

# CONTENT & COMMERCE



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## TURNING BROWSERS INTO BUYERS WITH QUALITY CONTENT

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In a world where eCommerce is considered the norm and the majority of seasonal shopping is now likely to be done online, how do you get people to buy from you rather than your competitors? Whether it's capturing the one-off impulse or high-value purchase, or encouraging brand loyalty to boost repeat sales, the content you deliver – words, images and videos – will be a key factor in your success.

Consider this: social media, video and online shopping are where internet users are devoting most of their time, with those aged 16 to 64 spending a total of over 6.5 hours a day consuming content online across different channels.<sup>1</sup> This presents huge opportunities to capture the attention and imagination of consumers, no matter what you are trying to sell.



The goal is to be smart about how you allocate your resources to create attractive content. For example, why create an app that simply replicates the buying experience your mobile site should provide as standard, when you could create an entirely different style of content within an app that exploits the unique 'mobile' attributes of smartphones? Similarly, not all influencers will produce the same uplift for your business, so how do you get the most from this growing aspect of the market?

In this whitepaper, we present guidance from the people who really know – because they're doing it themselves. From wallpaper and beds to clothing and bicycles, their tips can help you avoid reinventing the wheel, as it were.

## BE LOYAL TO YOUR BRAND

“Brand is everything. It’s the key to how you start a conversation with your customers,” says Kate Mitchell, Head of eCommerce at Bensons for Beds and Harveys. “It should be at the forefront of all your consumer thinking.” However, as Mitchell notes, ‘brand’ doesn’t have the same significance in every sector. Everyone can tell you what brand of phone they use, but how many know what brand their bed is? Or their dining table?”

That said, your brand is important within your sector and you should never undermine it. “Brand consistency across all your sales channels is imperative,” says Rebecca Scott, Founder & Owner of NEUapparel. “If you are trying to grow a brand and want it to be here for a long time, that consistency is key. I’m extremely pedantic about our brand voice, down to the words and captions, and even the emojis we use – everything is consistent.”

Brand voice has many aspects, including what you say and don’t say, and what you share or choose not to share. To enable this, Scott advises you should make sure the whole team is on board with your brand voice.



**“The stark reality is that if you have a multichannel business and you don’t build your business around the customer journey, however complex it is, you’re not going to succeed,” says Kate Mitchell, Head of eCommerce at Benson for Beds and Harveys**



## CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE BOOSTS CONVERSION

With brand consistency in mind, the next step is to consider your customers’ experiences when interacting with your brand. Ultimately, you want them to spend more money with you, but preferably in the most convenient way for your business.

Remember that your buyers are not the same as you. You need to track everything they do to truly understand their buying journeys and their interactions with your brand. This can indicate where you need to add or amend your content, as well as providing valuable evidence for internal discussions about funding requirements. “The stark reality is that if you have a multichannel business and you don’t build your business around the customer journey, however complex it is, you’re not going to succeed,” says Mitchell.

You need to start planning to have great content online right from the start of the customer journey to engage them; content that is both on brand and appropriate for that channel and location. Research from Bain & Company, in partnership with Google, reveals that brands who show up with the right message at the right time are the ones who are “finding pathways to growth”.<sup>ii</sup> It also means identifying where content is a hindrance and changing or removing it.

Despite online now seeming a relatively mature market, there is an opportunity here for newcomers and established brands alike. Forrester’s 2018 Customer Experience Index

unearthed that companies are struggling to create and sustain a human connection with their customers: "This is not a question of delighting customers as an endgame or some fluffy sense of emotional attachment; this is a crass and clear story of financial risk".<sup>iii</sup> Forrester notes that this is about "reorienting your business around the customer" and treating each one as a "single sentient human being – and then operationalising that view".

