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ENGAGING MARKETING MINDS

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2020

DEPTH PERCEPTION

SEEING BUSINESS THROUGH YOUR CUSTOMERS' EYES



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TAKE CONTROL

As much of what we have come to count on has been disrupted, we are forced to do a bit of soul searching. The bottom line is that while our personal lives, our businesses and our overall psyche have taken a beating, this is a time to do a little disrupting of our own. We simply must not allow the world to dictate to us. Rather, we can use this moment in history to innovate and not retreat.

The secret of disruptive business models isn't that they change an industry; it's that they change people. They alter how people feel about something, in a way that's enough to change their behavior. And while it seems murky right now, it is possible to look to the future and think about how your community might be enhanced as a result of what you do today.

Elite innovators are focused on creating the story that the clients cannot articulate, and they are not afraid to sell it right back to them. The time is ripe for any marketer who wants to make an impact going forward by telling better stories. Our new recipe of engagement must be focused on showing clients what you stand for, so that they can choose the stories and brands that they want to believe in. Marketing is not a promotional budget. It is the narrative of how we create value for your customers.

In this issue, we are proud to provide some insights on how you can start disrupting and creating real value. Our cover story, "Depth Perception," discusses how building trust with your clients is critical, but it is set to be even more important in the future. We must listen to our clients and understand them in order to better market to them. In our second feature, "6 Feet Apart," we share how to connect with people when you must stay socially distant. Specifically, we note how custom content bridges that gap.

Enjoy the issue and please reach out to us to discuss how we can help you take control and be your own disruptor.

Warmest regards,



Gina M. Danner, CEO

THE SECRET OF DISRUPTIVE BUSINESS MODELS ISN'T THAT THEY CHANGE AN INDUSTRY; IT'S THAT THEY CHANGE PEOPLE.



Be visible. Be accessible. Be vigilant.

05



8 tips for quality content

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DEPTH PER CEP TION

SEEING BUSINESS THROUGH YOUR CUSTOMERS' EYES

"WE WANT TO HELP."

When the world and everything in it abruptly stopped in its tracks, Rhythm Communications listened as two of its longtime clients expressed interest in making a difference when making a difference mattered the most. The first client, Barberitos, a burrito-inspired national restaurant chain, wanted to send food to hospital workers, but the units, impacted by the pandemic, were fighting to stay open. The other client was a national healthcare technology firm, Forcura, which wanted to recognize the accomplishments of frontline workers. Unfortunately, limited access to the facilities and stay-at-home mandates made their wish daunting.

In a time when every minute, every second, counts, the Atlanta-based marketing and communications firm understood that what their clients

wanted transcended crafting winning sales and marketing strategies.

The plan they devised was put into action quickly and efficiently. The Rhythm team worked with Barberitos to allow for online food donations from individuals and corporate sponsors, which included Forcura. Rhythm celebrated each donation through media announcements and local press coverage. When a Barberitos franchisee made a celebratory delivery, it provided on-site signage and balloons. The donation was lauded via social media. Barberitos was able to secure revenue with larger, discounted orders, while Forcura received recognition for its contributions. After its initial success, the program was replicated in more than 10 markets and continues to be supported nationwide.

"A client expects you to be strategic on

their behalf," says Amy Woodward Parrish, CEO and Managing Partner for Rhythm Communications. "But the strategy must be based on their needs and their client's versus what you think they need, even if it's something that your company does not offer. We develop marketing plans and campaigns that address the client's needs and their customer's needs. If we do not offer a particular service that we recommend, we introduce them to our network of contacts who can help."

When resources are limited, Woodward Parrish says trust must be the force that drives your actions, i.e., your client must know you can deliver on what you say you can. "It is important that you invest in your relationships. Your clients look to you to get things done to the quality they expect and deserve. Today's business environment

requires that you be an extension of them—an extension of their voice."

Agencies like Rhythm Communications are thriving in the new normal by maintaining a new level of openness, especially in a time when face-to-face meetings are limited. That means being able to see through your customers' eyes is even more challenging than ever. Listening has become an even greater asset—listening to your client, your client's marketplace and your client's customers.

