



The case for content marketing

Colin Kennedy reports on the strategic shift to content marketing and how businesses are already benefiting from it.

Red Bull may give you wings, but it's the international corporate giant's innovative use of content marketing, or brand journalism, that has launched the brand into the stratosphere of marketing success.

Red Bull Media House prints one of the most widely-read magazines in the world with a distribution of 4.8 million; offers Red Bull Mobile services; operates a TV station and produces documentaries, movies, music, apps and even games for all devices.

The strategy is called content marketing and their objective is simple: "To excite customers with outstanding quality content."

When Red Bull launched Media House in Europe in 2007, the content marketing wave was just beginning to build on the back of a global shift in the way buyers interact with companies – whether B2B or B2C.

Buyers in control

The invention of the Internet, the introduction of Google and more recently the surge in social media apps, handed regular people the power to research their decisions, source good quality information instantly and control the terms of engagement.

For example, Facebook gives

people the ability to engage with multiple 'friends' on a regular basis, at their own convenience, for time periods of their own choosing.

And now we're applying the same rules to how we shop.

The result is that most consumers now research their buying decisions beforehand. According to the 2011 New Zealand World Internet Project, 69 percent of respondents rated the Internet as an important source of information ahead of television, newspapers, radio and other people.

The rise in buyer power has been facilitated and influenced by a number of trends in the last decade, but there are three that stand out.

- **Infobesity.** Simply put, people are overwhelmed with the flow of information. Already by 2005, J. Walker Smith – president of consumer and marketing watcher Yankelovich – was telling USA Today that consumers were encountering from 3,500 to 5,000 marketing messages per day, vs. 500 to 2,000 in the 1970s.

- **Our faster pace of life.** A recent study undertaken in 32 countries by a team led by British psychologist Professor Richard Wiseman, found that walking speeds have increased

by an average of ten percent in the past ten years. "This simple measurement provides a significant insight into the physical and social health of a city."

- **Technology is changing the way we think.** Calling it the 'Age of the iBrain', Scientific American reports "The current explosion of digital technology is not only changing the way we live and communicate but is also rapidly and profoundly altering our brains." Ask most people when they last bothered to memorise a telephone number, and they won't be able to tell you, because the need to memorise information is being made redundant by mobile technology.

The result of this information overload, time poverty and the evolution of digital technology is that buyers don't want to be hassled with interruptive marketing. They want speed and convenience and now they have the power to get what they want.

The B2B Content Marketing: 2012 Benchmarks, Budgets & Trends report (published by the Content Marketing Institute and MarketingProfs) found that 41 percent of people engage with a sales rep only after initial research, and 24 percent only after they've shortlisted their preferred vendors.

