

Frolic in the Snow

with those 'in the know'

10 ESSENTIAL POSTS FROM LINKEDIN MARKETING INFLUENCERS



ANN HANDLEY



JOE PULIZZI



BRIAN SOLIS



DAVE KERPEN



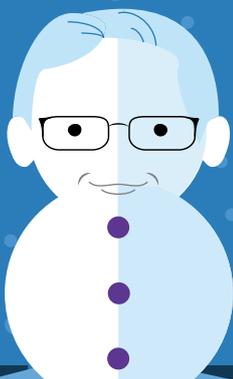
JONAH BERGER



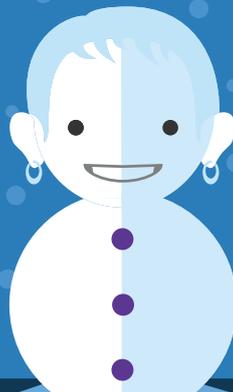
CHARLENE LI



RYAN HOLMES



DAVID EDELMAN



LINDA COLES



DHARMESH SHAH



'Tis the holiday season in Marketing Land, where snow-covered content is crafted and planned.

As marketers bundle and prepare for next year, thought leaders share their wisdom and cheer.

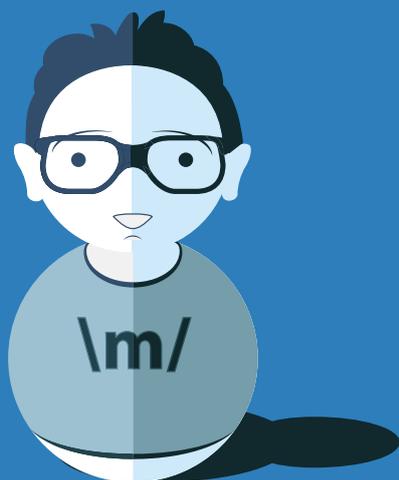
So gather ye round for a story (or ten) and enjoy these glad tidings from your friends at LinkedIn.



.....

As 2013 comes to a close, we look back at our 10 favorite Influencer Marketing posts of the year. This timeless collection represents a mere sampling of the thousands of articles shared by our LinkedIn Influencers.

Enjoy it on your tablet, mobile phone or laptop while roasting chestnuts on an open fire. As an added bonus, snuggle up and check out the final pages to learn how you, as a marketer, can best utilize the Influencer channels for inspiration, education, and content curation.



*Happy Holidays from LinkedIn
Marketing Solutions!*

Jason Miller
Senior Content Marketing Manager,
Marketing Solutions



The Biggest Marketing Lesson from Chipotle's 'Scarecrow' Video (and It's Not to 'Start with a Billion Dollars')

by Ann Handley

Last week, the fast-food company Chipotle released a new marketing program, “The Scarecrow,” which depicts a kind of creepy, dystopian world that makes a heart-wrenching statement about the sorry state of industrial food production.

In less than a week after its release on Wednesday, 9/11, the video had attracted 3.1 million views on YouTube, almost 20,000 likes, and more than 4,000 comments. It was picked up by countless media sources (Slate, the Christian Science Monitor, NPR).

If it's not the most poignant moment I've ever seen in marketing, I don't know what is. In other words: If it doesn't move you, you are possibly made of stone.

If you haven't seen it yet (or even if you have—it's worth watching again and again and again...), check it out: Chipotle's effort isn't just a viral video: It is a content marketing play to get people involved in the Chipotle story on a gargantuan scale.

I speak a lot to audiences worldwide about social media, content and marketing. And when I talk about things like Chipotle's truly inspired effort or (in another bit of well-publicized content marketing inspiration) when Felix Baumgartner dove from practically the edge of space while 8 million people watched Red Bull's YouTube live stream, I can read the faces of some skeptics in the audience.

They project something like this: Good for Chipotle, which hired Fiona Apple (!) to sing the music track and tapped Oscar-winning Moonbot Studios and CAA Marketing to gorgeously produce its film.

And bully for Red Bull, a multimillion-dollar company with its own content arm and years of production experience.

“But what the heck can my [usually smaller and less well-endowed] business possibly learn from such sophisticated programs? Plenty, actually.”

The truth is that it doesn't take a pile of cash to be a great content marketer.

I sometimes joke that a company's first order of business to become a strong content marketer is to “find a billion dollars,” but I don't really believe that, of course. The truth is that it doesn't take a pile of cash to be a great content marketer.

Chipotle and other big brands with strong content chops (like Red Bull, Coca-Cola, Google and Nike) might have ambitious programs and big budgets to fuel them. But even the smallest brands with the most modest resources can steal one big thing (or two) from them:

Tell your bigger story.

I wish I could write this in 40-thousand-point type. It's that important!

Here's a paradox about content marketing: Your story is not about you; it's what you do for others.

Chipotle might be a fast-food company, but its story isn't about how you can get a cheap but good Mexican lunch on the fly. Instead, it's about what it stands for: Good food that's locally and responsibly sourced. You can see that key bigger message incorporated in the animation: Cultivate a better world.

The “better world” isn't corporate-focused, it's relentlessly customer-focused. It's about a better world for our children, for the chicken and cows, and for us all, in part through linking the content (both literally and figuratively) to the restaurant chain's Cultivate Foundation, which has contributed more than \$2 million thus far to help fund initiatives that support sustainable agriculture and family farming.

In other words, Chipotle's animation might be marketing. But it feels more important than marketing.

Similarly, Nike's “Find Your Greatness” content theme isn't about shoes or gear; it's about motivating and inspiring the athlete in all of us, even if we are more Eeyore than Seabiscuit.

You, too, can identify your bigger story, with or without a social cause overlay. Ask yourself: How does your product or service live in the world? How does it help people?

Shoulder their burdens? Ease their pain? Your story is always about the people who use the thing you sell, not about the thing itself. Cast your customer as the hero—not you or your product.

Tell that bigger story relentlessly and unwaveringly: It should be the steel-infused backbone of whatever content or social media presence you ultimately create. Make sure every person creating content on your behalf is looking through your story lens, metaphorically speaking: Is this telling our bigger story? Is this content steeped in our larger mission?

