

A Market Definition Report

Real-Time Marketing: The Agility to Leverage 'Now'

December 17, 2013



By Rebecca Lieb
with Jessica Groopman and Charlene Li

Includes input from 18 ecosystem contributors

ALTIMETER®

Executive Summary

Real-time marketing (RTM), the strategy and practice of reacting with immediacy in digital channels to external events and triggers, has been steadily growing in use and popularity. An expanding array of tools and digital channels (e.g., social media and listening capabilities) has made real-time accessible, in theory at least, to virtually every marketer. As digital channels become increasingly more real time, all marketing organizations must consider to what degree they will function in real time. We found that successful RTM requires enormous strategic and tactical preparation. This report, based on interviews with 18 executive industry practitioners, explains the benefits of RTM, outlines the business cases to which it can be applied, and identifies the best practices and steps necessary to move an enterprise toward RTM readiness.

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Real-Time Marketing

The Agility to Leverage ‘Now’

The Benefits and Problems of Real-Time Marketing

Altimeter Group defines real-time marketing as:

The strategy and practice of responding with immediacy to external events and triggers. It's arguably the most relevant form of marketing, achieved by listening to and/or anticipating consumer interests and needs.

RTM has been entrenched in the digital arsenal for well over a decade. Triggered email and text messaging, search results and search advertisements, and ad retargeting are all existing RTM examples. However, the current trend in RTM, and the one primarily considered in this research, is considerably more human and less automated. It's worth noting in this context that two forms of RTM are emerging: one that is entirely hand-crafted and the other sparked by increasingly sophisticated digital triggers. All real-time marketing is deeply rooted in both content and social strategy.

Benefits of RTM span the business and consumer. It supports the individual on the one end, through hyper personalization, customization, surprise and delight. And it serves the brand on the other end, as companies enjoy tremendous media buzz, increased following and positive sentiment. Our interviews with real-time marketers surfaced some specific benefits of RTM:

- **"Surprise and delight."** This is the feeling an individual has as the result of a more human (less corporate) interaction, the semblance of spontaneity, dialogue, and brand interest in the individual.
- **The right message at the right time.** This is the ability to reach audiences with timely engagement throughout the customer journey, greater relevance, resonance and personalization.
- **Brand relevance.** This is the opportunity for brands to actually be cool. When brands do this right, they effectively tap into the Zeitgeist, bridging brand relevance with what is hip and trendy. Consider the tremendous resonance of Oreo's now-infamous tweet: "You can still dunk in the dark," both in social and traditional media, when the lights went out at the 2013 Super Bowl.
- **Always-on.** Participating in RTM enables brands to appear always on, available, and listening through evergreen content, thought leadership and excellent customer service.

Real-time marketing

The strategy and practice of responding with immediacy to external events and triggers. It's arguably the most relevant form of marketing, achieved by listening to and/or anticipating consumer interests and needs.

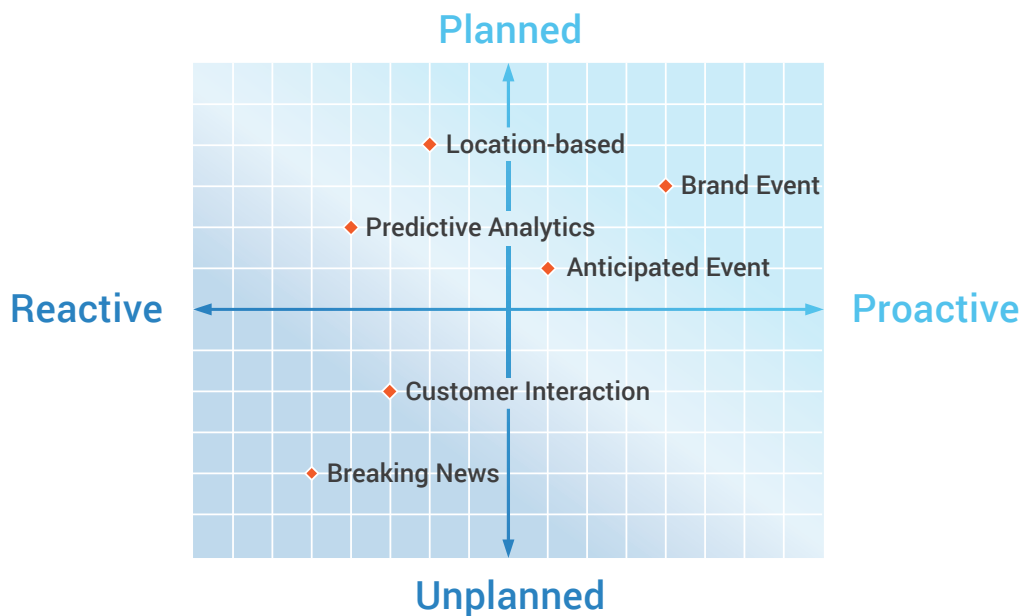
RTM is also known to lift literally all desirable marketing metrics (e.g., interest, consideration, search, word-of-mouth, media receptivity, etc.), as well as to turbo-charge other marketing initiatives.¹ Eighty-three percent of marketers say they plan to begin to use or to increase their use of real-time data in marketing campaigns this year.² The movement toward RTM is being driven in part by consumer expectations for immediacy, relevance, and access increase with technology.

