

Clever Content Builds Great Brands

OLSWANG



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Last week Olswang hosted a fascinating discussion amongst industry experts on the role that brands are increasingly playing in the financing and production of content.

This is nothing new but from the LEGO movie to the Formula E "Leap Of Faith" (if you haven't seen Damien Walters backflip over a speeding Formula E car you really should – click [here](#)), brands are often behind some of the most engaging content around.

We were fortunate to be joined by a fantastic panel of industry experts who shared their insights into this market. Our panellists were:

- Giles Morrison, Global VP, Brand Communications Excellence, Unilever
- Michael Iskas, President, The Story Lab Global
- Justin Kirby, Advisory Board Member, BCMA / VP, Strategic Content Marketing, Tenthwave Digital LLC
- Andy Taylor, Co-Founder and CEO, Little Dot Studios
- Martin Trickey, Head of Digital, Warner Bros.

We wanted to share with you some of the key takeaway points from the discussion:

1. Great content marketing is about telling stories and creating content that your customers want to seek out themselves

There was certainly some debate about exactly how best to differentiate content marketing from native advertising, with the consensus generally being that what we were principally concerned with was content that customers want to watch and which has a creative value apart from the brand association. It is not about interrupting what your customer wants to be doing but actually being the thing that your customer wants to be doing.

2. Brands need to re-think their attitude to risk if they are really going to embrace content as a marketing strategy

You can't buy audience for editorial content in the same way that you can buy eyeballs for ads. Exposure needs to be earned not bought and as a result it carries more risk. Some content is perhaps riskier than other content. Utility content (think cooking videos, make-up tutorials, how-to guides) probably sit on the less risky end of the spectrum whereas entertainment is at the higher risk end, not least because great entertainment content is not cheap to produce. Investment in content as a marketing strategy therefore requires confident, forward thinking marketers and a Board that understands the long term play and the risks involved.

3. Content marketing is one piece of an ever more complex global marketing strategy

Advertisers want exposure for their brands but ultimately they want to sell products. Traditional spots and display advertising offer more immediate results – or at least the prospect of more immediate and accurate measurement – than a content-based marketing strategy and traditionally marketers are incentivised to deliver instant results. Advertising isn't going away. But technologies that enable ad blocking and the prevalence of untargeted (and therefore annoying) ads online mean that a good campaign plan needs to encompass both elements across the entire customer journey. Content is also highly sensitive to cultural differences – content that works in one market may not work in every market. In the same way content that works online may not work on TV. And of course there are rules about the extent to which you can blur the boundary between editorial and advertising and these rules differ depending on the market.

4. Producing great content requires specialist skills – creative, business and legal (of course!)

Different brands have different approaches – some are building up their own in house expertise in the entertainment space whilst others are relying on the agencies to help them plug the gap with their growing content divisions. Production companies are also key to the mix. Platforms such as YouTube are clamouring for brands to invest in great content but they also want slick videos with high production values – which is where the traditional production community comes in. They know how to tell the stories that consumers want to watch, they know how to navigate the entertainment industry and they are used to the level of risk involved. Sometimes the quickest way to kill creativity is to bring it within a large corporate structure so working with external production companies might be paramount.

5. Regardless of how good your content is it needs to get to its audience and this takes planning

If your content is designed for TV broadcast then you may already have an audience – subject to it finding the right channel and timeslot. But online content needs a push. Hundreds of hours of video are uploaded to YouTube every minute so how do you drive people to yours? One answer is to build into the content elements that different market segments and demographics will be drawn to and, perhaps more importantly, that press and other curators serving those segments and demographics will pick up on.

6. Measuring success – different but not impossible

There are a whole variety of different metrics that can be used to measure success – number of views, number of likes, number of downloads, TV viewing figures, etc. But marketers also need to demonstrate an impact on sales. Not least to continue to get buy in from the Board and other stakeholders. This can be tricky, but not impossible.

How Olswang can help

Olswang's heritage is in media, it is the core of what we do. Our media team is top tier ranked in Legal 500, Chambers & Partners and Media Law International. We have a client base spanning television broadcasters, film financiers, producers and studios, record labels, advertising agencies, newspapers and publishers as well as talent agencies and celebrities. In addition, we are increasingly working with brands that are looking to bolster the content aspect of their marketing plans and agencies who are working with their clients on these strategies. Whether you need help with development or production agreements or a steer on navigating the production financing space or the myriad means of distribution for your content, we can help.

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