Incidentally, focusing on your bigger story also helps you strongly communicate what makes you truly unique. (B-school types might call this, depending on the situation, your “value proposition,” “positioning,” or “unique selling proposition.”)

And, of course, clearly communicating what makes you unique helps position you for long-term success.

How does this play out in a smaller company? The Chicago law firm Levenfeld Pearlstein uniquely involved its employees to tell its bigger story—and so differentiate itself as a very human and approachable brand.

“But here’s the interesting part: The firm interviewed its attorneys about unconventional topics, filming their answers to questions like, What did you want to be when you were little? And, If you could time-travel, where would you go? Or, What is your most prized possession?”

The firm realized via Google Analytics that the attorney profile pages were the most visited on its site. (That makes sense, right? If you want to hire an attorney, you want to know the skinny on who it is you are hiring!)

So the firm created a series of partner videos. But here’s the interesting part: The firm interviewed its attorneys about unconventional topics, filming their answers to questions like, What did you want to be when you were little? And, If you could time-travel, where would you go? Or, What is your most prized possession? That’s pretty amazing for a professional services firm, and I love that the videos (and so the firm) make it clear who they are, and who they aren’t. Here’s the firm’s Aaron Kase telling a story about his rule-following childhood: The bigger story isn’t about Aaron, of course. It’s this: You won’t find corporate stuffed shirts here. You’ll find real

people who are smart and who value great relationships. So the headline on this piece promises just one thing. But really, I can't not mention one more small but important thing.

1 and a half:

Reimagine your content. The Chipotle video is not a one-off animation. It's actually part of a larger story being reimaged in different formats, across different platforms and channels.

Technically, the video is not a promotion for the fast food chain's restaurants. It's actually a promotion for an arcade-style iOS game that's available for free in the app store, also developed with Moonbot.

I downloaded the game, which challenges players to help the Scarecrow "foil the evil plans of Crow Foods and break the crows' monopoly on food production and supply in the city of Plenty." And if you rock the game, you get a coupon for a free burrito at Chipotle.

The bigger point is this: Chipotle does a great job reimaging the story in various ways, to reach various audiences.

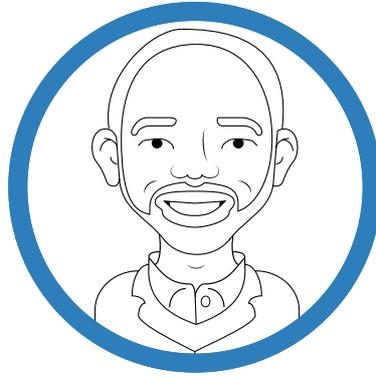
If startups or smaller brands can steal one overarching idea from big successes like Chipotle's, it's this: The best content marketers approach their content not as a task or tactic or channel—not as a blog to put up or a Twitter feed to broadcast messages on, or a Facebook page to collect Likes.

They don't approach their content as a requirement with the same heavy-handedness that an orphanage doles out gruel. Rather, they see it as a strategic opportunity—a very rich opportunity—to engage audiences in new and exciting ways that bring new and exciting results. They see the big picture.

You have an unprecedented opportunity to speak directly to and with a larger group of customers and prospects than ever before, in the history of history. Publishing is a privilege, as my friend Tom Fishburne of the Marketoonist.com says, so don't abuse or squander it. Rather: Embrace that mindset, and own it!

Ann Handley is the Chief Content Officer of MarketingProfs and the co-author of the best-selling book on content marketing, "Content Rules: How to Create Killer Blogs, Podcasts, Videos, Ebooks, Webinars (and More) That Engage Customers and Ignite Your Business."

[+ Follow Ann Handley](#) [View Original Post](#)



Why Most Branded Content Is Just Awful

by Joe Pulizzi

Around the world — in North America, the UK, Asia Pacific — approximately nine in 10 organizations produce content like media companies do to attract and retain customers. That's correct: Everybody's doing it.

But that doesn't mean companies are doing it well. Far from it.

Let's be honest. The majority of content produced by brands through blog posts, newsletters, social media posts, print magazines and webinars is flat out awful. In many cases, the content is self-serving, not useful and, maybe the worst, pointless. Even when you ask marketers themselves, just one in three believe that the content they develop is effective.

“So you'd think that a 100-year-old industry would be mature, but that is far from the truth.”

Why is branded content so bad?

Content marketing, as an industry, is hot but by far from new. For example, John Deere started their custom magazine, *The Furrow*, back in 1895 to solve the specific problems of farmers (and is still produced today). Many call this the formal beginning of the content marketing industry, but brands have been telling stories to acquire and retain customers since there was such a thing as a company.

So you'd think that a 100-year-old industry would be mature, but that is far from the truth. In actuality, if content marketing were a baseball game, we'd just be getting out of the dugout for the first inning.

Even though the art and science of content marketing has been around a long time, developing useful content to create a behavioral change in customers (as opposed to traditional marketing and advertising) is unnatural to most brands. The “storytelling

muscle” in organizations has atrophied from lack of use over the years as we basked in the glory of mass media.

“Just one in three believe that the content they develop is effective.”

Why do we continue to see lackluster, even truly bad content coming from brands today? Here are the top three reasons.

There Is No Strategy

We just finished up our fourth annual content marketing research to over 2,000 brands from around the world. While I can’t get into the specifics (yet), I can tell you that the vast majority of brands do not have a documented content strategy.

“I can tell you that the vast majority of brands do not have a documented content strategy.”

Yes, you heard that correctly. While almost all brands are doing content marketing, very few have an actual strategy. How can brands develop valuable, compelling and consistent content for their customers and prospects without knowing where the boat is heading? It’s impossible.

Challenges such as lack of content, lack of resources and lack of budget will never be solved unless you have some kind of a formalized strategy based on marketing objectives, an awareness of the informational needs of the audience, and at least a hypothesis of how you are going to measure the content marketing program.

There Is No Focus

Most brand marketers believe that going wide with content is the answer. Brands want to create and distribute content in and around all the types of products and services they offer. This strategy could not be more wrong.

“Don’t try to “boil the ocean” with your content.”