Yet while RTM comes with real benefits, so too are its many challenges. The first are plotting strategy and analysis. The potential for risk is greater in RTM, given the (near) immediate nature of interactions and posts. Brands must take extra precaution, planning, and listening to mitigate these risks. The other set of challenges are in execution and organization. Speed, agility, scale, approvals, legalities, technology, analytics, and the ability to deploy teams around the clock are daunting, not to mention expensive,

prospects for many organizations. From an organizational standpoint, RTM can be confusing, planning and resource-intensive, and requires immense preparation and coordination. Many companies will grapple with approvals, particularly those in regulated industries.

RTM requires a shift in mindset: Brands are relinquishing a measure of control in exchange for more opportunities for relevance and deeper, more personalized customer experiences. "A lot of organizations aren't comfortable with this concept of real time," explains Chad Warren, Senior Social Media Strategist at Adobe. "Culturally, we're about reviewing and scrubbing, and generally quite guarded in how we present ourselves in front of the public. There has to be a recognition that we don't control the conversation anymore as brands, and real-time marketing helps stakeholders understand that and how we can still harness it."

Fig 1. The Six Use Cases of Real-Time Marketing



Six Use Cases of Real-Time Marketing

To better understand just what RTM is, and isn't, Altimeter Group has identified six business use cases for real time marketing, identified below and accompanied by case examples. These six use cases fall into two axes of RTM: Reactive & Proactive, and Planned & Unplanned (see Figure 1). Organizations will maintain the most control and can expect the best results from RTM when their efforts fall in planned/proactive sector of the RTM quadrant. These use cases are discussed below in the order from the lowest degrees of planning and preparation needed to the highest.

These use cases are listed hierarchically, from the highest to lowest degrees of possible planning and preparation. Note: These are graphed-based on qualitative research interviews; categories do not bear actual numerical coordinates.

Use Case #1: Brand Events

Examples of brand events include product launches, conferences, and media and customer-facing events where content strategy, pre-approvals, media and channel plans, hashtags, creative elements, editorial calendars, etc., can all be prepared in advance. During these events, staff are available to push out announcements and react to anticipated posts in social media. There should be few surprises in these planned brand events, but it should feel fresh and authentic rather than canned in advance. Some examples include:

- *Pepsi* debuts its skinny can during Fashion Week as a way to simultaneously promote its new thinner can design alongside a series of fashion events, generally geared toward an audience that emphasizes lean bodies. The product was integrated into the event as Pepsi amplified "get the skinny" content on Twitter and Foursquare and other social channels.³
- *Pizza Hut / AMEX / Foursquare SuperBowl* promo in which all three brands partnered to offer hungry

fans a \$5 rebate on any Pizza Hut purchase over \$10 by checking in – not to Pizza Hut – but to the Foursquare app's Super Swarm Sunday feature and then paying with their AMEX.⁴

- *AMEX* sponsors Small Business Saturday, a national event benefitting millions of small businesses, in which AMEX helps small, local businesses prepare for marketing in real time prior to the event by providing shops tools, signage, templates and more, as well as offering rebates to customers who use their AMEX cards when purchasing.⁵
- *Ford* on #daftpunk on Twitter and Spotify: After partnering with and launching Spotify in new models of the Focus, the auto brand worked to amplify the new feature's win in real time. When Daft Punk's new single beat Spotify records and #daftpunk began to trend in on Twitter, Ford leveraged the buzz with promoted tweets containing #daftpunk, #spotify and #fordsync.⁶

Use Case #2: Anticipated Events

A growing number of organizations have become mature enough to fully prepare for real-time events that can be anticipated in advance to fully leverage opportunities. Like Branded Events above, they prepare by having business goals, strategies, teams and approvals all done in advance, and they have content at the ready. This "locked and loaded" approach is deployed by advertisers and sponsors (brands) in advance of major events not of their own making like the Super Bowl and the award shows. Some examples include the following:

- While *HBO* couldn't know how many shows would win which categories, HBO seized the opportunity to prepare content across social channels (primarily Twitter) anticipating the Emmy's outcome in advance of the live event – giving the appearance of real-time content as the program aired.⁷
- In February 2013, *Starbucks* promoted its VIA coffee when Blizzard Nemo hit the Northeast.

The coffee giant prepared location-based promoted Tweets to offer gentle suggestions to enjoy a warm beverage (e.g., “Snow Day?”; “Grab some Via and enjoy the snow!”) amidst the ensuing buzz of Blizzard Nemo as it dumped snow across the Northeast.⁸

- Although *Oreo’s* famous tweet during the Super Bowl captured the limelight, it was the fully staffed Super Bowl “war room” (uniting all brand and agency stakeholders) that enabled the rapid design, approval, and publication of that tweet.⁹

Use Case #3: Location/Object-Based

A small but promising use case of RTM taps into location and object-based triggers. Hand-crafted examples of this type of RTM include local food trucks and or @ChicagoCabbie publicizing specials and their current locations. Yet increasingly sophisticated mobile apps, such as iBeacon, can target a consumer’s location down to the store-shelf level and push a promotion to that person’s phone at that moment. That’s literally targeting the right person at the right time and the right place.

