



BRIGHTSPOT®

TECHNOLOGY THAT ENABLES GREAT STORYTELLING

In today's world, consumers are always connected. They rely on multiple channels to get the information they want, when they want. Marketers must develop and enable the ability to publish a steady stream of relevant content that informs and captures customer interest, even while constantly adapting to changing customer demands.

Brightspot, a digital experience platform, was built and is managed by Perfect Sense, a full-service product company that drives innovation in web and mobile development for companies worldwide.”

INTRODUCTION

With technology evolving, marketers have to evolve as well. Brand storytelling is no longer about simply publishing a webpage that shares a message or tells a story; It's about creating a consistent experience and invoking emotion across multiple channels — meaning marketers have to become masters of those channels and content types. Brand storytelling is at the heart of driving emotional connections with consumers, and successful brands have proven there are many ways to tell stories. Technology is central to this process.

Whether developing content around broad messages, creating stories around specific ideas, or posting content on social media platforms, companies need a platform that lets them work the way they want and deliver the right content to the right audience at precisely the right moment. This whitepaper addresses the best practices of successful storytelling and how technology can and should enable those best practices.

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STORYTELLING IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER

Businesses develop emotional connections with their customers through storytelling. In today's world, consumers have choices, and creating the connections that drive brand loyalty is essential. As such, marketers continue to invest more in producing content and experimenting with different content types to fuel their storytelling efforts. According to the Content Marketing Institute, half of B2C and B2B marketers planned to increase spending on content in 2017, with blogs and videos as the most popular format.

Ensuring timely delivery of content, as well as being able to measure and serve the right content to the right person requires a robust platform. With the right technology platform, the value of brand storytelling can be unlocked, enabling a business to:

Increase engagement with target customers — Stories that elicit customer response allow the brand to better understand their customers, increasing the ability to personalize and target even further.

In 2010, Old Spice re-told the story of its 70-year old brand by appealing to its target audience of young men. In its 'The Man Your Man Could Smell Like' campaign, it introduced the Old Spice Guy, who became a central character in all of its ad campaigns. Videos went viral on YouTube with more than 150 million total views across the campaign.

Build affinity, loyalty and community — Consumers tend to align themselves with brands that hold similar beliefs to their own. Brands that can bring together likeminded consumers and offer unmatched experiences often build loyalty and develop a deep fan community.

Nike continues to outpace competition with its innovative products and consistent message that resonates with old and new fans alike. As a brand that spans multiple sport categories, Nike has been able to build communities around its message, its technology and its experiences. The Nike+ community and its 30+ million members, has become a place where runners can share their routes and data with friends, giving their consumers a reason to engage with the brand nearly every day.

Create competitive advantage — By developing a compelling and consistent story across channels that is authentic and emotional, brands can differentiate themselves from the competition.

Athletic socks are not something that is top of mind to most consumers, but the founders of Bombas have turned socks into a story of altruism. The company's story centers on providing socks to the homeless and its 'buy-one-give-one' philosophy sets it apart from the competition. Bombas' story has a sense of 'saving the world' that appeals to many of today's consumers, and its content distribution strategy made perfect sense for its audience.

Differentiate and focus — A brand story can often set one company apart from the pack, differentiating and defining its role within the industry.

From its inception, Apple told a consistent and differentiated story. While most other technology companies communicated the features and functions of products, Apple kept to its story of thinking differently. Built for those that don't conform, to this day, Apple maintains the same theme through all of its communication, whether traditional or digital.

WHY TECHNOLOGY IS CRITICAL TO BRAND STORYTELLING

A brand is much bigger than the sum of its products – as mentioned, it is the emotional connection between a company and its customers. Communicating a brand's story that will enhance an emotional connection requires weaving together different messages a company delivers into a cohesive narrative through all touchpoints.



A SUCCESSFUL BRAND STORY IS NOT JUST A
STORYLINE THAT ILLUSTRATES COMPANY VALUES
AND PRODUCTS, BUT ALSO ONE THAT CAN BE
DISTRIBUTED IN THE RIGHT FORMAT AND ON THE
RIGHT DEVICE.

Companies can solve this challenge with a technology platform that is built to fit with the way they do business. The technology needs to make creating, editing and managing content — whatever type — easy and collaborative. It needs to be able to meet all of the requirements a company has to support its digital strategy; including multichannel content distribution, personalization, mobile app development, etc.

General Electric (GE) is a great example of a company harnessing its DNA to tell stories in the digital age. The company has always been passionate about science and technology, beginning with its founder, Thomas Edison. GE delivers authentic narratives online around its business units such as healthcare, energy, and aviation that illustrate the importance of GE's imagination, innovation and invention to society. Through storytelling, GE has built equity with its consumers, creating an engaged community of millions. When marketers create powerful messages and stories that surprise and delight consumers, brand awareness and consumer loyalty increases.

A successful brand story is not just a storyline that illustrates company values and products, but also one that can be distributed in the right format and on the right device. It's possible that a consumer reads content first thing in the morning on a mobile device, but views content on a laptop or desktop the rest of the day. A consumer might not watch video at work, but consumes videos in the evening on a tablet. Analytics that allow a brand to monitor these preferences increase the likelihood that the right content will be delivered in the right context so it is best received.

DIGITAL STORYTELLING: SETTING UP THE RIGHT TECHNOLOGY

Technology is a critical component for telling the brand story – from initial concept to continuous analysis of results:

Creation, Curation, and Management. Websites hosting multiple pages, images and conversations should be managed with a platform that lets editors publish content and respond to consumer engagement quickly and easily. Workflows that automate processes allow editors to better focus on creating more impactful content and publishers to better focus on accelerating the delivery of that content.