To go big with content marketing, you have to go small. Don't try to "boil the ocean" with your content. Instead of one all-encompassing content strategy, a more likely scenario is creating many small, targeted content strategies that focus specifically on the pain points and informational needs of customers and prospects. Get laser focused and work to become the go-to resource in one or a number of smaller content niches.

So start small to go big with content marketing.

There Is No Accountability

Even though I'd love to see every company hire a Chief Content Officer in the organization, let's be realistic. All you need at this point is someone accountable for the company's brand story. As Kathy Button-Bell, CMO of Emerson, so eloquently states: "If there is no accountability over something in the organization, it's not important and doesn't get measured."

Whether it's the director of marketing, VP of public relations or the social media manager, someone needs to be accountable. So no matter where your company is in the life cycle of content marketing maturity, make sure someone in your organization has ultimate responsibility.

Joe Pulizzi is founder of the Content Marketing Institute, which runs the industry's largest content marketing event, Content Marketing World. He is also overly passionate about the color orange. His third book, "Epic Content Marketing," is now available for pre-order.

[+ Follow Joe Pulizzi](#) [View Original Post](#)



The 7 Success Factors of Social Business Strategy

by Brian Solis

Social media has a problem and it needs to be addressed now.

The truth is that a majority of social media strategies employed by some of the best brands out there aren't linking activity to business goals and results. This practice is creating a divide within companies where social media is undervalued and largely misunderstood as a viable and formidable business tool or solution.

As a result, resources, budgets, and the ability to scale social media across the organization is incredibly hindered. More importantly, without considering business goals and priorities, strategists with the best intentions around social media may wind up creating dissonance among decision makers, making it more difficult to make the case for social in the long term.

In a comprehensive social business research study with Charlene Li, my colleague at Altimeter Group, we uncovered some pretty surprising realities about the state of social media strategy within enterprise organizations...

- Only 34% of businesses feel that their social strategy is connected to business outcomes.
- Just 28% of companies we studied feel that they have a holistic approach to social media, where lines of business and business functions work together under a common vision.
- A mere 12% are confident they have a plan that looks beyond the next year.
- Only half said that top executives were “informed, engaged and aligned with their companies’ social strategy.”

While our research results were initially distressing, we aimed to outline a path to help strategists better understand how to not only align social strategy with business objectives but also how to transform social media into a full-scale social business initiative that evolved along Six Stages of Transformation. Charlene and I concentrated our research on the common traits of B2B and B2C companies that successfully overcame common trials and tribulations to effectively become fully “converged” social businesses where social was now a way of business.

Charlene and I proudly announce that our findings are now available in the newly released ebook *7 Success Factors of Social Business Strategy*. In 100 pages, we help you learn how to align social media strategies with business objectives to deliver real results and ROI. Additionally, you’ll learn through best practices and a detailed checklist how to define an effective social strategy, create alignment across the organization, and use that strategy to support and measure overall business success.

What are the 7 Success Factors?

There’s a difference between a social media and social business strategy. Social media are the channels where information and people are connected via two-way platforms. Social media strategy defines programs specific to networks and the corresponding activity within and around each. Altimeter’s definition of a successful Social Business Strategy (SBS) is one that aligns with the strategic business goals and has alignment and support throughout the organization.

You don’t need to get the book to learn what the most advanced companies learned to prioritize. Following are the 7 aspects each shared to successfully champion and scale social media through the organization and earn executive support along the way...

One: Define the overall business goals.

Explore how social media strategies create direct or ancillary impact on business objectives. What are you trying to accomplish and how does it communicate value to those who don’t understand social media.

Two: Establish the long-term vision.

Articulate a vision for becoming a social business and the value that will be realized internally among stakeholders and externally to customers (and shareholders).

Three: Ensure executive support.

Social media often exists in its own marketing silo. At some point, it must expand to empower the rest of the business. To scale takes the support of key executives and their interests lie in business value and priorities.

Four: Define the strategy roadmap and identify initiatives.

Once you have your vision and you're in alignment on business goals, you need a plan that helps you bring everything to life. A strategic social business roadmap looks out three years and aligns business goals with social media initiatives across the organization.

Five: Establish governance and guidelines.

Who will take responsibility for social strategy and lead the development of an infrastructure to support it? You'll need help. Form a 'hub' or CoE to prioritize initiatives, tackle guidelines and processes, and assign roles and responsibilities.

Six: Secure staff, resources, and funding.

Determine where resources are best applied now and over the next three years. Think scale among agencies but also internally to continually take your strategy and company to the next level. Train staff on vision, purpose, business value creation, and metrics/reporting to ensure a uniform approach as you grow.

Seven: Invest in technology platforms that support the greater vision and objectives.

Ignore shiny object syndrome. Resist significant investments until you better understand how social technology enables or optimizes your strategic roadmap.

It's time for businesses to get serious about social and that starts by taking social, its promise and its ability to impact business outcomes and customer experiences, seriously.

Brian Solis is a Principal Analyst at Altimeter Group. He is an award-winning author, prominent blogger, and keynote speaker. His book credits include: [What's the Future] of Business? (WTF), The End of Business as Usual and Engage!

[+ Follow Brian Solis](#) [View Original Post](#)



7 Simple Rules for Amazing Content Marketing

by Dave Kerpen

I just keynoted LinkedIn's Brand Connect Asia-Pacific '13 conference in beautiful Singapore, so I figured what better place to share my presentation from a LinkedIn conference than, well, LinkedIn! So here are the 7 simple rules I just shared about how to do amazing content marketing across social media, and why it pays to be likeable:

One: Be consistent.

When we launched our first blog, Buzz Marketing Daily, six years ago, early employees complained, "But Dave, this means we'll have to post daily."

"Exactly!" I replied. We did post daily to our blog, and within a year we had become one of the most read blogs in marketing and advertising in the world. The days of static websites are long gone. Even if you have good content today, you've got to consistently "feed the beast," adding and distributing new content on a monthly, weekly or even daily basis. Every brand is a publisher today.

Two: Be useful.

You can be consistent but if your content isn't useful or valuable, then it's a waste. How can you help your customers? Are you there to educate them or to entertain them, or both?

We've shared so much useful content over the years, that twice, people have walked up to be at conferences and said, "Dave, I just want to thank you for all of your useful content. I've taken it all and started my own social media agency!"