The emerging Internet of Things where sensors are deployed throughout our physical world creates dazzling possibilities for RTM to exist in true real time and with uncanny relevance. Marketers will have to understand how to balance expectations around engagement versus privacy or face being seen as creepy. Some current examples of this use case include the following:

- *Taco Bell* partnered with GPS phone app Waze to trigger location-based ads to appear on drivers’ smartphones when they are near a restaurant — but, wisely, only when stopped at red lights.¹⁰
- *Yelp* partners with businesses small and large to provide coupons and deals, some based on users’ locations and others prompted via checking in, all in real time.¹¹

- *MGM* sends notifications for nearby restaurants, shopping, show deals, etc., for hotel guests staying in Bellagio Las Vegas via their smartphones and the MGM app.¹²
- *Macy’s* enables in-store targeting with *Apple’s* iBeacon, where it is installing iBeacon transmitters throughout two stores in NYC. Macy’s then pushes special offers and recommendations to customers based on the specific department in range.¹³

Use Case #4: Predictive Analytics-Based

Another relatively small but growing area of triggered RTM is based on predictive analytics. Amazon has been using predictive data for some time to display recommendations to customers based on browsing and purchase history. This practice is slowly being adopted by B2B marketers as well, sometimes combined with marketing automation solutions. We predict the trend will gain momentum as data solutions become more accessible and simpler to implement.

- *Salesforce.com* uses its own toolset to track lead interactions with content (e.g., clicks, downloads, shares, time viewed, etc.), funneling this data back into its CRM and deploying automated follow-up content based on an individual leads phase in purchasing process.¹⁴
- *Walgreens’* SoLoMo (social, local, mobile) Foursquare program reaches in-store shoppers who check-in at a Walgreens location on Foursquare. These shoppers instantly receive a coupon for a special offer with an added bonus of the coupon being scannable directly from the phone.¹⁵

Use Case #5: Customer Interaction

Customer interactions take many forms: CRM, customer service, handling complaints, and community interactions being the primary examples. While many organizations handle such interactions

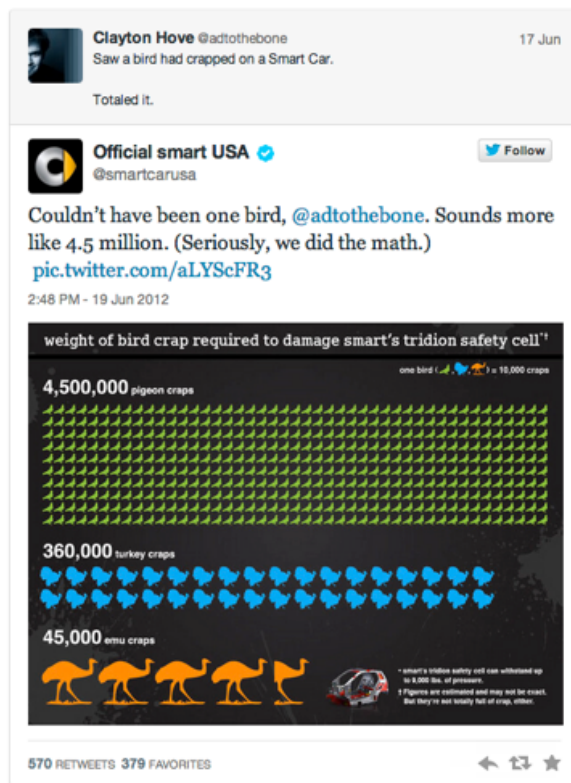
to customer service, the very public, visible and occasionally even viral nature of these interactions in social channels means they are increasingly becoming the purview of the marketing organization.

This is especially true now that customers have come to expect brands to respond to their digital queries and complaints in near-real time.¹⁶ This requires a combination of both reactive and anticipatory work: triage workflow, determining what types of messaging will be responded to and in which channels (public or private), empowering staff to address complaints, and having a breaking news communications plan ready for crises. It also means close coordination between customer service, communications, and marketing on all of the above.

This category includes traditional customer service, community building, and crisis management use cases:

- *Pretzel Crisps* listened for tweets from people who wrote that they were hungry but not sure what to eat. The company then replied back to them with an offer to send product samples.¹⁷
- *Citi Bike* saw a distressed call over Twitter from a rider, having just fallen off his Citi Bike in the rain on the way to a meeting, soiling his pants in the process and using the hashtag #PLEASESENDPANTS. Citi Bike quickly jumped into action, with the help of J.Crew, sending the rider a new pair of #PANTSFORPAUL. Rider, @PaullYoung, director of digital at charity : water, tweeted the entire experience to his 10k+ followers.¹⁸
- *JetBlue* uses Twitter to be as responsive as possible (aiming for less than an hour response time), both engaging with happy customers and helping frustrated ones.¹⁹
- *SmartCar* responded to a particularly snarky tweet claiming, "Saw a bird had crapped on a Smart Car. Totaled it." The brand responded by putting

Fig. 2: SmartCar's Clever Response Tweet



together a hilarious, scientifically valid infographic and tweeted back, "Couldn't have been one bird, @adtothebone. Sounds more like 4.5 million. (Seriously, we did the math.)"²⁰ See Figure 2.

Use Case #6: Breaking News

The most reactive form of RTM is responding in a legitimate, relevant manner to unanticipated breaking news. This can also be the most spontaneous, challenging and difficult type of RTM brands will encounter. Advance preparation is all but impossible, and all too often breaking news isn't good news, so an acute degree of sensitivity is called for. The requirement is often not just getting a polished message out in a short period of time in reaction to an event, but also following the arc of a story as it unfolds. There is an opportunity in this use case to hit it over the fence by appropriately leveraging the

Fig. 3: Coca-Cola Saw Significantly Increased Mentions After Announcing Typhoon Hayann Relief

Coca-Cola People Talking About



event in a way that is contextually relevant, both to the event and to the brand.

For example, Coca-Cola announced it was suspending all brand advertising dollars for a month and putting that spending into relief toward Typhoon Hayann disaster recovery in the Philippines.²¹ The company is donating \$2.5M toward the cause but received significant global recognition, publicity and social amplification by leveraging real time to maximize the impact of the announcement (see Figure 3).

