



Content
Evolves

Gather
Good Data

Focus on
Personalization

Know Your
Audience

Outside
the Box

Active**DEMAND**



2016 Predictions from 10 Top Influencers

Where Some of Today's Influential People See Marketing Heading in 2016

The year 2016 is gearing up to be a game-changer in the realm of marketing and across several categories, and if one wants to survive in this ever-evolving landscape, it's vital to take a close look at what's coming. From content promotion experimentation by content marketers of all kinds to video ads driving engagement, personalization, relevancy and more, there are a number of marketing "influencers" – the "movers and shakers" of this industry – that have made their predictions regarding the burgeoning world of marketing communications and what they feel should be focused on in 2016.

We queried several of these marketing influences for their thoughts and predictions on the direction of marketing in 2016. Their responses concentrated on five important perspectives:

- Chapter 1. Content Continues to Evolve
- Chapter 2. Focus on Personalization
- Chapter 3. Gathering Good Data is More Important Than Ever
- Chapter 4. Knowing Your Audience is Key
- Chapter 5. Look Outside the Marketing Box

Here's a closer look at each one...



Content Evolves

Chapter 1: Content Continues to Evolve

The time has come to perhaps modify the moniker within Internet marketing that suggests “Content is King” to “Content Marketing is King” – indeed, content marketing boasts a broad definition, and it is likely that no two marketers would hold the exact same definition if asked what the reference means to them...and their marketing efforts. But irrespective of how it is defined, content marketing is being utilized more than ever, with a study by Unisphere Research as reported by eMarketer¹ suggesting that just the budget that is allocated to content marketing alone is enough evidence to prove “content marketing” is no longer a buzz word.

Chad Pollitt, VP of Audience, believes 2016 will be a big year for content promotion experimentation by content marketers of all kinds – and not just paid native promotion, but experiments that encompass owned, earned and paid-converged promotion. Eder Holguin, CEO of Idealmedia, meanwhile, is putting faith in native ads and video.



Try New Things with Content

Chad Pollitt
@ChadPollitt

VP of Audience, Co-Founder of Relevance

“Next year will be the big one for content promotion experimentation by content marketers of all stripes.”

“Generally, I’m an optimist. However, I might sound somewhat pessimistic concerning next year’s trend line when it comes to content promotion. I’ve spoken with hundreds of marketers and brands this year and the vast majority of them have no converged content promotion plan and don’t look to be in a position to implement one fully for 2016. As a result, the vast majority of content marketers next year will still be relying mostly on the adage of produce, publish, broadcast (owned promotion) and pray.

That said, there’s definitely a silver lining. Next year will be the big one for content promotion experimentation by content marketers of all stripes. Not just paid native promotion either, but experiments that include owned, earned and paid – converged promotion. This year was the year of education and learning around those promotion channels for many – influencer marketing, sponsored content, media relations, native advertising, content amplification, etc. Next year many more brands and marketers will be sticking their toes in to check the temperature of the water. This should set up 2017 nicely for many more content marketing teams to be fully onboard and executing with robust converged content promotion campaigns.”



Video Expands its Footprint

Eder Holguin
@ederman1
 CEO, Idealmedia

“Video ads continue to drive engagement”

“I think the biggest marketing trends for 2016 are native ads & video. Marketers need to focus on creating content heavy, native, non-intrusive ads and take advantage of syndication via the many native platforms. In addition, content marketing via video ads continue to drive engagement, brand awareness and when done right, vitality.”



Focus on Personalization

Chapter 2: Focus on Personalization

Many marketers believe now is the time to utilize social data and marketing technology to create highly personalized experiences for potential clients. Data can be used in numerous ways, of course, but when it comes to getting real return on marketing efforts in 2016, these particular marketing experts believe it is most useful for helping folks get personal.

Personalized content talks directly to a target audience and offers the exact solution he or she is looking for; now, one could argue that this sounds very much like a one-on-one approach, or an omni-channel approach, and that would be correct. A personalized content strategy has omni-channel implications, some of which are detailed by our experts below.



Creating Unique Experiences

Matthew Barby
@matthewbarby

Global Head of Growth & SEO, HubSpot

“Personalization is going to be more important than ever.”

“Moving into 2016, personalization is going to be more important than ever. Creating completely unique experiences for your varying users is key to getting the reaction you want from them. This is becoming easier to implement and the data that’s available to marketers is only growing. People are more connected, with the internet of things playing a huge role in this. The priority that marketers need to place around personalization is to add genuine value to a user’s experience whilst also getting them to perform an action that meets their business objective.”



Be Relevant

Ardath Albee
@ardath421

CEO & B2B Marketing Strategist, Marketing Interactions, Inc.

“Time to focus on what’s really important – being relevant to the audiences”

The trend in marketing that concerns me is the declining relevance of content to our buyers and to the effectiveness of our content marketing programs. As a profession, our effectiveness has declined from 41% in 2011 to 30% today, per the 2016 B2B Content Marketing Benchmarks, Budgets and Trends report published by Content Marketing Institute and Marketing Profs.

But it’s not just marketers that rate themselves as ineffective. Recent research conducted by Forrester found that 65% of business decision makers found much of the content supplied to them by vendors useless. Marketers need to make understanding their buyers and customers a top priority. And they need to use that information to drive the relevance of their content strategies if they want to prove performance.

