BEST PRACTICES

For Using Social and Marketing Content to Drive Sales

A Knexus Report

INTRODUCTION

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Customers have rising expectations of the content they consume across brand touchpoints. Whether it's videos, images, social posts or articles, they expect content to be, first and foremost, relevant and useful to them. And with the traditional paths to purchase disrupted by an explosion of different channels and touchpoints, serving those expectations to a consistently high level has never been harder.

Understanding this, brands have invested in increasing content quality and quantity, whilst trying to capture and process more and more data.

Yet, most brands have an underdeveloped appreciation of how content can be optimally developed, deployed and measured in a systematic way that drives not just engagement, but additional sales.

In this report, we'll present best practices gleaned from successfully working with some of the world's best brands to deliver relevant content that provably drives more sales.

ANALYZE YOUR CUSTOMERS' DIGITAL BEHAVIOUR

"Develop content to inform and educate consumers and help them move through the decision process. Arming customers with the right information helps them move independently through the shopping journey, creates trust and increases their loyalty"

Deloitte Consumer Review: The Growing Power of Consumers

Customer journeys are more complex than ever, with research published in the Harvard Business Review stating that 73% of customers now use multiple channels during their shopping journey.

Content may be king, but context is queen. At different parts of a customer's digital journey across your channels, they will have varying needs. Depending on the precise combination of the type of customer, the product in question and how close they are to a buying decision, different forms of content will be most effective.

The reward for getting it right at every step of the way along a customer's purchase path is to win trust and increase conversions.

Creating actionable insights as to what type of content customers need at different stages is the foundational block of using content to drive more sales.

TAKE THE CONTENT TO THE CUSTOMER

It's too expensive to get the customer to the content

Digital advertising spend has climbed and climbed, with CPG companies spending more than $11 billion in the U.S alone for 2019. Too many of those dollars are spent chasing customers with content they would have happily consumed on your owned channels, if only they were given the chance.

Of millennials, 30% rate Instagram and YouTube as places where brands do a good job of creating content they want to see, but only 12% say the same of brand websites. The solution: to bring in the best of Instagram and YouTube to your website, not to make customers abandon effective buying channels to discover relevant content.

Give the customer the content they need where and when they want it, or accept they'll go somewhere else to find it and may not come back.

DON'T WAIT FOR PERFECT DATA

Perfecting data is a marathon, not a sprint

Whilst it's important to work with IT and vendors in an effort to unify all disparate sources of data, projects of this type are always time consuming and treacherous to realise.

While waiting for the perfect 360 degree, real-time customer view of tomorrow, more agile competitors are learning fast and creating the personalization wins of today.

To get started, you only need enough data to perform better than you do now. From there, you can strengthen data in an agile, incremental fashion.

ANALYZE THE COMMERCIAL PERFORMANCE OF YOUR CONTENT

Measuring content can be challenging. Most CMS or content platforms will give you an array of metrics such as time spent on page or CTR, which can be used to measure customer engagement.

But do you know how content contributes to your top line?

And can you compare that top line contribution across content from different channels, in a meaningful apples to apples way?

You need a single view of content performance, with the right metrics, to give you a full understanding of how content drives sales.

USE DATA TO MAKE CONTENT RELEVANT AND TIMELY

Personalization is not achieved simply when your organization possesses a process or capability to alter what content a given user sees, personalization is achieved when a customer's needs are met through the timely delivery of relevant information.

To that end, brands need to be able to marry top performing content to the right person, combining a number of data sources: customer contextual, demographic, behavioral, customer profiles, sentiment, and affinities.

But more data isn't always better. To create relevant, effective content experiences, ensure your data sources are up to date and fit for purpose.

Combine your data-driven understanding of your customer with their stage in the buying process. The right content on a buying page increases conversions and delivers more sales.

THINK 'CUSTOMER, CONTENT, COMMERCE'

69% of all website content goes unseen, across all industries

2020 Digital Experience Benchmark

And not 'Channel, Content, Engagement'

Content that is created with the customer, and their stage in the buying journey, first in mind will not only be more effective, it will also inherently be more re-usable across channels, increasing ROI and saving time and effort.

A channel-first approach can seem easier, considering the traditional way marketing teams and agency relationships are structured, but this way of working is increasingly coming into conflict with achieving key commercial objectives.

And unashamedly focus on those commercial objectives; social media and content marketing may have acquired a somewhat distracting, even woolly, language that speaks of conversations, virality and fans, but these are just means to an end, of only limited value in themselves.

Content's impact can be much more decisive: to bring in more light buyers and drive incremental sales. And if you focus on that impact, and measure it, you will achieve an attributable uplift in sales.

MAKE YOUR CONTENT INTERNALLY DISCOVERABLE

Much like the parable of the blind men who each feel a different part of an elephant and argue about what an 'elephant' therefore must be, different teams' understanding of your brand's content landscape may not just be limited, they may fundamentally fail to appreciate that what they are looking at is a siloed part of a greater whole.