In addition, real time can last many days, or even weeks in some cases. Jason Miller, Senior Manager of Content & Social at LinkedIn, shared, “Real time lasts as long as volume of conversation is still there. If you can ride that wave, push it out as much as you can. It can be anywhere from two days to a couple weeks, so long as your customers are still talking about it.”

The poster child for this type of RTM is Oreos at the Super Bowl. Because it was practicing the second use case of RTM – anticipated events – the company was lucky to have the right team onsite to

be able to respond. When the power went out, the team put out its inspired tweet, which would not have been possible without those assets in place.

An important risk to consider in this use case is inappropriate or insensitive posting around an event. This is when brands inject themselves into event commentary in a way that is artificial, overly promotional, irrelevant to the brand, or just plain crass, often termed “culture-jacking.” Epicurious found itself backpedaling and apologizing in the wake of the Boston Marathon bombings when pre-loaded tweets promoting cranberry scones went

Fig. 4: Example of Poorly Executed Real-Time Marketing



live shortly after the tragedy. A real-time response expressing condolences, yet promoting another recipe, only fanned the flames (see Figure 4).

Adobe’s Chad Warren sees this as, “In a desperate effort to stay relevant, brands attach themselves to any and everything, losing sight of what their audiences actually care about and see in the brand.”

Preparing for Real-Time Marketing Requires Two Types of Planning

How companies prepare for real time will dictate the effectiveness of RTM programs. We found that planning falls into two areas, one that looks at the overall strategy and approach to RTM and the other that focuses on the organization and resources needed to execute RTM itself. The following outlines the top 12 steps businesses should take to maximize success and scale in RTM (see Figure 5).

I. Planning Strategy

This first phase of preparing lays a foundation of customer understanding, goals and content strategy that is essential.

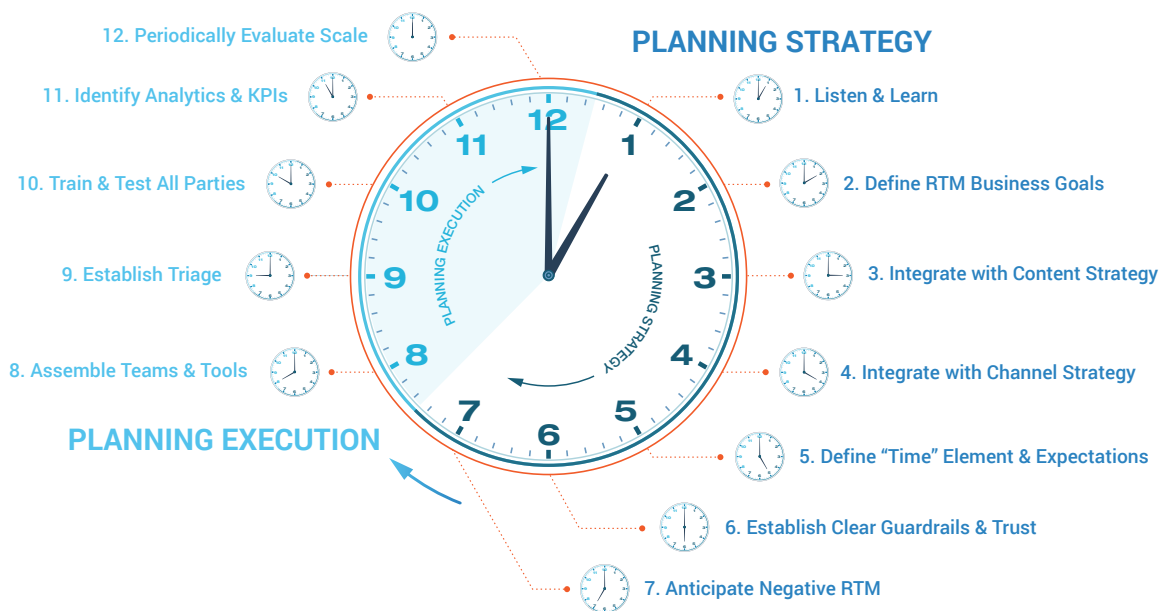


Listen & Learn

Success in real time is contingent on understanding your audience, who they are, where they go, what they care about, how they perceive the brand, etc. While traditional research methods like focus groups and surveys are instructive toward this end, the literal real-time nature of RTM requires more real-time information gathering. Listening and analytics tools help monitor the audience’s pulse, sentiments, behaviors and buzz as it happens and as it evolves. Are customers complaining about not getting a response? What are competitors doing, and what is happening in adjacent industries?

Equally important is having the analytic capacity to mine findings from these discussions and apply learnings to continually improve campaigns and uncover new creative ideas and insights. Brands must always be listening and learning, both for cues from the audience, industry and pertinent cultural events — this is absolutely necessary to lay the foundation for being as relevant as possible with RTM.

Fig. 5 Twelve Steps to Prepare for Real-Time Marketing





Define RTM Business Goals

The next step to RTM preparedness is defining the goals RTM will serve, both at a program and business level, e.g., brand relevance, favorability, consideration, purchase intent, etc. Be sure to extend this beyond simply the number of times a post gets favorited. Aligning real time with existing business goals is important, because it helps contextualize and justify the program to executive decision-makers and will increase the likelihood for executive sponsorship as the program evolves across functions.



