e.g. the CMS or digital asset management system) in IT requirement scoping.

C. Follow with Measurement

- 13. Define, then align goals, measurement, and KPIs.
- 14. Share and discuss results across stakeholders.
- 15. Constantly evaluate and redefine KPIs and metrics.
- 16. Ensure content metrics aren't at odds with stakeholders' individual goals. Example: Collaborators on a single engagement may be comprised of one set of team members who are responsible for customer acquisition, while others strive for engagement.

Ecosystem Input

This report could not have been produced without the generous input from thought leaders in content strategy, influencers, and solution vendors who have a vested interest in the evolution of content marketing. Input into this document does not represent a complete endorsement of the report by the vendors or individuals listed below. Not all interviewees are disclosed due to confidentiality constraints.

To develop this report, Altimeter Group gleaned input from the following leaders:

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End Notes

¹ Pulizzi, Joe and Handley, Ann. *B2B Content Marketing: 2013 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends-North America*. Content Marketing Institute. (<http://contentmarketinginstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/b2bresearch2013cmi-121023151728-phpapp01-1.pdf>); *B2C Content Marketing: 2013 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends-North America*. Content Marketing Institute. (<http://contentmarketinginstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/b2cresearch2013cmi-121113201300-phpapp02.pdf>)

² Owyang, Jeremiah. *A Strategy for Managing Social Media Proliferation*. Altimeter Group. January 5, 2013. (<http://www.altimetergroup.com/research/reports/a-strategy-for-managing-social-media-proliferation>). Figure 2.

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⁵ Zmuda, Natalie. "Solving the Content Creation Conundrum." *Advertising Age*. January 14, 2013 (<http://adage.com/article/news/marketers-solve-content-creation/239149>).

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Altimeter Group provides research and advisory for companies challenged by business disruptions, enabling them to pursue new opportunities and business models.

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