"We request regular updates and react to any need or issue that needs to be discussed," Woodward Parrish says. "We also follow them and their competitors on social media and in the news media. We monitor their activities and share insights so that we can collaborate on solutions and differentiation." ■

6 WAYS LISTENING ENHANCES THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE



- 1. PROVIDES FEEDBACK & DATA**
Your customers and employees on the frontline are your best source of real-time feedback. Together they can diagnose the good, the bad and the ugly, and identify opportunities to create better customer experiences.
- 2. OFFERS STORIES YOU CAN SHARE**
When it comes to the good, the bad and the ugly, every story matters. Stories should be shared across all mediums, including social, websites, brochures, and more.
- 3. GROWS CUSTOMER RETENTION**
It is less expensive to keep existing customers than to acquire new ones. What drives retention is listening, and just as important, acting on what you have "heard."
- 4. INCREASES CUSTOMER SPENDING**
Make a customer happy and they buy more. Along with providing a good customer experience, your customers want to be heard.
- 5. CREATES BRAND AMBASSADORS**
Satisfied customers talk to their friends, family and colleagues. Your best marketing is going to come from customers who sing your praises.
- 6. FOSTERS EMPLOYEE RETENTION**
Customer and employee feedback is gold. Listen to suggestions and ideas, and act on the best ones.

BE VISIBLE. BE ACCESSIBLE. BE VIGILANT.

IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE FUROR

surrounding the pandemic, Andrea Fryrear received scores of emails from brands she says her firm had forgotten that they had ever engaged with. Each message started with those all too familiar and reassuring words, “We’re here for you.”

Everyone, everywhere, was jumping into the “we-are-all-in-this-together” moment.

As one of the world’s foremost authorities on Agile marketing, Fryrear understands a brand’s need to declare its undying assistance in times of need, whether they have ever been able to fulfill that promise or are just now joining the party. But to truly be a savior, Fryrear says you must already have a track record of success.

“Trust is what allows us to communicate in a meaningful way during moments of crisis and uncertainty,” she says. “You can’t try and build trust from scratch during tough times. It has to already be there. The way we as brands and businesses act while in crisis can either increase or erode that trust, but we’re going to be speaking from an existing relationship. That’s why we’ve got to deliberately cultivate these relationships all the time, so when we really need them they’re already authentic and available.”

Trust is the important part of the equation, so knowing your customers’ end game makes delivering and/or refining their strategy clearer. And that, as Fryrear emphasizes, takes trust. “Trust isn’t all that complicated to articulate, but it’s tricky to execute. It’s saying that you’re going to do something and then do it. Or, similarly, it is saying you believe something and then behaving in a way that’s consistent with that belief. When there’s a disconnect between intention and action, or between statement and action, trust erodes. When those things align, trust is built.”

The best trust builders know that the secret lies in being transparent about your actions. What are your values? What drives you? What is your follow-through on the

promise you made? The first half of that equation is often the hardest for brands, which are used to being open about their values internally, but less accustomed to putting it out into the public domain. Even the most sensitive, right-seeming actions ring hollow if you do not have a stated action or value that you can live up to.

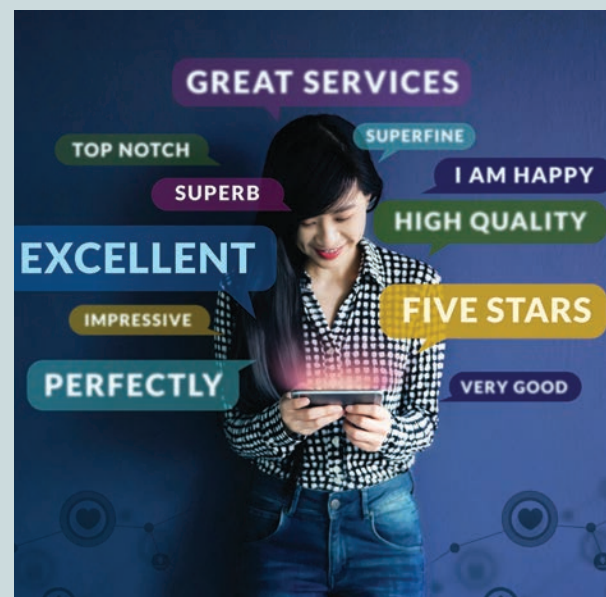
The key: See what your customer sees and your vision is most likely accurate.