Huh? Not only are we helping competitors, but we're actually inspiring new ones? But the reality is, even for the competitors we've helped with our useful content, we've gotten thousands of inbound leads from companies who know, like and trust us because of that content.

I once even got a phone call from a CMO of a large company in the US who said, “We have to do a RFP, but I’ve been reading your blog for a year now, and I know we’re going to hire you. I have \$250,000 for our first project.”

Three: Be authentic.

Authenticity breeds trust, and trust breeds business. If you can share authentic, even vulnerable content, it will resonate with people. Your CEO should lead the way when it comes to content marketing and social media, and the more employees you have sharing their authentic stories on behalf of your organization, the better.

[Here is an article I wrote](#) which includes some very authentic, vulnerable statements. This could have been risky, but it ended up resonating with people and didn’t result in any lost clients.

Four: Tie into your customer’s emotions.

It’s always been a core concept of marketing and advertising to tap into what resonates emotionally with your audience, but now, more than ever, with so much online content competition, if you can create an emotional connection with your customers, you’ll be one step ahead of your competitors.

Take a look at this [online video](#) from Malaysian rice company BERNAS that does an amazing job connecting emotionally. (You may need to grab your tissues.)

Five: Be where your audience is.

You can have all the great content in the world, but if you don’t share it in the right places, with the right people, it won’t matter. If you’re a retailer targeting urban men, you should be on Foursquare. A consumer product? Facebook. A B2B company? LinkedIn. You don’t have the resources to create and share content across every social network, so pick and choose based on where your audience is.

And if you’re not sure, just ask your customers!

Six: Advertise, better.

You don’t have to spend a lot of money on advertising to be a great content marketer. But spending a little money to help reach the right people sure does help. Use Sponsored Updates on LinkedIn, Sponsored Posts on Facebook, and Promoted Tweets to get your best content seen by more people.

Use the amazing targeting features on social networks to have your content reach the right people with your advertising. You know what’s cooler than reaching 1 billion people on Facebook? Reaching the right 1,000, 100 or 10.

Seven: Tell, don't sell.

Nobody wants to be sold to but everyone loves a good story. Use storytelling to create content that people actually want to share.

Ideas for “your story”?

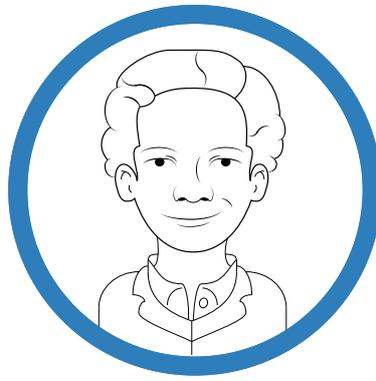
- Your humble beginnings
- Customers who have overcome obstacles
- Employee challenges
- Inside the lives of leadership
- Community and charity partnerships

Check out our [Likeable Story](#) if you haven't seen it yet.

These seven simple rules will help you create and distribute amazing content marketing across social media, to build better relationships with your customers, prospects and employees, and to grow your business - the right way.

Dave Kerpen is a Lady Gaga fan and the founder and CEO of Likeable Local, the cofounder and Chairman of Likeable Media, and the New York Times bestselling author of “Likeable Social Media”, “Likeable Business” and “Likeable Leadership.”

[+ Follow Dave Kerpen](#) [View Original Post](#)



Viral's Secret Formula

by Jonah Berger

Viral has become marketing's Holy Grail. From the Harlem Shake to the Rutgers basketball coach abusing his players, hardly a week goes by without some video or news story going viral. And word of mouth and virality have a huge impact on businesses, large and small. Blender company Blendtec's sales shot up more than 700% a few years ago after videos of the CEO blending things like iPhones spread like wildfire. But what makes something go viral?

“Want to know why things go viral? Why some products get more word of mouth? Let me tell you a secret. It's not luck.”

If you ask most social media “gurus,” they'll tell you it's all about getting lucky. Viral isn't a strategy, it's like buying a lottery ticket. Or they'll talk about cats. Lots of people share videos of funny kitties, so cats must be the reason things go viral.

All these theories are great, except, well, they're not really backed up by anything. No data. No analytics. Just old fashioned guesses based on looking at a couple particularly noteworthy successes. It's like the idea that the Earth was flat. It seemed right until someone actually looked deeper and showed, well...it wasn't.

Virality isn't luck. It's not magic. And it's not random. There's a science behind why people talk and share. A recipe. A formula, even.

My colleagues and I have analyzed thousands of news articles and hundreds of brands, all to understand why some make the most emailed list or get more word of mouth. Again and again we found the same principles at work. Six key drivers that shape what people talk about and share. Those six principles are the basis of my new book, *Contagious: Why Things Catch On*, and the first principle is Social Currency.

New York City is a tough place to open a bar. Competition is fierce and it's hard to cut through the clutter. There are dozens of options around every corner.

But a few years ago Brian Shebairo launched a place that's been packed since the day it opened. In fact, it's one of the most sought after drink reservations in the city. Bookings are only available day-of and people frantically hit redial again and again hoping to snag a spot. Yet he's never advertised the bar. Never spent a dollar on marketing.

“How did Shebairo do it? He hid his bar inside a hot dog restaurant.”

Walk into Crif Dogs in the East Village, and you'll find the most amazing hot dog menu you've ever seen. A Tsunami dog with pineapple and green onions, a Chihuahua dog with avocado and sour cream, and a Good Morning dog wrapped in bacon, smothered with cheese, and topped with a fried egg.

In one corner, off to the side, is an old-school phone booth. One of those rectangular numbers that Clark Kent used to morph into Superman. Walk inside and you'll see a rotary dial phone on the wall. Pick up the phone, and just for fun, dial the number 1. Someone will pick-up the other line and ask you if you have a reservation. And if you do, the back of the phone booth will open and you'll be let into a secret bar called, of all things, Please Don't Tell.

Has Please Don't Tell violated traditional “laws of marketing?” Sure. There is no sign on the street and no mention of it in the hot dog place. In fact, they've worked hard to make themselves a secret.

But there's a funny thing about secrets. Think about the last time someone told you a secret. Told you not to tell another soul. What's the first thing you did with that information?

