

LUXURY MEMO SPECIAL REPORTS

Content marketing in luxury – Luxury Memo special report

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Cover of Net-A-Porter's magazine. Image credit: Porter

By BRIELLE JAEKEL

The ubiquitous nature of social media and content platforms has created an overload of messaging. For luxury brands, this makes content marketing more important than ever.

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While consumers are overloaded with content and have shrinking attention spans, this gives luxury brands an opportunity to be creative with their communications. Content that pulls customers in through a message apart from the traditional advertising concept is a vital method of forming a bond.

"Brands have to differentiate themselves," said Dan Goldstein, president of [Page1 Solutions](#). "It's no longer enough to set up a Web site and optimize it for search, then expect users to flock to your company.

"Luxury consumers are discerning, and they need something extra to earn their business," he said. "Content plays a major role in defining the brand of your business.

"Content marketing is an ongoing strategy that amplifies your marketing message, providing consumers with opportunities to learn what products and services you provide, define your brand identity and show customers why they should buy from you. Consumers buy from brands they trust, and content is a cornerstone of building this trust."

Top 5 trends in content marketing

- Digital video
Consumption of mobile and digital video continues to grow, allowing brands to be their own creators.
- User-generated/influencer content
Brands are able to create a greater image of authenticity by tapping real consumers.
- Audio content
Podcasting and other forms of audio content have become almost as big as digital video.
- Branded magazines/blogs

Marketers tap their sector expertise for branded magazines.

- Native content

Brands that leverage native advertising with publishing partners engage consumers through storytelling.

Editorial branding

Brands across the spectrum are tapping into their owned media for organic content, leveraging platforms such as Instagram and their own blogs to share creative efforts that are different from a product push.

Many luxury brands have taken this opportunity to become more sophisticated with their editorial side online, despite a previously notorious image of holding off on digital marketing. One of the most popular forms of editorial content from a label today is a branded magazine or blog.

While the branded magazine was not born in digital, the growth of technology has allowed the concept to flourish.

For instance, *The Furrow*, published by farming manufacturer John Deere, is regarded as one of the earliest branded magazines, having been released for the first time in 1895. It did not take long for John Deere's magazine to become widely popular, and it is still in print today due to its ability to put content first before advertising products.

Since then, many marketing experts have learned the value in building a relationship with audiences by publishing content that entertains or informs, and in turn builds trust.

Net-A-Porter is currently one of the most well known producers of a branded magazine, using its retail expertise to provide readers with fashion advice and editorial content.

Porter launched in 2014 ([see story](#)) and spans both print and digital. But through the use of digital, Net-A-Porter has learned to simultaneously usher in sales with the editorial endeavor.



Porter's Winter 2018 issues. Image credit: Net-A-Porter

Most of the products featured in editorial as well as in ads are shoppable on Net-A-Porter's ecommerce platforms or available through other third parties. In its inaugural year, the magazine saw 90,000 product scans on its scannable product pages that link to ecommerce ([see story](#)).

"Luxury brands have traditionally held tight control over their brand, messaging and visual identity," said Bill Connolly, director of content at [Monotype](#). "Consumers in this space want to buy from aspirational brands with high

quality products and highly curated marketing content.

"Still, with social media becoming ubiquitous, and consumers seeking more authentic, transparent messaging, luxury brands are strategically ceding control of their marketing content, working with both influencers and regular customers to co-create experiences," he said. "They're also tapping into shoppable media, making it far easier for customers to go from a point of discovery to a point of purchase.

"As an increasing share of luxury purchases moves online, brands are using new forms of content influencer, UGC, etc. to engage and convert their audiences directly on platform."

Last year, *Porter* magazine announced it will now publish seven days a week, 365 days a year through a digital hub.

In February of 2018, *Porter* magazine began the new daily approach to fashion and lifestyle editorial coverage, in addition to its print and digital editions ([see story](#)).

While many fashion brands and retailers are known for their production of editorial content, they are not the only ones to dip into the branded magazine pool.

Sotheby's International Realty recently expanded into the world of publishing with the launch of a luxury magazine, *Reside*.

Reside includes features, interviews and editorial content focused on the world of luxury real estate and high-end homes. The magazine, created in partnership with Dow Jones Media Group, allows affiliate companies to create their own unique versions of the magazine specific to them ([see story](#)).