Make your content - and what's in it - more easily discoverable across both marketing teams and martech systems. Having social media, newsletter, and website teams with their own distinct understanding of what content you have, and how well it works, makes it tremendously difficult to understand the efficacy of your content. And it makes it harder still to use the best performing content across more touchpoints.

Content must be surfaced out from channel or departmental based siloes and then richly tagged so it can be deployed in the most effective way possible.

> **"Disorganized folder systems, multiple content repositories, and lackluster metadata thwart personalization efforts. Content production and management should have a strategic purpose beyond bonus material. "**
>
> **Key takewaway, Forrester report:** 'There's no personalization without content intelligence'

TEST, LEARN AND GROW

If you're ready to act on the best practices outlined here...

Begin with an agile approach - starting small but quickly gaining capabilities and growing the scope of your efforts.

Start with high impact placements such as on product pages, seeing quick wins in excess of the resources required to deliver them, and gathering results and data that will power further layers of your capability to drive sales from content.

Don't try 'running' with a complete, holistic project until you have proven you can 'walk' and are going in the right direction.

TAKE A SCALABLE APPROACH

Ultimately, the idea that content can drive revenue, as well as softer metrics such as engagement, is not a truly novel concept. Many brands have indeed realised that effective content increases buying decisions.

However, execution has been a different story.

Too often, successful implementations of this concept have been left as a one off project rather than a repeatable marketing capability, and that's because a scalable approach has not been found. In non-scalable approaches, for every step of the buying journey that is optimized, there is a need for more resources, both agency and in-house. The revenue is there, but the profit is not.

That was then. Now, with the rise of machine-learning and AI, platforms such as Knexus offer the ability to leverage content to drive sales at scale in a way that is fully automated and optimized.
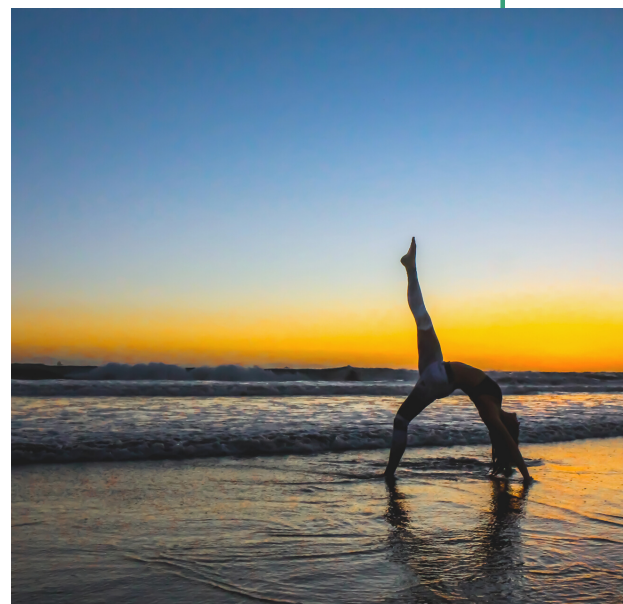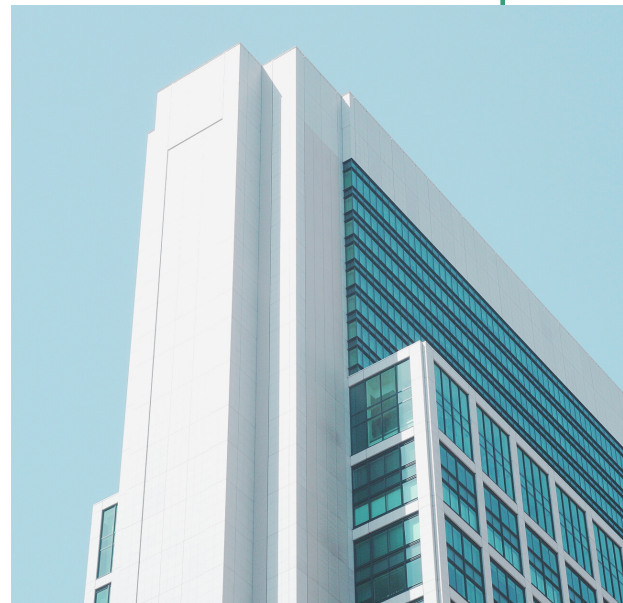
5 STEPS TO LEVERAGE CONTENT TO DRIVE SALES

Knexus' proven approach

UNLOCK

- Break content out of channel based silos so the most effective pieces can be used in more buyer journeys

PERSONALIZE

- Deliver the right content at the optimal point of each customer's buying journey

AUTOMATE

- Dynamically decide most relevant content in real-time and at scale

MONETIZE

- Match the most effective content to the right products for an attributable uplift in sales

ANALYZE

- Unite all sources of content to understand which are the most effective