You probably told someone else.

And the reason is something called Social Currency. People talk about things that make them look good. Sharp and in-the-know. Smart and funny rather than behind the times. If people go to a place like Please Don't Tell, or even if they just hear about it, they tell others because it gives them status.

Social Currency isn't just about hidden bars. It's why people brag about their thousands of Twitter followers or their kids' SAT scores. Why golfers boast about their handicaps and frequent fliers tell others when they get upgraded. McDonald's used

social currency to help the McRib sandwich take-off and Rue La La used it to turn a struggling website into a \$500M business.

Want to generate word of mouth? Get people talking about you? One way is to give them a way to look good. Make people feel special, or like insiders, and they'll tell others—and spread word of mouth about you along the way.

Along with five other key principles (STEPPS: Social Currency, Triggers, Emotion, Public, Practical Value, and Stories), Social Currency is a sure fire way to generate buzz. Will following these six principles guarantee that 10 million people spread your message? No. But it will increase the number of people who pass it on. Encourage people to tell two friends instead of just one. It's like a batting average in baseball. No one hits a home run every time, but by understanding the science of hitting you can boost your average.

“The next time someone tells you that going viral is about luck, politely tell them that there is a better way. Science. Word of mouth isn't random and it's not magic. By understanding why people talk and share, we can craft contagious content. And use it to get our own products and ideas to catch on.”

Jonah Berger is an Associate Professor of Marketing at the Wharton School. Want to learn more about why things go viral? Check out his New York Times and Wall Street Journal Bestseller “Contagious: Why Things Catch On.”

[+ Follow Jonah Berger](#) [View Original Post](#)



What Inspires Me: Making An Impact

by Charlene Li

As a book author, analyst, and entrepreneur, I'm frequently asked where I get the ideas for writing and research, and also how I stay focused and in balance while running a firm. What inspires and keeps me motivated is that I love to have an impact, and it's a great reward to see a connection between the work that I do.

For example, five years after writing *Groundswell*, people regularly approach me to say that the book had a huge impact on them. Some were inspired to make a change in their career while others shifted their organization's strategy. Being able to connect with people, either in person or just through comments or @replies on Twitter is what sustains and inspires me.

And I need the inspiration because I find writing to be a painful process. An author friend of mine once described the process of writing a book as picking up a keyboard, bashing it against your head until blood pours out on the table. You stare at the blood until words form and you type those words into the computer. That pretty much describes the experience of writing for me.

I pour my heart and soul into it and am drained by it. I love the craft of writing, but the process to deepen and make that writing meaningful for my audience takes so much energy that I find it hard to pull away from the hubbub of every day work to find the mind-space to think and write.

And here's my confession — I'm a horrible procrastinator (even this post is late). Knowing how difficult writing will be, I tend to put it off for as long as possible. So how do I get motivated and inspired to do this? I've found that the following three things have helped me stay focused and motivated in the midst of every day chaos, and my hope is that they will help you find inspiration as well.

One: Tackle really audacious topics.

I need to connect emotionally with the problems and pain points that are plaguing people and organizations, and focus on helping them create pragmatic solutions. That's why almost all of

my writing has action points, recommendations, and actionable steps. This is the Maximizer in me — if I'm to spend the time and energy on something, I'm going to make the most of it. For example, I'm currently conducting research on how large organizations create disruptive strategies — how does a large, slow-moving company become more adaptive, dynamic, resilient, and in the end, be disruptive if everything in their corporate DNA is to do exactly the opposite? I'm not sure what the answer is (that's why it's called research) but if I can get closer to the answer, the impact will be enormous. To find your motivation, take on the really tough projects and questions, the ones that seem nearly impossible to solve, and that have the risk of failure. Being safe isn't very motivating, but being audacious can be inspiring.

Two: Coordinate and protect your calendar.

At Altimeter, analysts all have a common problem — we're pulled in so many directions between clients, business development, and briefings that we don't have time to write. When we each individually reserved writing time on our calendars, we'd inevitably be scheduled into meetings with each other or client teams. The solution: We declared two days a week to be meeting-free for all analysts. We found that unless we took research and writing seriously as a firm, investing and protecting that time, we'd never get it done. We try to put writing at the same level of importance as client time - we would never schedule over a client meeting and writing needed to have that same level of sanctity. I recently heard the CEO of Spanx, Sara Blakely, discuss her routine of setting aside time every day for what she calls "free thinking." So set aside time in your calendar to think and be inspired, and make it a priority — or you'll never get around to it.

Three: Become more mindful.

Having a great audacious topic, and a set writing time get me almost to the table. But I frequently find myself falling into the procrastination trap, avoiding and putting off things I don't want to do until the last possible moment. The one thing I've found to be helpful in this area is to practice mindfulness. This is less about meditation (although I do find it helpful occasionally) and more about being aware and present enough in the moment to recognize that I'm falling into the avoidance trap. I've had to learn to be more mindful of my emotions and behaviors, and then to have the discipline to focus on my goal and motivation of my writing having an impact. The biggest step to becoming more mindful is blocking out every day distractions long enough to find that original kernel of inspiration. Some people benefit from a visual reminder -- a picture next to your computer screen for example. At the start of my writing time, I set a special ring tone and alarm on my phone to remind me to get centered -- and I take a few moments, a few deep breaths, to focus on the impact my writing will have.

Charlene Li is the Founder and Managing Partner of Altimeter Group, and the author of the New York Times Bestseller "Open Leadership", and the co-author of "Groundswell: Winning In A World Transformed By Social Technologies."

[+ Follow Charlene Li](#) [View Original Post](#)



Social Media Capital of the Universe? It Might Surprise You

by Ryan Holmes

Brazil is a nation best known around the world for its soccer chops, lush rainforest, abundant coffee exports, and vibrant carnivals.

And soon, South America's most populous country may also be recognized for its social media savvy. 79 percent of Brazilian Internet users (some 78 million people) are now on social media, according to a [newly released report](#) from analysts eMarketer, fast approaching adoption rates in the U.S.