Automakers have also been known to cater to car aficionados through branded magazines, often focusing on print.

British automaker Bentley Motors recently revitalized its print magazine with new leadership and an eye on making the publication more appealing to prospective and existing clients.

The quarterly *Bentley* magazine is published around the world as a way of fostering a global Bentley community. Now, Bentley has brought in new leadership to create a magazine that can also be enjoyed by those who have not yet bought a Bentley, but may have plans to do so in the future ([see story](#)).



Bentley magazine. Image credit: Bentley Motors

Other luxury brands who have launched branded magazines include Four Seasons and Harley Davidson. Even direct-to-consumer companies and startups such as mattress manufacturer Casper and Airbnb have developed their own magazines.

The success of these magazines often relies on the content. Brands who publish content just for the sake of publishing content do not see as positive results.

But those that do can often see significant engagement.

Four Seasons' magazine, featured in the hotel chain's guest rooms, focuses on sharing insight into its top locations throughout the world. The magazine's latest media kit cites an average readership of 1.10 million per issue.

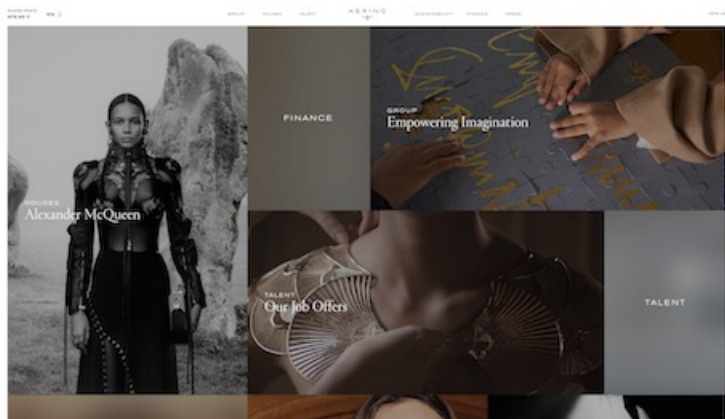
Editorial inspiration

While many brands have tapped into digital channels to complement or expand their print content marketing, others have looked to print formats for digital inspiration.

Many high-fashion labels and luxury brands across sectors have looked to a magazine format to set their ecommerce initiatives apart from those of mass marketers and retailers.

For instance, French luxury conglomerate Kering updated its Web site design to be more dynamic and editorial.

The new site makes it easier for visitors to view all of the group's news and initiatives. At the center of the redesign is the idea of "Empowering Imagination," as the company looks to communicate its forward-looking perspective ([see story](#)).



Kering's new Web site. Image courtesy of Kering

Many brands also develop digital blogs that act similarly to magazines.

Italian fashion label Dolce & Gabbana looked to inspire consumers through a millennial-centric editorial section of its online store.

Dolce & Gabbana's Stories features photo spreads of young models donning its designs for activities such as grocery shopping. Stories fits into Dolce & Gabbana's recent proactive appeal to up-and-coming luxury buyers, as it looks ahead at the future drivers of the business ([see story](#)).

While luxury digital initiatives reflect the experience of print magazines and offer an easier path to purchase, the growth of online media is actually making print more of a commodity or collectible.

Since digital content has become so ubiquitous, print has become more precious and has inspired these brands to create physical magazines in ways that are special to consumers.

"No matter what you're selling, the people you're targeting are spending a lot of time online, and that is also where they'll be looking for your products," said Todd Grossman, CEO of [Talkwalker](#), Americas. "A well-developed content strategy will allow you to reach a range of new potential customers, as well as to develop your relationship with existing fans."

Social reach

One of the most prolific elements to come out of digital's ascension is social media, which has allowed brands to

expand on owned media and hone their content marketing.

Luxury brands have learned to integrate social media into their strategies, since the visual capabilities and ability to tap into loyal audiences bodes well for these high-end marketers.

Digital video is proving to maintain its status as an important tool in modern marketing, with more than half of the brands designated as "geniuses" in Garter L2's Digital IQ scoring also ranked as the top performers on YouTube.

Garter L2's report has designated 57 of the 1,872 researched brands as digital geniuses, labeled as leaders in digital media, product innovation and organizational structure, with many exhibiting similar characteristics. In addition to prowess in mobile video, these leaders showed an ability to adapt to the changing media landscape and excel in new platforms ([see story](#)).

