

The lowdown on creating award-winning content campaigns

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Content. It's a small word for a massively important element of **marketing** that has been embraced by advertisers and publishers alike.

55% of marketers plan to increase content **marketing** budgets over the next 12 months, according to Adobe.

Why are consumers embracing branded content?

Content comes in a number of guises, from native **advertising** (the evolution of advertorial into tailored, **brand**-led editorial online) through to a **brand**'s own content on their website and much in between.

The reason content, in whatever form, is growing is because consumers are, well, consuming it.

Consumers are happy to engage with **brands** through content as long as it is useful or entertaining, says **Alex Altman**, the managing director at MEC Global Solutions, London. "If it achieves this," he explains, "they then go on to share the content because it makes a statement about them – I am connected, I am clever, I am funny."

What does great native content look like?

The partnership between **brand**, publisher and agency is something that comes up again and again and is nowhere more important than when looking at native content, where powerful **branded** content is leveraged with the trust of a publisher's audience.

Aaron Robinson, director, custom content, **The Wall Street Journal**, says, "There must be a genuine connection between the two **brands** and the campaign must be executed in a way that is not seen to deceive the user. The best campaigns are those that deliver, in a timely manner, real substance that the audience can use. Above all, "native" must feel it's delivered in the voice of the platform it appears on.

Damien Marchi, global head of content at Havas Media Group, agrees, "Native content is best

when, from a consumer standpoint, it is as good as regular publisher content and would look the same without the involvement of the **brand** and, from a **brand** standpoint, it achieves the given objectives.”

What are the biggest challenges when planning a ‘multi-national’ vs ‘international’ campaign?

This adds another layer of complexity as there are so many other factors that come into play when planning content campaigns, from language and culture to humour and demographic differences.

Jane Grenier, executive director, client services for **Quartz**, says, “Balancing multi-national relevancy with international efficiency is a tough juggling act. Publications with a global audience for their editorial lend themselves most easily to international **branded**-content campaigns.”

Niki Webb, CEO EMEA at FleishmanHillard ContentWorks, believes that for global campaigns the **brand** story has to be the absolute core. “There is a tendency to use more local tactical approaches so it’s best to work through these in the planning phases and use **brand** journalists to create the outline narrative first,” says Webb. “Localisation is a fine art but it is easier if there is a shared narrative.”

Pitfalls to avoid in content-driven marketing

Don’t start devising your content strategy from the **brand** perspective, points out **Sonia Le Louarn**, chief strategy officer at Mindshare Lat Am. “Find out first what your target audience likes and why,” she says, “and then fit the **brand** around these insights. However, you have to do this without losing your attributes, values and key message on the way.”

Altman says, “Be authentic – do not try to be something you are not. A bandwagon approach will almost certainly lead to disaster. As is said of comedians – tell me a joke, don’t tell me you’re funny.”

Key points

- Content must be useful, entertaining and relevant to be picked up by consumers
- Delivered within trusted environments, content can deliver higher reach and engagement
- than traditional ads
- Content works best when created as part of a strong partnership between **brand**, publisher
- and agency
- Content must speak in the same voice as the platform it appears on
- International content campaigns can be localised, but require a shared narrative
- Be part of a conversation, be authentic – and don’t sell

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