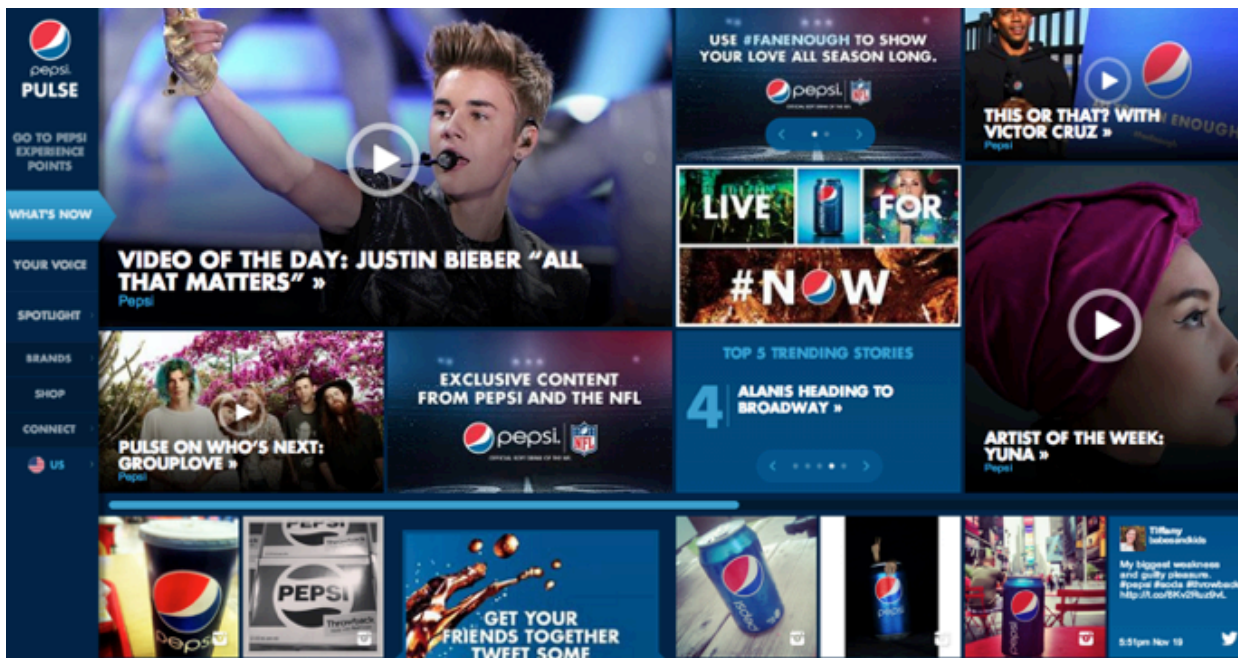
Integrate with Content Strategy

Aligning real-time marketing with content strategy is foundational to creating guidelines around what, how, and when to respond, publish and listen. Integrating real time into the greater content marketing strategy also provides a reference point for rapid decision-making around brand relevance, messaging and strategy.

Content strategy should not only have guidelines around voice, tone, POV, messaging, brand values, etc., but should invest in educating those executing in real time, whether they are brand employees or agency partners. "Develop a brand compass if you don't already have one, and apply it to real-time marketing," explains Sabrina Caluori, Vice President of Digital and Social Media at HBO. "Set the boundaries around what makes sense for you to participate in and what doesn't so that every time something is trending, the team isn't asking, 'Is this appropriate?'"

At an executional level, integration with strategy also aids in the creation of more anticipatory locked and loaded content assets, which facilitate the appearance of real time to customers, but can be created, approved and queued for deployment well in advance. In fact, real time can be integrated entirely with ongoing content marketing initiatives through modular, re-purposeable, or even evergreen content hubs.

Fig. 6: Pepsi Pulse Creates a Content Hub That Supports Real-Time Marketing



Pepsi Pulse exemplifies embedding a real-time approach into its content strategy through an evergreen content hub. Relating to its slogan, “Live for Now,” the site aggregates hot content (tweets, videos, photos — largely earned) from across the web in an effort to provide visitors the most inspiring now moments based on social popularity (see Figure 6).



Integrate with Channel Strategy

The where of RTM is as critically important to its success as content strategy. Channel strategy is dependent on many factors, including in what channels the target audience is to be found; the channel(s) in which relevant conversations are occurring; and having or having the ability to quickly make content assets that are appropriate to the channel in question (e.g., photos, videos, text, animated gifs, etc.). Currently, the most critical channels for RTM are Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Tumblr, Reddit, and, of course, e-mail. Secondary, but still important, are owned channels, such as the company website, YouTube and Facebook channels, mobile app, etc. Channel selection is always dependent on a variety of factors, including content strategy, audience targeting, and rapidly shifting media habits.

Multinational and even many national enterprises must also deeply consider time zone issues simultaneously with channel strategy. Having a separate Facebook page for India vs. the USA, for example, or for the Northeast vs. the Southwestern US, may be as much a component of RTM strategy as it is cultural relevance when it's important to generate conversation, excitement, buzz or other RTM initiatives around a local event, be it news or even local weather.



Define “Time” Element & Expectations

Not all organizations are prepared to operate 24/7 or to respond to customer queries with literal immediacy. The Clorox Company currently has a response goal of one hour or less as

they consider ramping up to a 24/7 environment. The fastest-responding brand on Twitter in 2013 was Halo BCA, of the Bank of Central Asia, averaging a three-minute turnaround in over 95% of customer inquiries.²² In fact, a recent study finds that 72% of customers expect brands to respond to Twitter complaints in less than one hour.²³ Dell aligns its customer support around this in their policy to respond to 100% of inbound customer interactions within a 2-hour time period, through the channel in which it was received.