Mobile video usage is showing no signs of slowing down, and brands are best capitalizing on this by creating content that engages users without ads.

The number of films published daily from luxury brands on social media sites is almost immeasurable, and their engagement is exceptionally high.

Luxury brands are also seeking attention through content that inspires or breaks the mold.

German automaker Mercedes-Benz hoped to break gender stereotypes with a video for a toy car in partnership with iconic toymaker Mattel.

Known as the creator of Barbie, Mattel has been working to challenge gender roles and is now making a toy car to show girls they can grow up to be anything they want to be. The car is representative of an important moment in history for women, as it is a die-cast Matchbox replica of the Mercedes-Benz 220SE in which Ewy Rosqvist won the Argentinian Grand Prix ([see story](#)).

Mercedes' video with Mattel

Swiss watchmaker IWC Schaffhausen aimed to position itself as a pioneer in luxury marketing by tapping virtual reality and digital film.

Actor Bradley Cooper starred in a choose-your-own-adventure storyline that brought users into IWC's setting through VR. From the point of view of a motorcycle driver, viewers could control their own narrative ([see story](#)).

Other efforts have seen luxury marketers linking with media brands for journalistic-style content.

Colored-gemstone miner Gemfields teamed up with *National Geographic* to invite consumers behind-the-scenes of its work in Africa.

A sponsored content project highlighted Gemfields' conservation and community-based initiatives in Zambia and Mozambique. Gemfields' positioning revolves around its sustainable approach to mining, as it seeks to differentiate itself on values ([see story](#)).

Gemfields' film

These videos run the gambit in subject matter, style, formatting, genre and tone. These marketers have taken a back seat in promotion and are hoping to connect with consumers through a feeling instead of a hard sell.

But brands are not taking this strategy for just one-off campaigns. Many funnel the approach into continuing series that appear on owned media.

For instance, Italian fashion label Giorgio Armani continually shares a look at its own heritage using the perspectives of longtime collaborators and ambassadors in its own video series. Actors Cate Blanchett, Li Bingbing and Hu Ge are among those interviewed for the campaign, "What is Armani for You?" ([see story](#)).

Prada's Miu Miu examined war through a feminine lens in a recent edition of its Women's Tales series. The ongoing series from Miu Miu always focuses on a female theme, but the subjects and styles of the films change.

"Shako Mako," directed by Hailey Gates, tells the story of Laila, an aspiring actress who feels stuck as she plays a civilian role in a staged training program for U.S. troops. Through the story, the film explores themes as wide-ranging as Islamophobia and the theatrics of war, as well as the roles women play in both entertainment and real life ([see story](#)).

The series makes no mention of the Miu Miu brand but embodies what is important to the brand itself, intending to

connect it with consumers who share the same values.

French fashion house Chanel emphasized the longtime link between two different cultures with a recent installment of its heritage film series *Inside Chanel*, which follows the house founder's arrival in the United States.

"Chapter 25, Gabrielle Chanel Goes West" explores how the French label found success stateside. House founder Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel first came to America in the 1930s, and her career there spanned decades ([see story](#)).

The series takes deep-dives into Chanel's history to give followers a better sense of its heritage.

Inside Chanel

Many other luxury brands have followed in Chanel's footsteps with similar series, such as Dior Stories ([see story](#)).

This form of marketing has become so popular, with consumers showing a clear aversion to traditional promotions, that brands are even taking the content marketing approach to their ad campaigns. Product promotion in advertising has been pushed to the back seat in favor of broader messaging.

For instance, Miu Miu continued its emphasis on female empowerment in its spring campaign film that takes symbolism to a new level, turning an inherently masculine setting into a female-driven motif.

The label cut out the past, and male dominance along with it, as its female leads cut their hair to establish a new sense of self. The film turns a barbershop, an environment historically known for being a male hub, into a place of female reinvention.

However, its spring collection is never mentioned ([see story](#)).

In a similarly content-driven effort, De Beers Group's Forevermark encouraged individuals to perform and share acts of love, as the fine jeweler launched its first large-scale campaign since refreshing its digital strategy.

Forevermark's "Live and Love" campaign examined real-life relationships, even moving beyond romances to explore the bonds between families and friends. A social media component looked to further engage consumers by celebrating everyday moments ([see story](#)).