“Humans are prone to all sorts of biases that make it hard to accurately imagine what it’s like to be in someone else’s head,” Fryrear says. “The curse of knowledge, for instance, makes it nearly impossible for us to remember what it was like before we knew something. Our existing knowledge colors all of our activities. This happens all the time with our products and services. We get so familiar with them that we forget what it’s like to be a new user. Listening allows us to mitigate this bias so we can help customers and provide what they actually want, rather than what our biased recollections and assumptions tell us they want.”

Like most training organizations, Fryrear’s team at AgileSherpas is developing new online content for its students. For a long time, the AgileSherpas team wanted to create a course on how best to visualize your work on a Kanban board (a question that comes up within their existing courses all the time). Fortunately, before they jumped on their pet idea, they created a quick survey via email and social media to solicit a list of five potential courses people were most likely to register for. The board design class was a distant second.

“It was nowhere close to the topic that our audience was really interested in,” Fryrear recalls. “It showed how to measure the effectiveness of an Agile system. So now we’re developing a course that our audience really wants, instead of the one we thought they’d like.”

As Fryrear and Woodward Parrish stress, marketing should always be listening. More



“WE ALSO HAVE A TENDENCY TO TALK ABOUT OUR OWN PRODUCTS AND SERVICES INSTEAD OF WHAT OUR CUSTOMERS AND AUDIENCES NEED. THE MORE WE LISTEN, THE MORE NATURAL IT BECOMES FOR OUR CUSTOMERS TO BE THE HEROES OF THE STORY.”

— ANDREA FRYREAR,
AGILE MARKETER COACH AND TRAINER

than anything else, marketers have to be the bridge between the business and the customer. “We also have a tendency to talk about our own products and services instead of what our customers and audiences need,” Fryrear says. “The more we listen, the more natural it becomes for our customers to be the heroes of the story and for our products to be their tools, rather than framing our products as the saviors our customers need.”

6 FEET



2 m. —



**HOW TO
BUILD TRUST
FROM A
DISTANCE**

BY MICHAEL PALLERINO

APART



JUST AS the pandemic changed the way people everywhere viewed everything, marketing firm Influence Central conducted a consumer insights survey with a panel of nearly 700 consumers, asking, among other things, what they wanted to see from a brand's marketing efforts during these trying times. More than half of the respondents said they preferred seeing influencers post raw and authentic observations, especially once the COVID-19 restrictions were lifted, versus posts about travel, fashion, fitness and food.

Among the litany of astute observations, the survey showed that brand marketers have to be flexible, relevant and sincere. During the marketing process, too many brands tend to get lost in the perfectionism and specific language requirements that represent a polished



— 6 feet



“CONTENT PLAYS A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN PROVIDING THIS NORMALCY AND FULFILLING NEEDS IN CONSUMERS’ LIVES. IN-PERSON EVENTS MAY BE CANCELLED, BUT HUMAN CONNECTION IS NOT CANCELLED.”

— STACY DEBROFF,
FOUNDER & CEO, INFLUENCE CENTRAL

campaign. The verdict seemed to indicate that consumers wanted relatable content and imperfect imagery, not sunshine and rainbows.

The insight is the kind that Stacy DeBroff lives for. The founder and CEO of Influence Central runs an agency bent on not only delivering the type of messages their customers want, but also advocate for. Working with more than 300 brands a year, Influence Central has created a community of nearly 10,000 vetted influencers across all demographics and verticals—women, men, lifestyle, fashion, wellness, foodies, celebrities and more.

So, in a time when up close and personal, and hands-on interactions are being parceled out, what kind of messages come next?

“Strong brands connect with their communities across various platforms,” DeBroff says. “Many marketers went quiet over the past months surrounding the outbreak. That was a mistake. The important thing is to make yourself visible during and after what is happening. People crave escapism and reassurance.”