Brazil already counts 65 million Facebook users, second only to the U.S. It's the world's second-biggest user of Twitter (with 41.2 million tweeters and counting) and the largest market outside the U.S. for YouTube. Meanwhile, a range of homegrown and foreign networks - from Google-owned Orkut to Ask.fm - keep social media users logged in for 9.7 hours a month, according to a [2013 comScore report](#).

Plus, all signs indicate Brazil is just hitting its social stride. Average time spent on Facebook among Brazilians increased 208 percent last year, to 535 minutes per month. By comparison, global use declined by 2 percent during the same period.

With social media saturation looming in the U.S. and Europe, China's citizens stuck behind the Great Firewall (with no legal access to Twitter and Facebook) and India still in relatively early stages of the Internet revolution, Brazil suddenly seems poised to hold an unlikely distinction: social media capital of the universe.

Inherently social people

The numbers tell a compelling story. With 199 million people, Brazil is second in population only to the United States in the Americas. Over the last decade, the country's middle class has expanded dramatically, growing by 40 percent and now embracing more than half the population. Meanwhile, the government has

spearheaded a progressive push to extend Internet access across the country, with the result that nearly 100 million Brazilians are now online. It's estimated that up to 80 percent of the population will have Internet access by 2016.

And the lion's share of online time in Brazil - 36 percent - is spent on social media, according to [2013 comScore stats](#). Insiders chalk this up as much to deep-seated cultural factors as to access to new technologies. Facebook's vice president of Latin America, Alexandre Hohagen, notes that Brazilians are inherently social people. "It's common for someone to start talking to you in the elevator or in a restaurant just to start a conversation," he says in a recent Wall Street Journal interview. TV soap operas, known as telenovelas, and sports are discussed constantly. "I always say we have two Super Bowls per week in Brazil," explains Fabio Saad, online media director in Brazil for global ad agency DDB, in reference to the deafening weekly buzz around soccer matches and telenovelas.

Social media is also a uniquely democratic institution in Brazil. While the country has a notoriously deep divide between rich and poor, mobile phones give even underserved urban communities and remote rural areas access to social sites. Plus, potential for growth in this sector remains strong. Smartphone penetration is just 23.3 percent, and the country's four largest carriers launched 4G services only earlier this summer. Domestic production of the iPhone has recently ramped up, as well, dramatically bringing down the price of Apple's popular offering.

Social buyers and advertisers: The race is on

More enlightening - in particular for businesses serving the market - is how Brazilians are using social media to inform buying decisions. 77 percent of Brazilian social media users have a positive attitude toward shopping and buying on social networks, according to a [recent study by Brazilian media consultant eCRM123](#). Meanwhile, four-fifths of social networkers use social sites to research new products and are more inclined to trust recommendations from social media contacts than from other sources, according to Latin American market research firm OH! Panel.

Major consumer brands including L'Oreal, Coca-Cola, Nike and Brazilian bank Bradesco have lately launched aggressive Facebook campaigns to capitalize on social media's influence, amassing millions of followers in just months. Nonetheless, digital advertising remains in its infancy in Brazil, accounting for just 10.6 percent of the ad market, compared to 19.8 percent worldwide. (TV, by contrast gets 69.4 percent of Brazilian ad dollars.)

The race is already on to capitalize on an impending sea change in ad spend, notes Facebook's Latin America sales chief, Hohagen: "This is a big country, so there's a lot of opportunity to migrate revenue from one medium to another." Equally worthy

of note: Brazil is expected to boost overall ad spending by \$5.6 billion in the next three years, more than India, Russia or Indonesia.

Social media marketers have already shown unusual savvy in executing campaigns in Brazil. Last year, consumer goods giant Unilever ran an intensive two-day Facebook campaign for its shampoo Seda, timed to correspond with the finale of the hit telenovela Avenida Brasil (whose episodes attracted up to 50 percent of the total viewing public). In a country where nearly half of Facebook users check the site while also watching TV (the so-called “second screen” phenomenon), the ads drew record attention. Meanwhile, clothing retailer C&A recently pushed the envelope by introducing “Likeable” hangers for products in its stores. When shoppers pressed a button on the hangers, Likes would register automatically on corresponding Facebook posts for each item.

Having the right social media tools has also been critical to marketers’ success. In Brazil, users log onto not only the familiar North American networks but numerous alternatives, including Orkut (until recently, the country’s most popular social site), social gaming site Vostu and popular question-and-answer network Ask.fm. Marketers hoping to tap into the widest audience have turned to social media tools that integrate with these diverse networks and help streamline campaigns. Brazil is among the top markets for HootSuite (Disclosure: This is my company), the leading social media platform used by large enterprises to handle multiple accounts. Meanwhile, Facebook, Twitter and Google have all opened offices in Brazil, recognizing the importance of localizing their products and customer service efforts.

Of course, it also helps that all eyes will soon be on Brazil for two of the biggest media events on the planet. The 2014 FIFA World Cup and 2016 Olympic Summer Games will put an unprecedented spotlight on Brazil, with a predictably unprecedented uptick in ad spending on social media and other channels. Considering, too, that the majority of Facebook users in Brazil are still under 24, it would seem that social media usage - slowing elsewhere in the developed world - will continue to ride Brazil’s rising tide in the years ahead.

Ryan Holmes is the CEO of HootSuite. Thought leader, dog lover and serial entrepreneur, he has redefined the face of social media - bringing social networks out of the dorm room and into the boardroom.

[+ Follow Ryan Holmes](#) [View Original Post](#)



Creativity Is Hard Work

by David Edelman

People like to think of creativity as a bolt from the blue that suddenly opens up the heavens to a new insights or idea. While lots of great advances have come from these “Eureka!” moments, creativity in the marketing, and broader business, world is hard work. And with some discipline and hard work, a lot of people can tap into their own creativity.

I see this most often when businesses think about how to connect with customers. You can get lots of data and do great analysis to understand your customers’ decision journeys and identify real opportunities. But then you have to turn that insight into a practical, viable idea.

Here are some tips:

- *Get video*

When you’re actually doing your research, especially if you’re doing qualitative research, film some of the people whom you’re talking to. Get quotes. Have them talk about what’s important to them and what’s not important to them. Actually see where they’ve been frustrated. Tap into the emotion side. Often ideation has to connect with somebody at an emotional level, and often the data doesn’t bring that out, but videos do.