[View this post on Instagram](#)

The small things that we do everyday build forever, and we shouldn't just notice them, we should live them.
#LiveAndLove

A post shared by Forevermark (@forevermark) on May 16, 2019 at 9:51am PDT

Instagram post from Forevermark

"One major trend in content marketing is the development of visual and video content," Page1's Mr. Goldstein said. "Custom videos, eye-catching infographics, interactive quizzes and more compel users to engage with the content, rather than simply consuming it.

"With so many brands competing for attention in the luxury space, it behooves companies and marketers to invest in different types of content that compel consumers to educate themselves in fun, unique ways," he said. "Doing so makes them more likely to buy, as your business took the time to compel their attention and stand out from the crowd in the lead up to a purchase decision."

In the hands of consumers

While brands have leaned towards social media for their own content, they have also learned to tap followers for content. The concept allows for a greater reach with a large content pool while also creating a more authentic image.

For instance, Prada has hosted multiple editions of Prada Journal, a multimedia campaign that relies on user-generated content to make up its bulk.

Prada Journal asks fans to send in their own images, whether they are photographs or illustrations, along with text that tells a story. Earlier years of Prada Journal took a more literary bent, while 2016 saw the brand moving toward multimedia ([see story](#)).



An image from Prada Journal. Image credit: Prada

Beauty marketer Este Lauder is putting the focus on nighttime rituals with a campaign centered on evening skincare and makeup.

#TheNightIsYours features tips and techniques to achieve a glam going out look or a spa-style night in. Through a dedicated hub on its Web site and user-generated content, Este Lauder positions itself as the go-to for nighttime skin renewal ([see story](#)).

Italian fashion brand Tod's lent support to consumers who let their feet do the wandering in an adventurous series that blended influencer and user-generated content.

Dubbed #FollowMyRide, Tod's campaign touts its Gommino design. The series exemplifies free thinkers and

adventure seekers as their passion drives them throughout all different types of motion ([see story](#)).

Research shows that more than half of social media users find user-generated content to be more trustworthy and authentic than brand images.

According to a report from Olapic, 44 percent of social media users follow influencers, including the majority of U.S. respondents. More than half of users have directly mentioned or tagged brands on social media ([see story](#)).

Influencer partnerships are a step up from UGC and have become a force to be reckoned with, in luxury marketing and beyond.

In a content marketing move, French fashion label Louis Vuitton recently used a new form of influencer relationship to cater to a younger generation, as experiential leanings become more important to brands.

Model Karlie Kloss was the special guest at Louis Vuitton's runway show during Paris Fashion Week, alongside 17-year old YouTube influencer Emma Chamberlain. The label extended this relationship with the women through a series of content following the show, in the hopes of catering to millennials as well as Gen Z consumers ([see story](#)).

Louis Vuitton's video

Influencers have also been tapped to star in brand-produced content. For example, Italian fashion label Salvatore Ferragamo celebrated its new Gancini monogram in an extensive digital project that centered on a group of influencers.

Paul Andrew, creative director of women's collections, reimagined the Gancini, or "little hooks," based on the brand's eponymous founder's heritage. To mark the update, the label collaborated with influencers dressed in Gancini prints to poke fun at today's digital-centric culture ([see story](#)).

"Consumers today want to see experiences," said Cathy McPhillips, vice president of marketing content at [Marketing Institute](#), an Informa Tech Company. "They want to share experiences.

"But do you know what younger consumers want to share even more? Adventure," she said. "Seeing someone you like and trust doing something that excites you, where you could see yourself in their shoes, puts you one step closer to purchase.

"Brands are able to collect, share, blog, vlog or simply regram customer stories. We all know that brand marketers love their products, but it's such a better story when a customer explains or shows why they love it."

Auditory response

In addition to social media videos, luxury marketers have flocked to auditory content in another popular marketing move.

Podcasts have become extremely popular with the millennial segment, prompting these brands to add audio producing to their resumes.

For instance, British department store Harrods took its luxury expertise to the podcasting world.

Harrods released a podcast series entitled "Harrods: True Tales of Luxury." The audio series was released in six episodes, hosted by broadcaster Mariella Frostup, as she dove into what luxury means today ([see story](#)).



