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**2015 Content  
Marketing  
Report:  
10 B2B and  
B2C Trends**

**W**e have a pretty good track record of predicting the content marketing trends to focus on for the coming year. Just look at our scorecard from 2013 and 2014—we were on the mark with everything. And in our minds, 2015 is setting itself up to be a very interesting year in the marketing world.

New technologies, new practices, new channels, and new roles will define the next 12 months, with a focus on strong brands, an even bigger call for original content, and navigating the ever-shifting world of social media.

## 2013

- Re-emergence of experiential content**
- Tailored consumer content experience**
- Alignment of mobile business and content strategy**
- Fusion of social media practices**
- Newsjacking**
- Content curation bonanza**
- Microstories**
- Video engagement**
- Marketing spend shift**
- Modular publication and distribution**

## 2014

- Native advertising meets content marketing**
- Visual editing**
- Data-driven content delivery**
- Content engineering**
- Custom brand video channels and series**
- Content overload**
- Audience-driven micropublishing**
- Tech-smart content curation**
- Near-field content**
- Editorial in a new SEO world**
- Social marketing shift**



# Digital marketing science fuses with content distribution

Digital outbound marketing has become essential for the practice of science-driven content distribution, while content marketing and its close cousins in custom publishing and branded editorial have become the hallmarks of inbound marketing. But things are changing fast in terms of how content gets in front of the intended audience. That's why the wall between outbound and inbound marketing is falling, and the domain of direct online marketing is fusing with content marketing.

The art of storytelling can be enabled with the science of digital marketing, and this coming year marketers and their content agencies will find that the combination of distributed content optimization (DCO), search engine optimization (SEO) and user experience optimization (UXO) can no longer exist in silos. Content has to be written, designed, and distributed from the ground up with push and pull (as well as owned and earned) marketing methodologies in mind. For instance, ad campaigns are already giving way to story-driven content campaigns versus pure promotional copywriting, while the age-old standby "point-of-view whitepaper" PDF is changing format to a highly searchable and optimized content experience that bundles disparate content for all digital environments and devices using paid and organic techniques in one fell swoop.

# Retailers rediscover the power of storytelling

Department stores and specialty retailers are beginning (again) to embrace investments in content. Stores like JC Penney, Dillard's, Macy's, and Belk used to be a part of the community and their customers' lives. Today, retailers have more to say than mere promotions and coupons can reflect, but they struggle to find the ROI around their stories while they are pressured to bring in the sales. In the coming year, they will wake up and rediscover just how content drives ecommerce.

Anthropologie, Patagonia, and Target are all great examples of retailer storytelling done right. Retailers can connect with customers on a deeper level and reattach them to the brand through great content, which shows they are serious about customer engagement and creates a holistic content experience rather than a loosely associated brand. User-generated content adds a second dimension to get great customer stories straight from the source. In the future, online stories will be matched in stores to bring things full circle.

# Companies embrace internal content marketing

External storytelling is meaningless unless everyone's telling (and believing in) the same story internally. Marketing to external audiences is only one half of the equation. Companies will increasingly tie internal marketing into their overall content strategies in order to get the entire company behind a cohesive message and brand personality.

Encouraging the internal culture to adopt the same message, language, and goals of the external content marketing campaign helps further your employer brand and strengthen the overall message that customers receive. It also allows employees to see how they are connected to the bigger picture at the company and understand how they are a party of that story. Not only that, but when you include your internal audience in your strategy, you come to a deeper understanding of who your company's employees really are, what they want, and what they need.

# Content takes center stage for employer branding

An employer brand attracts people to a company by creating the story around why they should become—and stay—employees. That’s why content is more important than ever in drawing the right talent in an increasingly competitive job market. Companies need to create a content experience that showcases real employee stories and shows off the intrinsic value of working there.

The entry-level age bracket (19-26) uses a wide variety of social media, so high growth companies recruiting at undergraduate and graduate school levels need to use content to recruit the best candidates by telling their story authentically in multiple channels and in a responsive way. Employer branding efforts should not forget that content is crucial in recruiting experienced employees. This will require moving beyond empty PR and awards for “best places to work.” You’ll need to tell the stories around your employer brand more deeply.