Distribution & Amplification. Brands need to pay attention to how, when and on which device a consumer wants to receive information. Successful marketers need a platform that enables them to publish across a variety of channels, amplifying existing content while maintaining a consistent experience. This can't be done without agile and robust technology that provides access to real-time analytics and the ability to iterate on the customer experience and customer journey.

Analysis & Optimization. A successful brand marketer analyzes how and where content is consumed, in order to deliver personalized, relevant content via the right device. With the right platform in place, marketers can identify what's performing and what's not, and adjust content delivery accordingly.

THE CRAFT OF BRAND STORYTELLING: HOW TO DO IT WELL

Brand storytelling may seem simple, but it's actually a challenge to do well. 60% of B2B marketers and 56% of B2C marketers report that their biggest challenge is producing engaging content (Content Marketing Institute). Here are some tips that can help:

Prepare. Focus on the plan as much as the content. Once the story has been identified and constructed, it will be shared through a variety of channels. The team needs to plan ahead to have the right technology to distribute the story in all of its iterations.

Be ready to react. Kohl's was ready when a consumer video - of herself laughing as she donned a Chewbacca mask - went viral. Purchased at Kohl's, the company rewarded the consumer with thousands of dollars in "Star Wars" toys and gift cards, and then shared the response on social.

Be human. Authenticity can go a long way in boosting brand allegiance. Spotify, in what it calls "Random Acts of Kindness," has been known to answer a customer query with a playlist, in which the answer is spelled out by reading the song titles in order.

Measure and pivot. A brand's story is always a work in progress. Being able to analyze the reach and success of each piece of content is key to knowing what topics perform best as well what type of content should be distributed across each device.

Seize the moment. Oreo responded to the blackout during Super Bowl XLVII with a simple tweet - an image of an Oreo in semi-darkness that read, "Power out? No problem. You can still dunk in the dark." Millions of social impressions later and, "Oreo won the Super Bowl blackout."

Engage early. Consumers won't stay around if a message doesn't capture their attention at the outset. Brands can hook customers by accurately illustrating the problem their product solves. Successfully portraying this problem-solution

FOUR KEY TECHNOLOGY FUNCTIONS TO LOOK FOR:

SPEED: A quality platform allows rapid and iterative deployment, and cost-effective implementation of each instance. It can evaluate and measure a company's content efforts and allow companies to respond quickly to changes in business strategy, market conditions, competitive pressures or other industry/ regulatory change. This accelerates value and leads to an impactful digital strategy and better results.

AGILITY: It's important companies stay on top of the latest trends, focusing on the future, and not be dragged down with meaningless sales speak and marketing mumbo jumbo. Platform technology should enable businesses to create the experiences they want, in the way that they want, and to continually test and evolve as their business changes.

SERVICE: A technology vendor's focus should be as much on the successful implementation of a platform as it is on selling it. That means a vendor should spend time understanding your unique needs and working with you to develop and ensure the successful deployment of digital experiences. Customer service and product documentation should also be top-notch, so any brands looking to partner with a vendor will rest assured that any problems will be resolved quickly and thoroughly—and the vendor is focused on your long-term success, not just the sale.

INTEROPERABILITY: Forward-thinking technology platforms will make it easy to integrate with a company's current technology stack and should enable you to extend the way you work, instead of requiring you to adapt processes to a new, restrictive technology.



PLATFORM TECHNOLOGY SHOULD ENABLE BUSINESSES TO CREATE THE EXPERIENCES THEY WANT, IN THE WAY THAT THEY WANT, AND TO CONTINUALLY TEST AND EVOLVE AS THEIR BUSINESS CHANGES.

WALMART CASE STUDY: STORYTELLING SUCCESS

Walmart has over two million employees worldwide, operates in twenty-eight countries, and averages 60,000 social media mentions each day. In 2015, the communications team recognized they didn't have the technological firepower needed to send out their stories worldwide in the way they wanted. As with many companies, their multiple platforms made sharing materials difficult, technology processes were slowing down the time to publish and people empowered to publish stories didn't always find the tools intuitive.

Walmart chose to re-launch its corporate website and blog on a single platform, and did so with Brightspot's digital experience platform. Having a platform that unified the domestic and international sites enabled something like a single story to be used in different ways worldwide. By the end of 2016, the company had launched nine corporate websites across six countries, sharing digital assets and allowing individual editorial teams to own their own launches without having to involve IT.

The US led the way in setting up a tagging system that included twenty-two main topics and supplemental tags for subsets of all the digital assets. This established a system for the other international sites as well. The new sites allowed for readers to engage with the material, and at the same time let the communications team moderate the conversations. Rulebased recommendations enable easy discoverability of related content through dynamic and editorially curated reading lists. The automated approval process cut down on the time needed to get third party approvals and the system is scalable to accommodate new ideas and templates.

Chad Mitchell, Senior Director, Digital Communications at Walmart says, “With the technology solved, we can think about ways to tell stories that are only limited by our own imagination and creativity.”



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CHAD MITCHELL, SENIOR DIRECTOR, DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS AT WALMART

CONCLUSION

Brands need to understand what goes into a good story, from the basic overall structure to the nuts and bolts of the process, as well as what technology will help them tell that story. Creating engaging stories for today’s “always-on” consumer isn’t easy, but it’s now a critical part of brand marketing strategy. With the proper storyline and the right technology in place, today’s marketing teams will find that “brands as publisher” is a model that can lead to success.

ABOUT BRIGHTSPOT

Brightspot enables digital innovation in a truly agile way. It is a powerful, flexible, fast-to-deploy enterprise-class content publishing platform that puts your digital experiences at the heart of your customer's journey. Brightspot lets you create and manage the experiences you want and that your customers expect. Brightspot organizes and delivers actionable information on your customers and your content, giving you a single system of truth where you can analyze data to make smarter, more informed decisions.

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