Harrods: True Tales of Luxury podcast. Image credit: Harrods

British department store chain Selfridges similarly embraced the intersection of art and fashion with a creative campaign that incorporated podcasting. The "State of The Arts" initiative is influencing everything from Selfridges' window displays and product offerings to a podcast series ([see story](#)).

Selfridges' "State of the Arts" is in addition to the retailer's previously established Selfridges Hot Air show discussing sustainability.

These podcasts are not focused on the Selfridges brand itself but showcase its values.

LVMH-owned Champagne house Veuve Clicquot delved into the history of one of its most influential leaders in an extensive audio narrative.

"The Veuve Clicquot Tales" told the story of Madame Clicquot, nicknamed the "Grande Dame of Champagne," who took the reins of the brand at an early age and left a mark with innovation and ambition. While most luxury podcasts have centered on interviews with today's movers and shakers, Veuve Clicquot instead leveraged the format for immersive heritage storytelling ([see story](#)).



"The Veuve Clicquot Tales" centers on the life of Madame Clicquot. Image credit: LVMH

French fashion label Chlo took on the new strategy in an effort to keep up with modern entertainment consumption by debuting a different take on podcasting.

"Chlo Radio," the first podcast for the brand, was introduced leading up to its spring 2019 runway show to excite fans. Each episode of the podcast is timed at about 20 minutes, but what makes this show unique is that Chlo is also leveraging IGTV for the initiative, sharing shorter segments on the video platform in an effort to gain a wider audience ([see story](#)).

Some audio efforts have also blended podcasting formats and UGC.

French perfumer Guerlain tapped into the strong relationship between scent and memory with an entire application that hopes to convey emotion through audio.

Guerlain is engulfing fragrance fans into its world with a variety of stories centered on perfume. The perfumer has created a new digital platform, dubbed Olfaplay, that invites a variety of speakers to share their stories in relation to scent, looking to make an audio impression in a time where social media has created shorter attention spans ([see story](#)).



Olfaplay, Guerlain's new platform. Image credit Guerlain

In addition to podcasting, luxury marketers have learned to tap into playlists in an effort to embody the feeling of their brands through song.

Christopher Bailey commemorated his time as chief creative officer of British fashion house Burberry with a soundtrack exclusive to Apple Music.

Under Mr. Bailey's creative direction, Burberry had a long-standing relationship with music. Since joining Burberry in 2001, Mr. Bailey incorporated music into the core of the brand's retail experience, runway presentations, events and campaigns, as well as through support of musical talent, which made the playlist fitting ([see story](#)).

Chlo partnered with the same streaming platform to tap into creative director Claire Waight Keller's free-spirited music tastes.

For the Apple Music's fashion curator series, the designer hosted a month-long takeover, sharing her ideal summer playlists. Through this placement, Chlo was able to showcase its perspective to Apple Music's 13 million subscribers ([see story](#)).

Prada also recently took to the auditory world in the role of DJ through Spotify.

The label launched an official channel on Spotify, where fans can immerse themselves in the Prada lifestyle. The channel's launch began with the soundtrack to the brand's current spring/summer campaign ([see story](#)).



Prada debuts official channel on Spotify. Image credit: Prada

In a similar manner, Chanel looked to extend the reach of its fashion show with a playlist series.

The house partnered with Apple Music to launch its official playlist. Through this, fans of Chanel can now surround

themselves with the feeling of its fashion shows outside of the runway through music ([see story](#)).

Gucci explored the live music experience in a collaborative digital project that links performing and visual artists in a different manner.

For #GucciGig, the brand paired 12 musicians with illustrators, photographers, graphic designers and videographers to capture their interpretation of playing live shows. Alongside the social media project, Gucci launched a new Spotify account, enabling the brand to more consistently connect with consumers over music ([see story](#)).

Across brands

In addition to tapping their own resources, brands often reach out to publishing partners to create native content for editorial platforms.

One of the biggest players in creating native branded content is *The New York Times* with its T Brand Studio. This is a studio dedicated to pumping out content specifically for brands, taking content marketing to another level.

As more advertisers are tapping into the opportunities of branded editorial, *The New York Times* continues to expand its commercial content operations.

Having developed more than 150 campaigns for about 100 brands including BMW, The Macallan and Cartier, the media company's T Brand Studio opened up a location in Hong Kong to better serve clients in the Asia-Pacific region. Display advertising's waning efficacy has marketers turning to native placements to reach consumers through storytelling, creating new relationships with publishers who are adept at the medium ([see story](#)).