# Digital detox means quality over quantity

The trend of content fatigue continues from before—people are overwhelmed by too much content and too many channels. Often, individual personalities within brands who seek to build their own social personas more than they want to promote their company’s brand can take away from brand efforts in social content. On top of that, audiences are overwhelmed with reposts, “look at me” status updates, and, thanks to the “Buzzfeed effect,” endless quizzes, armchair analysis, and amateur newscasting from their friends and family. More and more, people are taking sabbaticals from their smartphones, seeking a digital detox.

When it comes to content, your audience wants to see fresh thoughts and ideas that truly promote your brand, not just a person within your brand. And sharing great content is one thing, but people want real interaction, not just an automated, one-sided link list. Create opportunities for conversation and engagement through your original content and rise above the noise.



# News content is reborn with a lean, local focus

Move over, CNN. According to Pew Research Center's State of the News Media report, the world of digital news is getting smaller. Legacy news organizations are no longer ruling the conversation while they try to figure out how to survive in a new landscape, and younger digital news sites founded within the last seven years are starting to take over.

These organizations have small staffs, report with a general or local focus, and more than half of them are nonprofit. But just because they are small and young doesn't mean they aren't getting the scoop. Think the Texas Tribune's livestream of an 11-hour filibuster in Austin, TX or the local alt-weekly Riverfront Times' coverage of the protests in Ferguson, MO—this is world-class journalism on a local scale.



# The social media ROI argument reignites

There is a long-running battle over the ROI of social media—what constitutes engagement, what shows brand affinity, what really matters? Over the years, brands have developed their own versions of tracking what works and what doesn't since there is no one standard to measure the impact of social media.

But with a steady stream of new social channels, the advent of paid social media, and more, the needle is shifting once again. Social media has evolved from a point of interaction to a channel to a new way of “being” for companies, and it's hard to measure something like that. The argument around all aspects converging will reignite, and cross-channel metrics will become more important than ever in unlocking what social ROI really means.



# Brands will create a new (virtual) reality

Content will go from online engagement to real world immersion with the widespread arrival of virtual reality technology like Oculus Rift and the further spread of gadgets like Google Glass and other smart wearables.

Virtual and augmented reality is a brand new channel for content creation, bringing the audience into the heart of the storytelling and allowing them to experience it instead of just witnessing it. Wearable technology offers up a new, always-on platform for brands to make their content even more seamlessly integrated into people's lives than smartphones or tablets allow.



# Microtargeting and micropublishing converge

It's no secret that we love a well-developed buyer persona. It's one of the best ways to get to know your customers and target them with the kind of content that they're looking for. But the big-picture personas are just skimming the surface—thanks to real-time social tracking, remarketing data, and more, microtargeting to very specific subsets of an audience is getting hotter by the day.

Companies are also deploying more platforms that support and encourage user-generated content. This allows them to utilize microtargeting to draw new content creators into the fold, with audience members becoming micropublishers in exchange for rewards and a deeper connection with the brand.



# **Paid placement is now a part of content success**

Paid social media placement isn't just an experiment anymore—it's now a necessary part of your overall distribution strategy. You could be writing the best content in the world, but without paid placement, it might never be seen. Thanks to new algorithms, even friends and family are having trouble with their posts being ignored, let alone brands. Sponsored content is in, and it's time to start making room for it in your marketing budget if you want your social media to be more competitive.

This may mean a change in your overall content strategy so that you're optimizing the paid media budget on the content you absolutely want to rise to the top of your customer's feeds—think less fluff and more meat. And spend wisely so you're not squandering twenties on tweets instead of pennies on Pinterest.

## About D Custom

D Custom is an integrated content marketing agency located in Dallas, Texas. We work with B2B and B2C clients around the globe to help them drive sales through content. Brand journalists at heart, we develop your message and deploy it across channels to connect you to your audience online, in print, and beyond. D Custom is more than just marketing—we take a custom, hybrid approach to every client's needs, merging technology, technique, and strategy in order to reach our clients' customers and prospects to build relationships, drive sales, and create loyal brand advocates.

We don't want to replace your marketing team—we want to refresh, illuminate, enhance, and amplify what they're doing by filling the gaps and adding depth and dimension to your marketing plan. D Custom has a history of success working side by side with brand marketers to translate their messages into compelling, engaging content using a variety of media. Our story is our clients' story. Let us help you tell yours.

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