



Content Management and Online Marketing

| Content at the Center of your Web strategy |

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
What Must Marketing Do?	3
Content matters	3
Engage or be left behind	4
Don't talk at your customers, talk to them	4
Learn from your customers	4
Putting Content at the Core of our Online Marketing and how a CMS can help	4
Content and brand consistency	5
Content Syndication and Distribution	5
Mobile computing	5
Search Engine Optimization (SEO)	5
Pay Per Click (PPC)	6
Campaign management	7
Web 2.0	7
Email Marketing	8
Conclusion	8

► Content at the Center of your Web strategy

ENGAGE OR BE LEFT BEHIND

This is an obvious one, but not necessarily an easy one. Competitors are a click away, loyalties are being measured in minutes spent on the site, and the days of having a bigger, faster, better widget don't mean nearly as much as it used to. Engaging with your audience and interacting how they like to consume content is the baseline for getting prospects to your site and keeping customers coming back to your site. We'll go into this in a little more detail later when we discuss Web 2.0.

DON'T TALK AT YOUR CUSTOMERS, TALK TO THEM

Although this message has been repeated over and over again, few companies have responded as well as they could. One of the simplest examples of such one-sidedness is the use of organization or hierarchy-oriented information architecture on the web-site rather than customer-oriented architecture. This has usually been because companies have traditionally been completely in control of information flow. Giving up that control is a hard task. But it can't be said enough that online marketing is a conversation and that conversation is content.

LEARN FROM YOUR CUSTOMERS

Since we want to have a conversation with our customers the flow of information is two-way; and we need to be ready to take what they are telling us and do something about it. Part of that learning comes from setting up more comprehensive analytics, and keeping a constant eye on user behavior. But most of it really comes from setting up conversations on sites rather than delivering sermons. Marketers need to constantly focus on finding out what their customers want to see on a Web site rather than what the company has available to dump on them. They need to give users the experience of a vibrant public space or forum than simply a sterile shop shelf. Of course this also means that we have to be open to criticism and willing to change.

Putting Content at the Core of our Online Marketing and how a CMS can help

As we've already said before, marketing is a conversation you have with your customers. Key to a good conversation is your ability to listen and respond efficiently, appropriately, and in a manner that enriches the consumer's experience of the conversation. So let's take these trends and apply them to some specific online marketing activities and look at how a CMS can help us solve some of these problems:

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CONTENT AND BRAND CONSISTENCY

One of the key points of effective communication is content consistency. As an organization's online presence grows and spreads, the primary challenge it faces is not only providing appealing and accessible content, but also ensuring that every bit of content delivered to a customer contributes a comprehensive, cohesive, and well-coordinated picture of the organization. This coordination of content across landing pages, microsites, internal and external Web sites is important not only because this helps draw the customer to the point of actual transaction, but also for its key role in maintaining brand consistency.

CONTENT SYNDICATION AND DISTRIBUTION

This is another obvious online marketing activity that centers around content and the ability to easily manage it.

Atom and RSS ('Really Simple Syndication') are two of the primary syndication standards. They allow your customers to subscribe to your content – and have it delivered to them. The CMS will enable you to set up a plan that makes constant, automatic updates of syndication files from your site data. Syndication also means that your content will now be available not just on your site, but on others as well – automatically increasing placements in search engine results. For example, if you have your content on other sites as articles, press releases or news items, the first page on a Google search may display only two links to your site; but it may have several links to your content on other sites. RSS feeds have proven effectiveness in boosting traffic, and search engines are paying increasing attention to RSS feeds. What's more, it's easier to find better placement in feed directories than from regular search engines. Managing the large and expanding number of links that arise with content distribution and syndication can quickly become a headache. This is where, again, the CMS can help you manage these links, allowing you to add, edit, delete or rename links, change link order, define new hierarchies, and more. A broken link is a sure way to lose a customer; the CMS can easily ensure a level of link integrity very hard to achieve with manual processes.

MOBILE COMPUTING

Consistency and availability have also become major parameters in design success as more and more users have begun to access information on the fly. The use of phones and laptops to search, browse and consume content on the Web is just another channel that people use to interact with your organization whenever and however they are connected. The CMS plays a crucial role in allowing organizations to design all of their Web sites for multi-channel and multi-device functionality, so you only need to create content once and then publish to many.