One example of T Brand Studio's work was an Olympic endeavor with U.S. fashion label Ralph Lauren. The campaign gave consumers an up-close look at the prowess of Olympic athletes through a sponsored augmented reality experience.

Produced by *New York Times* journalists, the interactive content allowed readers to walk around the figures of skaters and a snowboarder, highlighting their form. Marking the first time the media company had leveraged AR, this editorial effort aimed to provide a more immersive storytelling experience ([see story](#)).

Many other publishers and brands have looked to a publisher-partnership strategy to attract the modern reader and consumer.

Gucci teamed with Cond Nast men's magazine *British GQ* to highlight the stories of creative individuals.

The second installment of their collaborative series "The Performers" followed five influential men as they traveled to a place that shaped them. Rather than one-off articles, today native content partnerships often revolve around ongoing campaigns or series, allowing a brand and publication to make more of an impact ([see story](#)).

Retailer Childressalon celebrated the art of storytelling for all ages in a sponsored content series by Cond Nast Britain Digital.

Conceived by the publisher's branded content division Stories, "Fashion Fairytales" appeared across *British Vogue*, *Tatler* and *British GQ*. Despite a degree of simplification for younger readers, the true tales shared in this campaign were meant for all ages to enjoy ([see story](#)).

Italian fashion label Dolce & Gabbana also promoted its Devotion handbag line with help from magazine media.

In a digital push for the collection, Dolce & Gabbana called in talent from publishing group Cond Nast and Hearst's *Elle* magazine, asking them to interpret the handbags ([see story](#)).

Consumers have become more skeptical of advertising, so brands have learned to adapt and taking a content marketing approach is vital to survival.

"Partnerships are a great way to reach new audiences whether they are with social media influencers, traditional celebrities or bigger organizations or events," Talkwalker's Mr. Grossman said. "Traditional partnerships with sports associations or tournaments are still very prominent.

"Last January for example, Cadillac became the official vehicle of the PGA of America in order to get their brand in front of golf fans on a regular basis through both earned and owned content," he said.

Best practice tips for luxury content marketing:

- Bill Connolly, director of content, Monotype

- "For content, the best approach is to test and learn because every industry and every brand has a unique story to tell. Modern content types, like UGC, influencer content and short-form video, engage customers in new ways. As such, they help brands learn more about their customers, not just in their buying behavior, but in how they live their lives. For luxury brands, content is an opportunity to connect the aspirational value of the brand to a customer's everyday lifestyle. By testing what works, and where it works, you can start to refine a strategy that will set your brand apart and breed loyalty from your most valuable audiences."
- Dan Goldstein, President Page1 Solutions
 - "Luxury customers know quality brands, so many of them start with branded searches to find products and services by companies they know and trust. But when they're looking for a product or service irrespective of brand or they don't know that a recognizable brand provides said product or service they search online like other consumers to begin educating themselves. For this reason, traditional SEO best practices are hugely important for content marketing by luxury brands. But, there's a twist. Instead of relying on static keyword lists determined by the business or agency, savvy brands and marketers are looking at the actual search queries consumers use to find specific products and services. Understanding search trends and optimizing all marketing channels Web pages, videos, visual content, etc. for the terms users search enables marketers and brands to develop content that address customers' actual questions and needs, making it more likely that they will buy from one brand over another."
- Todd Grossman, Talkwalker CEO Americas
 - "Define your brand positioning and content objectives before you start creating anything, or your message won't be coherent and you won't be able to measure success."
 - "Think visual, think video: by 2021, 80 percent of online content will be in video format. Make sure to communicate visually, as well as to monitor mentions of your brand logo in videos and images so as not to miss great user-generated content."
 - "Include user-generated content in your digital strategy. Your brand voice is important, but people trust their peers' review a lot more than they trust you."
- Cathy McPhillips, vice president of marketing content at Marketing Institute, an Informa Tech Company
 - "Stop publishing content for content's sake. Is what you're creating truly useful to your customer? Is it exceptional? There is so much content out there, that brands need to create less content so they can be more effective. Also, video can show so much more than a blog post about a brand. Podcasting is still on the upswing, and there are very few brands really knocking it out of the park. The best practice of all is to determine where your customers like to digest content, learn what format is best for you to distribute your content, and match up those two things together."