Real time can also span a temporal continuum of days, weeks and even months (e.g., the BP Gulf oil spill or the Icelandic volcano ash cloud). The temporal definition of (and imperative to respond in) real time depends on the context and will differ by situation, organization and business goal. As Symantec’s Charlie Treadwell, Director of Social Media Marketing, puts it, “I think it can be turned up and down, but never off. You always have to be ‘on’ at some point.” Ultimately, brands must define the what real time means for their unique programs and channels and then let this guide expectations for responding and publishing based on organizational capabilities.



Establish Clear Guardrails & Trust

Perhaps the biggest obstacle to the adoption of RTM is the perceived barrier of approval processes: internal, legal, client, etc. Yet the organizations that are practicing RTM most successfully shrug off this concern. “We have a great relationship with legal,” is a typical, dismissive response to what, for others, is a seemingly insurmountable obstacle. Our research unearthed the following best practices to pre-define guardrails before operating in real time and then streamline processes once deployed.

- Simplify legal approval to a Yes/No response. Standard legal approvals can take hours, days, even weeks. These are eons in the world of real time, where every second can make the

difference between crisis and diffusion. “You can’t go through the standard legal process with multiple levels of revisions and emails. Instead, you should sketch out what scenarios could look like in advance and get legal to quickly say ‘yay or nay,’” explains Shankar Gupta, Director of Strategy at 360i. Taking this step helps twofold: one, by streamlining the approval process when acting in real time; and two, by exposing legal to anticipated scenarios early on.

- Have the necessary teams on deck. Whether in the room or a phone call away, it’s critical to have access to key stakeholders involved (or who may need to be involved) when deploying in real time. Common stakeholders include those responsible for creative, copywriting, the brand team, the social team, the measurement team, corporate communications/PR and legal. For more anticipatory use cases, brands like Adobe assemble these stakeholders for weekly meetings to discuss newsworthy events and RTM as related to strategy. For more immediate use cases, accessibility is imperative. “We have a point person in Corporate/Crisis Communications who I have on speed dial and that I can text anytime. They’ll often give us recommendations for how to respond, or they will call [an angry customer] directly,” explains Charlie Treadwell at Symantec.
- Construct a mini playbook. These will look less like traditional procedural handbooks and more like a list of three or four questions to which all RTM decisions must be accountable. Symantec, for example, is developing three questions that all employees must ask and answer before posting:
 - Am I creating unneeded risk to the brand?
 - Could this impact the company or myself negatively?
 - Would I want my grandmother to read this?

This simple system helps build confidence and empower employees to act autonomously but on

behalf of the brand. Ultimately, Treadwell contends, “It’s all about common sense and what feels right.”

For a planned real-time event, such as the Emmy awards, HBO’s Sabrina Caluori informs internal stakeholders (management, legal, communications) about overall strategy and what her team will do and react to and then develops guidelines. “We know we need freedom to develop content on the fly, but we need to know the guardrails [and] if anything we did needed to be escalated. There are built-in parameters for the campaign.”



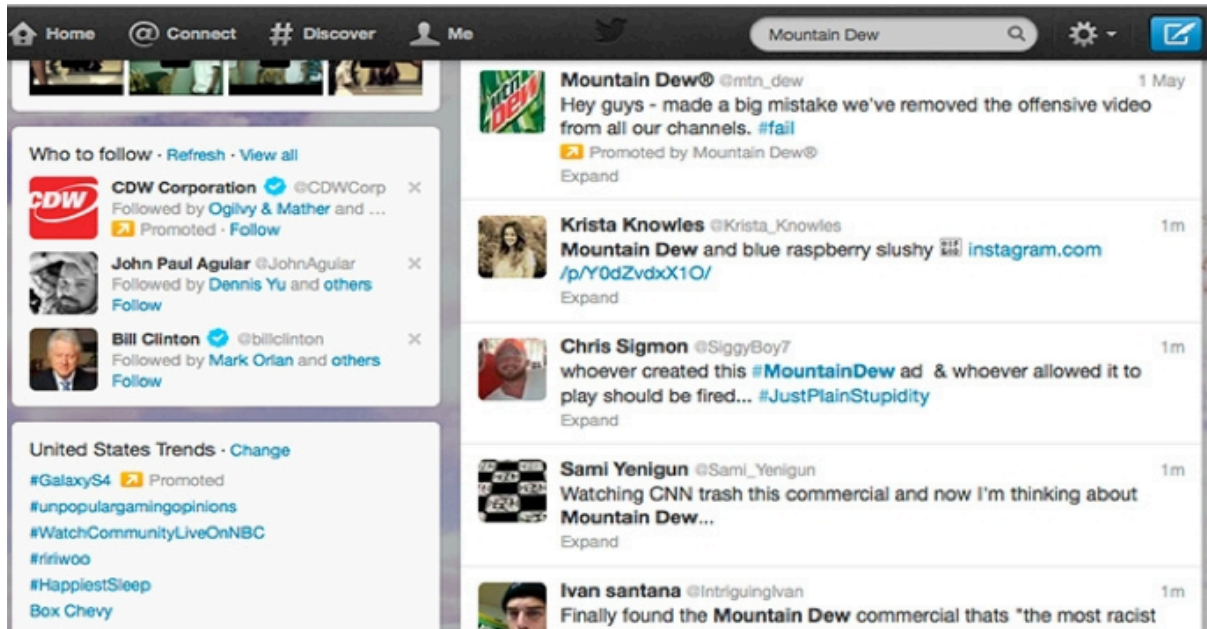
Anticipate Negative RTM

Opening up an organization to real-time events, reactions, and interactions increases the risk of backlash and social media crises. While preparedness and governance help mitigate these risks, companies must actively and proactively be ready for anything. When it comes to societal events, brands can generally choose if, or to what degree, they want to chime into the conversation. But, when negative brand events are unfolding in real time, there is an imperative to respond and message in real time.