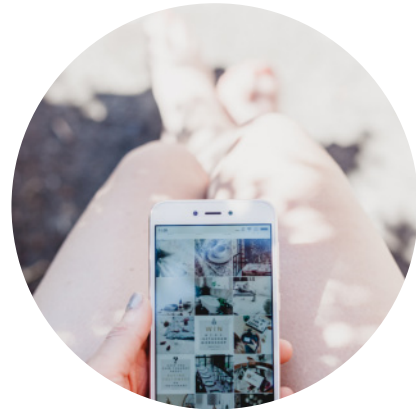
There are a handful of key parameters you should look at, including cadence and consistency. If people like what you do, they'll like it even more if you present that content on a regular basis, both where and when they expect it. It's better still if you present it when it suits them (not you). Consider focussing on when they read your emails or online content. Also look at which days they tend to shop with you. "It's about serving the right content at the right time for the right person – if you start with that mantra and work back from that, it's a good start," explains Jonathan Wall, Chief Digital Officer at Missguided.

All of this requires the right tools to create content to suit your organisation. Fast fashion brands will have very different needs from a company selling high-end furniture, for example. "Building the tools to let the merchandising team get on with their job allows a transformation, as they can serve content with whatever cadence they want," says Jon Cleaver, Chief Technology Officer at In The Style.

One cautionary note is that you should not spend too much time looking sideways at your competitors. "When you obsess too much about what your competitors are doing, you'll only ever reach their benchmark – and by the time you've got there, they'll be in front of you," says Cleaver. By all means acknowledge good, inspirational brands and learn from them, but to succeed your focus needs to be on your business, not theirs.



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## **INSPIRATION & ASPIRATION CREATES INTERACTION & TRANSACTIONS**

Consumers also like to aspire to a better lifestyle. This, however, can lead to plenty of time browsing but limited sales. Here, the goal is to make the move from aspirational content to purchase as easy as possible. At wallpaper specialist Graham & Brown, this led to the development of an augmented reality (AR) app that would allow users to see virtual wallpaper 'samples' across the walls in any room in their home and give a calculation of how many rolls would be needed, with options to save images online – and, importantly, the information they need to place an order – to share and revisit later.

For content to be inspirational, it has to be high quality, no matter what you're trying to sell. Matthew Lawson, Chief Digital Officer of Ribble Cycles, related that having high quality videos in the right places has bolstered customers' perception of the brand. Equally, when a former customer is not yet ready for a repeat purchase, serving them high quality, aspirational content, for example via email, can encourage them to share it, resulting in broader engagement. "It's not about churning out volumes of content – you have to ensure it's high quality as otherwise they won't share it," says Lawson.

Tools to measure all such customer interactions are as vital as those designed to measure transactions. Quite how you interpret the data will depend on your business model. For example, having physical stores means any interaction that leads to increased footfall in one of your stores has value, so the content on your website store finder area is as important as beautiful images of what you sell. Where you can't confidently attribute sales to content, use A/B testing to determine what's working and what is not.

And if people do end up in store, what happens next? This is still part of their customer journey, so consider how digital content can support in-store sales – either as a direct touchpoint for customers or on tablets used by store staff.



## THE INFLUENCER INFLUENCE

When considering aspirational content, one option is to use carefully curated user-generated content (UGC), which people will respond to as this is seen as attainable: this can help with engagement too, as most people love the idea of being seen as worthy of featuring on a business's website.

The use of 'influencers' is a logical extension of that approach. As communications company Edelman says: "Other types of marketing can give

your brand or product an emotional connection, but only influencer marketing can give you 'social proof'... [which is] the need to be part of a group and to imitate the behaviour of people around us – especially people we respect."<sup>iv</sup>

Some huge brands can afford to pay well-known celebrities huge sums to feature their products on social media. Most businesses can't, so have to be savvy about who they approach in order to achieve the best effect and to keep such promotion in line with their brand.

NEUapparel doesn't shy away from the fact that its growth on Instagram comes from influencers. "It's not the ones with most followers that you want – it's the ones who are relatable and who engage with their followers," says Scott. "Sometimes they don't even have that many followers but they create fantastic content. Conversely, you won't see a return on those who constantly plug lots of different brands." As Scott notes, there is a problem in that ROI is hard to prove. "It's a risky way of marketing and a lot of companies find it difficult to crack because they throw money at the biggest influencers and don't see a return."