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION (SEO)

Being search-friendly is one of the primary criteria for a successful Web site, and good content is useless unless found. This may be one of the most under-utilized ways a CMS can help your organization get better visibility on the Web. Whether an organization relies on Pay-Per-Click or organic search (or most likely both), it pays to improve content hygiene and make a site more search engine-friendly. With organic search, a CMS permits the institution of a number of SEO best practices such as:

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- ▶ Enforcing W3C compliant code
- ▶ Creating 'crawlable', search engine-friendly site maps
- ▶ Ensuring search engine-friendly URLs
- ▶ Maintaining keyword densities in site content
- ▶ Eliminating broken links
- ▶ Reducing code clutter
- ▶ Creating effective title tags and metadata tags
- ▶ Avoiding spelling errors
- ▶ Prohibiting duplication of content

This is especially important in the context of Google's new push towards personalized and continually refined search results, where the search engine will monitor user behavior on a Web site and base future rankings on those usage patterns.

PAY PER CLICK (PPC)

While all the same SEO criteria apply here as well, PPC campaigns also have the additional step of a call to action that that can leverage the CMS to increase online conversions.

Creating landing pages for specific ad groups and campaigns.

This not only helps to create a more relevant message based on your ad creative, but it also allows better tracking of your conversions.

Building forms to capture user information on your landing pages, microsites or Web site.

You can use the forms to convert whatever call to action you may want to have prospects or customers take: download a whitepaper, register for an event or request a product demonstration.

Workflow to your lead distribution process.

When someone does fill out a form, you can assign that information a workflow that may want to go through a review or approval process before it goes into your CRM or SFA system for distribution to the sales organization.



Landing Page Management

As a robust source of capturing and tracking leads, landing pages have become an increasingly important marketing tool. With the right CMS, you can:

- ▶ Easily create, publish and track landing pages
- ▶ Ensure content and brand consistency
- ▶ Create forms to capture user information
- ▶ Test which pages are performing best and promote them accordingly

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Lowering Cost-per-Click.

Even in the case of paid search and paid placements, content hygiene is one of the primary quality indicators that affect your bids. Well-designed, communicative sites, landing pages and microsites rank higher on search agents quality parameters, thus reducing the cost of paid search as well.

CAMPAIGN MANAGEMENT

The task of calling a customer's attention, getting him or her to an organization's Web site; to the organization's product catalogue and finally eliciting a purchase decision requires perfect coordination between all of the organization's touch points. This requires not only the obvious management of landing pages and microsites, but also attention to a variety of other channels such as email, analytics, CRM and lead management systems among others. A CMS acts as the hub between these systems managing the content from a single source and aiding in the rapid creation, updating and deployment of marketing messages through all such channels. Thus, the CMS provides a certain amount of centralized control that ensures that the organization's key message does not get garbled as it travels through the ranks.

WEB 2.0

This is a whitepaper unto itself (please see our whitepaper: Marketing Management in a Web 2.0 World, a collection of online marketing best practices) so we won't go into too much detail here. Web 2.0 goes back to the idea that the Web is now bi-directional. We are no longer just talking to our audience we can now listen to them, whether that with blogs, content rating, polls, social networks, RSS, and on and on and on. For your enterprise to keep up with so much user-generated content and find a voice online requires a number of changes to the way you deal with an audience steeped in Web 2.0:

- ▶ For starters, you must re-look at inefficient information architectures that have prevented users from finding what they need. The move should be towards a more dynamic structuring of content. An innovative content management product can come into its own here, supporting placeless assets with a rich tagging system and dynamic, query-based navigation.
- ▶ Another key feature of a good CMS solution is the ease in maintaining good URLs, which facilitates better access by social bookmarking sites such as Del.icio.us, StumbleUpon or Digg.
- ▶ Most important is whether a CMS solution has a flexible content data model and supports public participation in the publishing workflow. Even if your Web site does not allow public content creation but only user-generated content metadata, your CMS should be able to support these 'voting' or 'rating' systems.
- ▶ And finally, your CMS should allow you to maintain an open syndication strategy, so that the organization can achieve great reach through the use of formats such as RSS and Atom.

EMAIL MARKETING

While Web content management systems typically do not have email campaign management systems built into them, they are still instrumental in their success. With single-sourced, centrally managed content, it becomes easy to publish directly into an integrated email system.

The CMS will also allow content creators and marketers to create, manage and test the landing pages and microsites that may be part of the call to action in the email. With style sheets and templates, the CMS can also ensure that your marketing teams need not wait for designers or technical staff to help with this process – they can publish when the need arises and not worry about branding inconsistencies or design gaffes.

Conclusion

As user behavior and marketing techniques continuously evolve, companies could easily get left behind. However, with the growth of crucial technologies such as the CMS, adapting to new scenarios and challenges does not carry with it a large technological burden. It only remains to organizations to have a finger on the online pulse and move fluidly with the audience.

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