One company we interviewed explained just how integral its listening tools and agility were to preventing negative real time during the Boston Marathon. The company had pre-loaded to publish an infographic on emerging technologies that runners find useful. Even before the news of the Boston bombing hit the airwaves, the company detected mentions of it on Twitter and quickly pulled infographic from the queue, sidestepping what would have come across as insensitive in the face of the tragedy.

When brands find themselves in a foot-in-mouth situation, as Mountain Dew did, one of the best ways to recover is to amplify the apology itself in real time. After receiving a tremendous backlash and

Fig. 7: Mountain Dew Promotes Apology Tweet after Ad Blunder



accusations of racism and misogyny for its “Felicia the Goat” video, Mountain Dew promoted its own apology in the form of a tweet,²⁴ as seen in Figure 7.

Active preparation for negative RTM includes direct communication with Corporate Communications/ PR and legal; clear guidelines around what, how, and where to respond and message; and a plan for action, apology or improvement. Prepare proactively for negative RTM through monitoring social buzz with listening tools, setting alerts for suspect mentions or keywords, and staying agile.

II. Planning Execution

Once you have your strategy in place, it’s then time to turn to the execution side of RTM, and in particular enabling it to happen in a seamless, scalable way.



Assemble Team & Tools

Successful RTM requires the right constituents be available, informed, educated and empowered. Assemble the proper teams (i.e., social, creative, copywriting, legal, PR, etc.) and tools (i.e., listening, analytics, design, digital assets, publishing tools, etc.) to ensure streamlined

execution. To this end, multiple companies we interviewed underscored the importance of having a “war room,” akin to a newsroom of sorts, where all teams can literally be present and collaborate together and in real time.

This can take three forms, depending on the use case the team serves. For unplanned, reactive RTM execution, either the existing content hub or social media team takes the lead or a pre-identified and trained virtual team that has been identified in advance leaps into action.

For anticipated events, a war room is often the hub, driving approvals, design, triage and publication in real time. Even brands without 24/7 RTM teams can assemble trained, prepared teams for special events, as Oreo did for the Super Bowl.

Anticipated or planned events with content created in advance assemble teams with regularly scheduled meetings to discuss event strategies and guidelines, as well as identify areas of opportunity. “At Adobe,” explains Chad Warren, “we operate a creative newsroom that meets on a regular basis to identify upcoming items to plan

for (e.g., news, events, etc.) and talk about what is relevant, what we could do more of, where we could take certain ideas. We have the right people in the room on an ongoing basis so that we don't need a lot of levels of approval and everyone understands their role – this helps us go from ideation to action much more quickly.”



Establish Triage

Establishing how to triage based on scenarios is one of the single most effective ways to streamline RTM execution. It reduces the need to be fully reactive by connecting certain cues or events that will trigger repeatable workflows. For instance, community managers should be able to identify what types of language indicate threats or risks for the brand and how and when to escalate them to legal, PR, or the appropriate team. When developing content for RTM, consider how users may respond, and then identify what warrants response and build workflows based on positive and negative interactions or needs. Consider all employees and teams involved, how team members will communicate, and how to handle messaging in a personalized and human way. The more detail provided, the more teams accounted for, and the more scenarios planned for, the better.



Train & Test All Parties

A big part of operating in real time is enabling key employees to be and feel trusted and empowered to act on their judgment. This level of confidence is really only achieved through thorough education and training across all stakeholders – not only those posting and responding, but those creating, approving, distributing and monitoring, both internally and externally (i.e., agencies and vendors). Training should include both strategic and executional (tactical) elements:

Strategic:

- How RTM is integrated with the larger content and brand strategies
- RTM's role across the organization (e.g., Customer Service, Sales, HR, etc.)
- Deep training around the brand identity, voice, vision, risks, affiliations and programs
- Which channels will support RTM, which will not, and why
- How the RTM program will be measured and optimized
- The role of agencies and technology vendors (if applicable)

Executional:

Guidelines, guardrails, roles, triages, response time requirements

- How to manage workflows based on RTM's role across the organization, as well as when triaging to other functions
- Sample scenarios of how customers, the crowd and media could respond to RTM
- How to leverage measurement and reporting to plan and act in real time
- Best practices using technologies supporting RTM
- Resources (e.g., contacts, phone numbers, vendor support, etc.)

Training tools and testing will vary for each organization, based on resources and stakeholders. The goal of training and testing, however, is universal: to establish confidence for those executing, and trust in them, by all stakeholders, management, and the brand at large.



Identify Analytics & KPIs

As with any program, you don't know where you're going unless you know where you are. RTM measurement instructs the effectiveness of current efforts, as well as pinpoint areas to explore more deeply. Listening should inform planning, targeting and action, as outlined

above. Analytics capabilities monitor performance and optimization. Define Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for RTM by aligning them with overarching content strategy indicators. Jason Miller, at LinkedIn, rolls RTM metrics into what he calls the top three KPIs:

Increased non-branded referral traffic: Are people going where you want them to go without typing a keyword into Google?

Engagement: However engagement is defined for your brand, are users interacting with content, aligning themselves with brand or content? The higher the engagement, the higher the Google ranking.