- *Think of a person*

Creating personas whom you’re actually going to be focusing on is incredibly valuable, because it gives you someone to talk about with a bit of richness behind it.

- *Look around*

If you look around – not just at competitors but companies and people in completely different areas – you’ll likely uncover 40 to 50 great ideas of other cool things that are happening in the digital space. Put them on boards around the room. These make great fodder to stimulate ideas.

- *Break your team up*

Create different groups, each focused on one of the particular personas. Step back and say, “Okay, given what we’re seeing now in terms of that decision journey, what are the things we’ve got to change?”

- *Whittle down the ideas*

As you start to create a broader list of ideas, you’re going to need to whittle those down. A very simple way of sorting them out is to create a two-dimensional matrix, one dimension being feasibility and the other impact.

- *Do additional legwork*

Many times as you start to evaluate these ideas, you’ll need to get some more numbers and understand the scale, or actually do some analysis to establish potential cost.

- *Get out of the office*

You’ve got to get into the environment where people are and observe them. This is a really important way to establish real empathy with your customers. It makes an enormous difference in terms of developing a commitment to solve their issues.

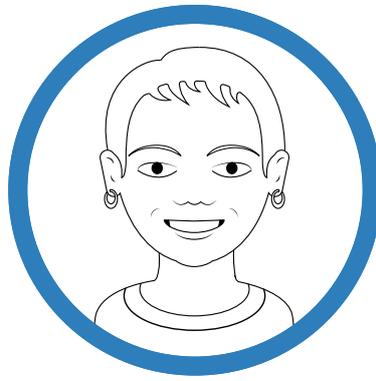
One day we were with a client team, a senior group of marketers, to figure out how mobile could change the in-store shopping experience. These people went out onto the mall floor to see what people were doing as they shopped. These executives saw how some of the shoppers were taking pictures of objects and sharing that picture with others to solicit the opinions of their friends and family. The marketers also saw people looking up prices and looking up more information. And then they also went into some of these stores to understand the customer experience, e.g. how good the signage was and the explanation of the products were, whether the people who were working in the store knew enough to be really helpful, where mobile could actually help. A few them even asked some of the shoppers questions about their experience.

This “empathy outing” was incredibly helpful to the executive team. Not only did it spur ideas, it also got them out and understanding exactly what being a customer meant along his or her decision journey.

It might sound strange to some people, but being methodical about creativity is a great way to be creative.

David Edelman is a Partner at McKinsey and a co-leader of their Digital Marketing Strategy group. He has helped CMOs and other executives across industries understand the implications of the evolving digital environment and implement the deep changes needed to enable digital strategies.

[+ Follow David Edelman](#) [View Original Post](#)



Listen BEFORE Your Customers Broadcast Their Voice

by Linda Coles

There are many ways to measure what your customers are saying about you. Particularly with channels such as Twitter and tools such as Google Alerts, it is very easy to eavesdrop or find out what has been said about a given search term, such as your brand.

But both of these track conversations that have already happened in the past, and so whilst they may give you a sense of what customers and prospects might think of your company it's only a snapshot, with certainly no real data behind it for you to work with.

Wouldn't it be great to find out what they are thinking before they broadcast online?

“How likely are you to recommend our company to a friend or colleague?”

Fellow Influencer Fred Reichheld is the original creator of Net Promoter Score (NPS), which basically enables you to get a very accurate reading about what your customers currently think of your product by asking only one very simple question. They are asked to grade on a scale of 1-10, with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest, “How likely are you to recommend our company to a friend or colleague”?

When the question has been asked either via email or text, the answers are all collated and a score is produced showing very clearly those that are not at all likely to recommend your company, called the Detractors, those are very likely to recommend your company, the Promoters, and those in the middle that are fairly neutral either way, the Passives.

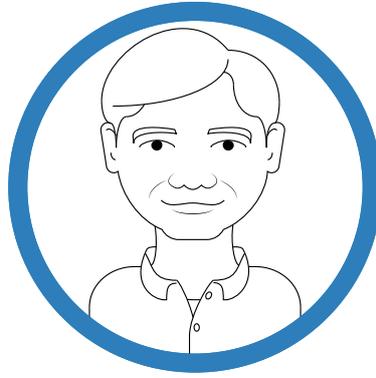
The passives are the dangerous ones, those that really don't care either way and could be swayed reasonably easily to take their business elsewhere, whilst the Promoters are exactly that. Promoters would walk over hot coals for you, are totally bought in to your company and have absolutely no qualms about recommending you, they are your cheerleaders. On the other side of the scale, are the detractors, those most likely to walk, they couldn't care less about your company and will probably leave, probably soon.

Imagine what knowing this information could do for your business, and the really cool thing is, you can also use this software to measure your team engagement too. How happy are your staff that are currently working for your company? Can those Detractors be saved before they leave, and do you even have any Promoters? Imagine how that information could impact on your staff retention and moral, seeing possible problems that might not have otherwise been visible.

Access to this type of information is easy, in fact you can get the software from Fred's company and another choice is [here](#) so if you really are wanting to know what your customers think about you, don't wait until the conversation has already taken place, find out what they are thinking right now before they get vocal. Then act upon it. Rinse and repeat in 6 months.

Linda Coles is the author of "Learn Marketing with Social Media in 7 Days" and a speaker, and trainer on building relationships. She lives in New Zealand on a fig orchard.

[+ Follow Linda Coles](#) [View Original Post](#)



Your Customers Are Not Ignorant, Selfish Control Freaks

by Dharmesh Shah

Imagine you're having some big, high falutin' meeting. Perhaps it's a board meeting. Or, if you don't have a board, perhaps it's a management team meeting. Or, if you don't have a team, perhaps it's just you talking to yourself at 3:00 a.m. in the morning. Whatever mechanism it is you have to talk about important issues and make decisions, imagine that meeting. Are you imagining it? Good.

Now, imagine that same meeting with one important change: *One of your smart, savvy, customers is at the table.* And, she has an actual voice. She's a peer. She makes arguments, some of which are wrong and misguided, just like you and the rest of your team. If the customer were there, I think you'd have better meetings.

“If the customer were here, what would she say? You don't actually have to do everything she says, but it's useful to at least factor in her point of view.”