Based on Influence Central’s survey, brands have the ability to provide the inspiration consumers want in whichever way suits their makeup. How you connect with your

community may differ based on your audience, but hiding in plain sight is not the right strategy. “Brands will need to continue educating themselves on the latest platforms and applying their messaging in engaging ways.”

In a global crisis unlike anyone has ever seen, consumers tend to reject overly aspirational content and instead seek ways to sympathize with and mitigate their collective exasperation. And if you truly know your consumers, you should know that they can tell when a brand message is scripted or forced. The way forward lies in authenticity—getting back to the basics of passionate storytelling and first-person experience with a product or service.

And while you probably do not need a survey to tell you this, people want brands to provide a sense of normalcy in a world that has been—without being too obvious here—a bit abnormal.

Where do you begin? DeBroff says to look in the most obvious place—content. “Content plays a significant role in providing this normalcy and fulfilling needs in consumers’ lives. In-person events may be cancelled, but human connection is not cancelled. Content, when done correctly, is a brand’s voice. It is a driving connection to the consumer minds you are trying to serve. Content will continue to provide the bridge between brand and consumer now and going forward. Whether it is a banner hanging in the stands of a baseball stadium, a 30-second spot on prime-time television, or a short shout-out on Instagram stories, content is everywhere.” ■

THE STORY IS THE STORY

For the past 14-plus years, Sylvie Tongco has worked in communications and marketing in the technology world. Spending the majority of her career helping Silicon Valley startups, enterprise companies and venture capital firms unlock their stories to build sustainable and thought-leading positions, she understands the power of a good story.

Today, as the VP of Communications and Corporate Marketing for Selligent Marketing Cloud, she has had a front row seat to the power of all things data. And in a time when personal connection went virtual overnight, Tongco has seen brands work extra hard to lean on the power of things like digital marketing.

“The term ‘engagement’ has become almost purely digital at this point,” she says. “Pressure is building for brands to use data to truly personalize customer experiences and make every interaction relevant to compel consumers to connect with the brand and digest information shared with them. Every brand that wants to succeed during this challenging time can’t afford to look at customer connection as a linear relationship. There are many ways that they can connect with their audiences and should allow for multiple ways for customers to connect with them as well.”

Tongco believes this omnichannel approach goes hand in hand with personalizing the customer journey—brands need to know where they are, how they prefer to connect, and what they care about. That means that using data to create that experience is now at the heart of all marketing.

“Content in the COVID-19 era is what’s driving engagement,” Tongco says. “Companies that pay attention to likes/dislikes and create customer experiences that focus on individualized preferences become more meaningful to their audiences. Only those mutually beneficial relationships will survive long-term. Tailoring content is critical and



utilizing smart content platforms as part of the overall digital marketing strategy is an important investment.”

The key will be in paying attention to individualized preferences, which is important for building trust and encouraging brand loyalty. For example, are you sending communication to your customers too often? Is that communication being deleted—or worse—are people unsubscribing?

Tongco says the only way to find the answers is to look at how marketing campaigns are performing and to create strategies that are nimble. Brands that focus on quality and relevance at every point of the customer journey can build trust because customers feel that their preferences are being respected. In turn, they will find the information they receive valuable to them personally.

Part of that information lies in good storytelling, which Tongco believes is at the heart of every successful communication. “Storytelling is probably one of the most powerful tools to engage and connect with consumers. And while face-to-face interactions may have become limited over the last few months and will continue to be scarce moving forward, bringing the ‘human’ aspect to a story is crucial. It’s a highly effective way to reinforce your brand’s values and mission.”

Relatability. Good stories. Authenticity. If you can capture these qualities, your brand will keep its personal connections in a world learning to keep its distance—for now. In the end, now more than ever, consumers want to feel less alone.