Increased quality of leads: Is sales benefiting with more qualified leads or just a longer list of names?

Real-time analytics capabilities are also important to RTM in order to capitalize on every effort made — not just the bigger, more planned initiatives, but the lesser planned, more reactive ones as well.

360i's Shankar Gupta measures interactions over content: "When responding in real time the majority of successes will be modest, because they don't all catch on that way. If you want to hit a homerun with real time marketing, put yourself in a position to take lots of swings. Then measure real-time responsiveness as a program, rather than focusing on specific pieces of content. Successful audience engagement should happen over the course of the program, not just as a result of one or two posts."

Finally, performance measurement of real-time engagement, content and activities should tie to support and help optimize the convergence of paid, owned and earned media.²⁵ To this end, RTM can be an effective testbed for larger content initiatives; a support hub for triaging customers to owned properties or helpful content; or even provide clues or fodder for developing catchy ads and promotions. Measuring these efforts instructs where to invest time and resources across all brand assets.



Evaluate Scale Periodically

"But will it scale?" is a very real question in real time, particularly regarding staffing and customer channels. For large brands that have traffic and interactions numbering in the thousands per day, real time carries a host of risks that must be addressed when thinking about response at scale. Enterprises must frequently (e.g., monthly or quarterly) assess and evaluate the scale of their RTM initiatives: headcount, talent, tools, roles, etc.

Appropriately scaling RTM is complex, difficult and cost-intensive, necessitating frequent reviews and assessments against business goals.

Scale must be evaluated on a foundation of benchmarking against KPIs. Adobe's Chad Warren explains, "If you don't have a means to understand whether something is working in your favor or not, you'll have trouble knowing when and where to scale those efforts."

Conclusion

Real-time marketing is a present reality, not a distant future, for enterprises functioning in the digital age. The speed and immediacy of news cycles and social media, not to mention the very public media sphere in which brand and product events operate, make it imperative that enterprises strategically adopt real-time marketing in a fashion that will both benefit the business now and scale to address future requirements.

Methodology

Altimeter Group conducted qualitative research and analyses for this report, using briefings on real-time marketing. This included:

- Briefings 8 brands running real-time marketing programs.
- Briefings with 10 agencies and vendors assisting brands in real-time marketing programs. Altimeter conducted these interviews between October and December 2013.

Ecosystem Input

This report includes input from market influencers, vendors, and end users who were interviewed or briefed by Altimeter Group during the course of this research. Input into this document does not represent a complete endorsement of the report by the individuals or the companies listed below.

Brands (8)

The Clorox Company, Helen Lee, Social Media Lead

Dell, Stephanie Losee, Managing Editor

Harvard, Perry Hewitt, Chief Digital Officer

HBO, Sabrina Caluori, Vice President, Digital and Social Media

Hewlett Packard, McKaela Doherty, Global Digital Marketing & Social Media

Juniper Networks, Ashton Bothman, Social Media & Digital Communications Strategist

LinkedIn, Jason Miller, Senior Manager, Content Marketing & Social

Symantec, Charlie Treadwell, Director of Social Media Marketing

Software Vendors & Agencies (10)

360i, Amanda Bird Malko, Vice President of Marketing

360i, Shankar Gupta, Director of Social Marketing Strategy

Adobe, Chad Warren, Senior Social Media Strategist

Big Fuel, Michael Ogince, Director Product Platform & Strategy

Engauge, Danielle Donnelly, Director of Social Engagement

Engauge, Teresa Caro, Senior Vice President, Social & Content Marketing

Mass Relevance, Sam Decker, Founder & CEO

Mass Relevance, Meghan Shannon, Senior Manager of Brand Communications

Oglivy & Mather, Irfan Kamal, Global Head of Social Data, Products, and Partners

Oglivy & Mather, Luca Penati, Managing Director, Content & Social

W2O Group, Michael Brito, Group Director of Media & Engagement

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, our gratitude to the executives and industry experts who gave so generously of their time and knowledge by consenting to be interviewed for this research. Additional thanks due to insights and/or support from Charlene Li, Christine Tran, Susan Wu, Julie Viola, Cheryl Knight, Alec Wagner, Vladimir Mirkovic, Sally Glynn, and Heidi Krizansky.

End Notes

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Authors



Rebecca Lieb, Industry Analyst

Rebecca Lieb (@lieblink) is an analyst at Altimeter Group covering digital advertising and media, encompassing brands, publishers, agencies and technology vendors. In addition to her background as a marketing executive, she was VP and editor-in-chief of the ClickZ Network for over seven years. For a portion of that time, she also ran Search Engine Watch. She's written two books on digital marketing: *The Truth About Search Engine Optimization* (2009) and *Content Marketing* (2011). Rebecca blogs at <http://www.rebeccalieb.com/blog>



Jessica Groopman, Senior Researcher

Jessica Groopman (@jessgroopman) is a Senior Researcher with Altimeter Group where she researches the evolving challenges and opportunities of disruptive technologies on businesses, primarily focusing on how data is shifting business models and behaviors. She has experience conducting business, technological, and anthropological research.



Charlene Li, Founder and Analyst

Charlene Li (@charleneli) is Founder of Altimeter Group and author of the New York Times bestseller, *Open Leadership*. She is also the co-author of the critically acclaimed bestselling book, *Groundswell*, which was named one of the best business books in 2008. She is one of the foremost experts on social media and technologies and a consultant and independent thought leader on leadership, strategies, social technology, interactive media, and marketing.

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Contact us: 650.212.2272 • sales@altimetergroup.com • altimetergroup.com • @altimetergroup

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