There are other aspects to take into consideration too. Gartner L2's research, for example, shows that influencer partnerships have more impact when the influencer posts on their own Instagram account and tags the brand, instead of the other way around.<sup>v</sup> This means that trust is needed when someone else represents your brand, as their content is not in your control.



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## GOING GLOBAL

Scott suggests that using influencers is also a wise move when expanding globally: “You’re not going to reach people on the other side of the world by any other means.” That approach also helps when trying to engage people where language can be a major hurdle.

“Automated translation systems are poor. You have to use native speakers to do the translating as the way you speak, your tone of voice, has got to be the same in the other language,” says Missguided’s Wall. Aaron Winsloe, UK Managing Director of Myprotein, goes one step further: “You have to understand the nuances and how to portray those. For example, in China the way they consume content and do their research before buying is very different from the UK. You have to ensure your content matches that.”

One aspect everyone agrees on is to retain the Britishness of your brand when expanding. “People will buy into a British brand – don’t ever move away from that,” says Wall.



## BOOST BUSINESS BUY-IN

Whatever tack you take, researching and producing great content takes resources and commitment. Your chances of success will therefore be boosted if everyone in your business buys into the concept you are promoting. “It’s about making it a business requirement and not just one team’s responsibility,” says Ribble Cycles’ Lawson.

Businesses with sales teams in stores will need to consider how sales are monetised, as you are likely to come up against resistance to any concept that’s seen as potentially taking sales away from them.

In addition, any content development proposals may cause conflict if they appear to support only part of the business. “Different departments and different teams will have different ideas about what data is important to them,” notes Stephanie Nash, UX Lead at Graham & Brown.

Any content ideas need to be presented in a tangible way. “Content always has to justify itself because it incurs a cost, whether it’s text or images,” says Jon Cleaver, Chief Technology Officer at In The Style. “It can be great for awareness and engagement but only in the right place in the sales funnel; otherwise it can have a negative effect. It’s imperative to do testing – the right testing – to prove its value.”

Bensons' Mitchell adds: "You need to take the business on a journey with you and get them to understand what you do, and how your team can add value to the business overall." She recommends talking about "how we can benefit you" when seeking board-level buy-in. This approach can work well with others in the business too, whether they're buyers, merchandisers or sales staff.

You could also involve staff in user testing, if appropriate, to give them visibility and a level of ownership.

Other tips from Mitchell include:

- **Put people from your Digital Team into the Buying and Merchandise Teams, so that the Digital Team truly understands those aspects of the business and can capture their needs – and vice versa.**
- **Find someone at a senior level to be a digital and content advocate. Better still, find as many as you can.**
- **Use language people outside the Digital Team will understand. Typical digital terms can sound scary and unachievable – work within their comfort zone instead and ask "How can I help you?"**
- **Understand your own team's strengths and weaknesses, and explain what that means for the business.**

And finally: "Never forget the customer is at the heart of this. The minute you bring the customer back into things it takes the heat out of all the conversations around business targets, footfall and so on," says Mitchell. "Ultimately, are we satisfying what the customer wants?"



<sup>i</sup> Edelman; Four reasons influencers are essential for marketing in 2018; 8 May 2018; <https://www.edelman.co.uk/magazine/posts/four-reasons-influencers-are-essential-for-marketing-in-2018/>

<sup>ii</sup> Think with Google; How digital insights help marketers act when the time is right; June 2018; <https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/intl/en-gb/consumer-insights/how-digital-insights-help-marketers-act-when-time-right/>

<sup>iii</sup> Forrester; Customer Experience Index Reveals Brands Lack Human Connection; 5 Sept 2018; <https://go.forrester.com/blogs/customer-experience-lacks-connection/>

<sup>iv</sup> Edelman <https://www.edelman.co.uk/magazine/posts/four-reasons-influencers-are-essential-for-marketing-in-2018/>

<sup>v</sup> Gartner L2; Don't Feature Influencers; 2 May 2018; <https://www.l2inc.com/daily-insights/dont-feature-influencers>