TACTICS



THE PERSONAL TOUCH

SURVEY SHOWS PERSONALIZATION PAYS OFF

In a world filled with content clutter, getting your customer's attention can seem like a chore. Making customers feel like they aren't just another number is critical to gaining their trust,

and ultimately, a brand's success. According to the "Consumer Content Survey" by Advanis and Adobe when brands personalize their content, customers are more likely to do the following:

40%

Check out
the content
immediately

39%

Make a
purchase

37%

Become loyal
to the brand

36%

Recommend
the brand
to others

32%

Subscribe to
the brand's
communications,
like email list
and social media
channels

27%

Make
purchases you
didn't intend
to due to
enhanced
recommendations

TALENT SHOW

SURVEY REVEALS SOUGHT-AFTER SKILLS

The pandemic brought many things to light, including good talent. Everyone had to step up their game. While finding talent is not new, the desired skill sets have shifted due to the pandemic and many are looking for different skills. "The CMO Survey" from Duke University conducted a Special COVID-19 Edition in May 2020. With results from almost 300 U.S. marketing leaders, the study showed what skills are needed to succeed in today's marketing landscape. Take a peek at what types of talent marketers are prioritizing, in order of importance:

- 01 ABILITY TO PIVOT AS NEW PRIORITIES EMERGE**
- 02 CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION SKILLS**
- 03 NAVIGATING AMBIGUITY**
- 04 EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE**
- 05 DATA SCIENCE BACKGROUND**
- 06 CURIOSITY**
- 07 NATURAL LEADERSHIP ABILITIES**
- 08 MARTECH PLATFORM EXPERIENCE**
- 09 FINANCIAL ACUMEN**



TOP OF THE CLASS

8 TIPS FOR QUALITY CONTENT

Content is a crucial part of your marketing strategy. But how does it measure up? Take it to the next level with these 8 hallmarks of quality content from Skyword:

NO. 1 PURPOSEFUL

Every piece that is published must have a clear purpose that aligns with your brand's content strategy, values and tone. It should provide value to both your audience and your brand.

NO. 2 ORIGINAL

To stand out among the noise, you need to differentiate your brand. Offering a unique perspective on otherwise generic content will make you memorable.

NO. 3 EMPATHETIC

Keep your audience's needs and wants front and center. Understand what they care about, and then design your content around it.

NO. 4 VALUABLE

Is your content worth your audience's time? It should deliver a tangible benefit and enrich their lives in some fashion.

NO. 5 AUTHORITATIVE

Be the expert that your audience can look up to. Build trust with factual, accurate and credible content.

NO. 6 RESPECTFUL

With all of the unrest in the world, it is imperative that your brand is respectful. Keep your audience in mind, use appropriate language and be inclusive.

NO. 7 ARTFUL

Draw in your customers with well-written and high-quality content. It should be engaging and easy to understand.

NO. 8 OPTIMIZED

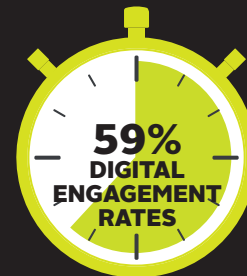
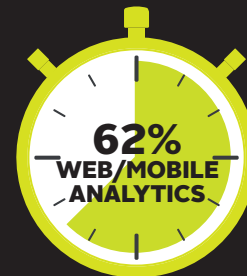
If your content is inaccessible, no one will find it. Use SEO practices to get it in front of your customers and drive results.

ON THE RIGHT TRACK

REPORT SHOWS MARKETERS **EXPAND THEIR KPIs**

MEASURING MARKETING is imperative to success and the metrics used are constantly evolving. Revenue still claims first place, but customer experience and satisfaction have risen in the last few years. In a world where marketing occurs 24/7, you must keep your finger

on the pulse. According to the sixth edition of the “State of Marketing” report by Salesforce, 72% of high performers can analyze performance in real time, versus 49% of underperformers. Take a look at the findings from the report to see what KPIs marketers are tracking:



QA

ON THE RECORD WITH MARTIN LINDSTROM

BUSINESS EXPERT ON THE POST-CORONA
LANDSCAPE



What opportunities do you see in the post-corona landscape?

They're amazing. Some of the biggest and most successful companies like GE, GM and Trader Joes were all founded during or just after a recession. COVID-19 has introduced what I call an 8th entry point, which is completely new behavioral buying patterns that open up for emerging opportunities.

How do we reignite our enthusiasm?