Practically speaking, you probably can't actually put a customer in all your meetings. If that's the case, you should act as if she's there. Pretend like she's sitting in the room. In the past, I've actually designated an empty chair in the meeting as being where the customer is, and looking in that direction while asking “what does the customer have to say?” (yes, I'm weird). When you're trying to make an important decision, and you're sort of divided on the issue, ask yourself: “If the customer were here, what would she say? You don't actually have to do everything she says, but it's useful to at least factor in her point of view.”

At my company, HubSpot, we have a stuffed bear (we call her Molly) that we pretend is the customer. Molly has sit in on numerous management meetings and has

helped us make better decisions. She has helped us live better to our “Solve For The Customer” credo (for details, see the Culture Code slide deck). I’ve included a rare photo of Molly in a board room meeting -- the person on the right is Mike Volpe, our Chief Marketing Officer.

Now, you might argue that you’re already factoring in customers in all of your decision-making. And, I’m going to argue that you’re wrong. You’re making decisions all the time where the customer’s voice is either completely absent or too weak. Just think back on the last five debates you had, and the decisions you made. Perhaps it was a pricing decision. Or a funding decision. Or an office space decision. Did the customer really have a voice? Was it as loud as everyone else’s? Probably not.

You might then further argue that you have someone “representing” the customer (your head of customer support, perhaps). I’d argue that that’s different. Yes, your head of customer support is solving for your customers’ well-being, but that’s not the same thing. Imagine if you were running a hospital. You’d have operations, and finance and marketing and all sorts of other groups. In your big hospital meeting, you might think that the doctors represented the patient’s interest (because they are looking to solve the patient’s problem), but if you’ve ever been a patient, you know that’s not the same thing. Your hospital management meetings would be very different if there was a patient in the room. Your startup is no different. The decisions would be better if there was a customer in the room.

Finally, you might have the most insidious set of fears of all: First, that your customers are ignorant (they don’t understand industry trends or technology). Second, that they’re selfish (all they care about is getting the lowest price and extracting the most value from you). Third, that they’re control-freaks and just want to run your business. All of these are simply not true. Your customers are not ignorant, selfish, control-freaks. Of course, there’s a distribution curve at work here. You might rightfully argue that some of your customers manifest one or more of these attributes. But, that misses the point. I’m not asking you to visualize those customers at your meetings.

“Visualize the smart, savvy and benevolent customer that wants you to succeed and has no intention of running your company. You have some of those customers. If you don’t, stop what you’re doing and go get some.”

That kind of customer is exceptionally useful. They feel pain with your product that you're likely not going to feel. They can empathize with your other customers in a way that you can't. And, in the long term, even though they may not have as loud of a voice or be able to debate as passionately as you, they have a decent chance of being right. Imagine if you were keeping meeting minutes from these meetings and noted her side of the story and her "vote". If you looked back a year or two later, you might say something like "Hey, you know what, in that meeting, she was right. We would have been better off if we had just listened to her." Maybe you and your team are way more insightful than average, but I've said this to myself many times.

"So, the next time you have a big, high falutin' meeting and are attempting to make a big decision, try to give your customer a seat at the table. I think you might make a better decision."

Dharmesh Shah is Founder and CTO at HubSpot. He is an active member of the Boston area entrepreneurial community, an angel investor in over 40 startups, and a frequent speaker on the topic of startups and inbound marketing.

[+ Follow Dharmesh Shah](#) [View Original Post](#)

Get Insight and Inspiration from Influencers

In late 2012, we made it possible for any LinkedIn member to [follow an exclusive group of Influencers](#) on LinkedIn. From C-level executives and entrepreneurs to world leaders and philanthropists, these Influencers contribute unique business insights and spark thought-provoking discussions on a range of issues. Displayed via Pulse, the Influencers program is a source of original content from outside of the LinkedIn network. But more importantly, it's meant to inspire, inform and make you a better marketer.

While the Influencer program numbers around 300 Influencers (as of October 2013), we continue to add inspiring thought leaders to the program. And you can directly engage with any of these Influencers, either by “Liking” a post or jumping into a conversation about a post. Moreover, through threaded comments, you can reply to a post by an Influencer to start conversations and debates with others who are reading that post. You can mention other people to draw them into a discussion, and get notified when your comment has received a response.

Consider these examples. Bill Gates is an Influencer with over 625,000 followers. One of his posts garnered over 1,600,000 views, more than 10,000 thumbs up, and over 4,000 comments.

Or consider Joe Pulizzi, a speaker, entrepreneur, author, and founder of Content Marketing Institute with over 11,000 LinkedIn followers. One of his posts pulled in nearly 38,000 views and over 140 comments. It's easy to be part of such a rich discussion!

In addition to joining in rich conversations, you will see which Influencers and topics are driving the most interest – perhaps sparking an idea of your own for a post or content asset. Plus the ability for LinkedIn members to like and share Influencer content lets you quickly find out what the people in your network are reading and reacting to, helping you unearth new ideas. Want to broaden your horizons? Take advantage of discovery modules within LinkedIn to help you find more relevant content based on the people you're following and the posts you're reading.

The Numbers Speak for Themselves:

- The average Influencer post garners nearly 30,000 views.
- 49% of Influencer followers are director-level and above while 22% are entry-level professionals.



Marketing Solutions

About Us

LinkedIn members number more than 259 million professionals. That's over one-third of the 600 million professionals on the planet. This represents the largest group anywhere of influential, affluent and educated people.

Professional Publishing Platform

Our evolution into a professional publishing platform drives increased engagement on LinkedIn. Compared with other professional publishers, content on LinkedIn works differently. The rich data on our platform means we can deliver the most relevant content to our members.

Relationships Matter

With LinkedIn Marketing Solutions, brands build relationships with the world's professionals by using accurate targeting to deliver relevant content and communications.

As today's connected professionals seek out ideas and insights from the people and brands they trust, marketers use LinkedIn to target advertising and publish relevant content in a professional context. Brands extend reach through the social sharing that occurs naturally on LinkedIn, as well as by extending LinkedIn data to their sites and brand experiences through APIs.

For more information, please visit our [Marketing Solutions site](#).