Go back to your roots and reframe your purpose in life...then ask yourself if this is aligned with where you're heading. The answer may be scary—that you're not on track or that you live in a fake-dream. If so, now is the time to rediscover what you stand for and then shape your life around it.

Can you speak to why we lack creativity and why it is needed more than ever at this time?

We are bombarding ourselves with an endless stream of stuff—posts, articles, tweets, Instagram pics, TikToks, etc—making us allergic to boredom. But here's the issue—boredom is the foundation for creativity because it provides us with the space to think, reflect and put things into

Martin Lindstrom is a *New York Times* best-selling author and the founder and chairman of Lindstrom Company, a leading brand and culture transformation group, operating across five continents and more than 30 countries. He has been named to *TIME* Magazine's "100 Most Influential People" and Thinkers50. Among the companies he advises are Burger King, Lowes, Godiva, Boar's Head, Beverly Hills Hotels, Pepsi, Hertz and Google. His books have been praised by multiple publications and have been translated into 60 languages. Lindstrom has also appeared in *The New York Times*, NBC's TODAY show, Morgan Spurlock's movie "The Greatest Movie Ever Sold" and on America's Next Top Model. He has delivered keynote addresses to Google, Kraft Heinz, Disney, Amazon, LEGO, Unilever, Hallmark, Adobe, Mattel and the World Economic Forum. We sat down with Lindstrom to get his take on the post-corona landscape.

a new perspective. Creativity takes us out of routines and delivers unexpected oxygen that connects different people under one language.

What is your hypothesis about how we will engage with clients in the post-corona landscape?

More than ever, empathy will be the key to connect. We've lost the concept of empathy, or the ability to place ourselves in the shoes of another person and see the world from his or her point of view. The most important thing for you to do is

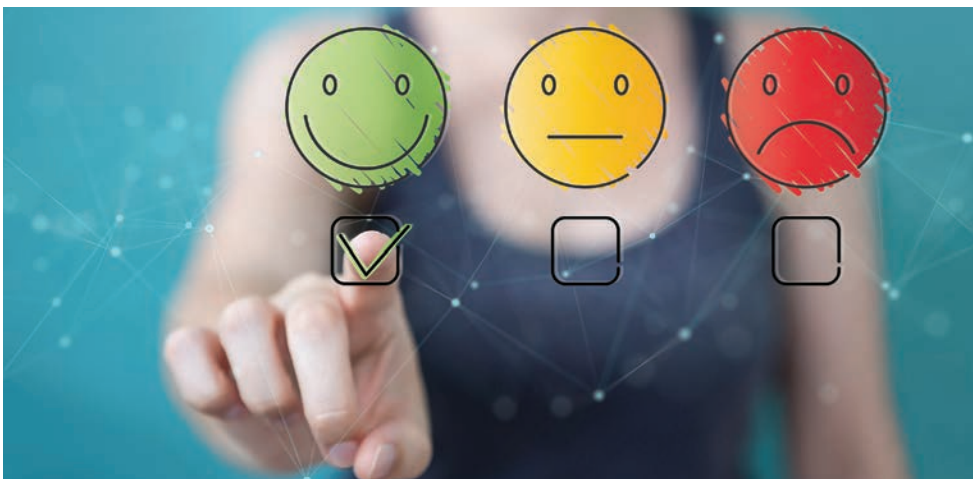
to see the world from your clients' point of view as they, most likely, experience the world in a completely new light compared with pre-COVID-19. If you're able to truly understand what that new view is, then adapt your products or solution accordingly so you're on the right track.

What don't you want to come back in the post-corona landscape?

That CEOs conclude that offices (and with that culture) are a thing of the past. You cannot build a culture without creating a sense of belonging. And you cannot create a sense of belonging using a remote control.

What are your thoughts about leadership in the emerging landscape?

You have just witnessed who the true leaders were and who were not. It is during a crisis that the true leader stands up and makes a point of differentiation. Sadly, the picture wasn't pretty. Not only did a lot of leaders only show leadership style in terms of cost cutting, but they also were unable to adapt their organizations to a changing market, which jeopardized the entire future of their companies.



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