Technology seems to be driving the shiny object syndrome for marketers. Channels and formats are also on the radar. But if we can’t become relevant to the audiences we’re trying to attract, all the technology, channels and formats in the world won’t save our marketing programs. And, that Fournaise Group research found that 74% of marketers rank form and style and delivery of their content more important than the message delivered, just goes to show that focus is off track. It’s time to focus on what’s really important before we do anything else—being relevant to the audiences with whom we want to do business.

Gather Good Data

Chapter 3: Gathering Good Data is More Important than Ever

Data is akin to air for marketers, because, think about it: What kind of marketing implemented today – whether business-to-business or business-to-consumer – is not data-driven? Data has always been a part of marketing, but now that data is big and getting bigger, while becoming more complex and expensive to manage. Marketers need the right tools and techniques to gather and make proper use of this data. Perhaps most important is that these facts are starting to get the attention of marketing leadership. There is great impact from data-driven marketing, not just on how we connect with customers and prospects, but also on how we organize our marketing departments...and how we think about the role of marketing in the organization.

No matter the industry or market share, marketers everywhere are stewards of consumer data. As our experts allude to below, it is our actions and abilities (and care and attention) that enables brands to use all the data available to delight customers and engage them.



Importance of the Attribution Chain

Tricia Meyer
@sunshinetricia

Affiliate Marketer, Blogger, and Consultant

"Marketers have to figure out where we fit into that attribution chain"

"As brands are starting to monetize influencer recommendations more and more, marketers have to figure out where we fit into that attribution chain. For example, are there opportunities for us to connect those brands and influencers through our own apps and sites? Can our content help solidify a recommendation by serving as an unbiased third party review? Are we the ones that help to close the final deal for the merchants via additional promotions and deals? Rather than looking at these monetized referrals and recommendations as a closed loop that we are cut out of, we need to see where we can be compensated for adding value of our own."





Invest in Data Profiles

Paul Dunay
@PaulDunay

Financial Services Marketing Leader, PwC

“Smart marketers are putting their money on honing their customer data profiles”

“In this age of fast moving information – I think smart marketers are putting their money on honing their customer data profiles. It’s been shown in studies that there is a 66% lift in revenue when you put a strong emphasis on data quality. More importantly, bad data is the most common culprit of a failed campaign, but how often to you really get after fixing the data?”

Bad data doesn’t get better with age. Generally speaking getting the data right at the source is 10x less expensive than fixing the data later. So why don’t marketers try to get ahead of the curve. Too often marketers feel like they don’t own their data but if your success is so inevitably linked to the data why not own your own fate!”

Know Your Audience

Chapter 4: Knowing Your Audience is Key

Many marketers we have spoken to believe that knowing an audience is the key to a successful content marketing strategy, with the goal being to produce well-crafted content specifically tailored to the intended audience. A strategy mindful of the intended buyer and their decision-making process increases engagement and develops customer loyalty.

As of late, companies have been embracing social media for more sophisticated storytelling platforms to get results in interesting customers. As the marketing gurus we tapped agree upon, quality trumps quantity – though a combination of the two is often best – and only content that truly engages an audience will attract new customers and boost ROI (Return on Investment).



Learning to Engage with Millennials

Jason Falls
@JasonFalls

SVP for Digital Strategy, Elasticity

“2016 is going to be a wake-up call for marketers of all kinds”

“I have a feeling 2016 is going to be a wake-up call for marketers of all kinds. Think about this: The 2016 election will be the first true election that features millennials as a major voting block. That will, for the first time in history, illustrate how the buying power and decision power in the world is shifting. And communicating with millennials is very different than Boomers or any other age segment. The world of on-demand media, of social media and of mobile first is about to smack us square in the face.”





Changing the Way We Communicate

Ted Rubin
@tedrubin

Social Marketing Strategist and Acting CMO, Brand Innovators

“Brand need to start changing the way they communicate”

“2016 needs to be the year of doing what I call... Looking People in the Eye Digitally. The last few decades of marketing tactics have made us lazy communicators and I’ve had just about enough. Most often we don’t even pay attention to who we are talking to other than via the data we collect (and even that’s a maybe). In order to fix this and really start to benefit from social relationships (both as individuals and as companies), we need to start looking people in the eye digitally.’ We don’t need to fit our world to social, we need to fit social to our world.

In addition, Marketers need to wake up and realize Millennials are not all that different from everyone else, it’s not genetics but environment, and recognize the need to change the way they communicate. Brands are from Mars and Consumers are from Venus... Brand need to start changing the way they communicate.

This will all take hold much more effectively when the C-Suite realizes they need to embrace social communication and outreach, and start following the lead of ahead of the curve leaders like Richard Branson, Doug Conant, and Sheryl Adkins-Green. “

Outside the Box

Chapter 5: Look Outside the Marketing Box

As we move into 2016, many marketers believe the whole segment needs to get back to basics and understand the factors motivating the consumer and what he or she is buying – even how they're spending.

Three factors come into play here, as our experts see it:

- . **Taking a data-driven approach by building a demographic profile**
- . **Personalizing messaging to each segment**
- . **Never losing sight of the bigger picture**

By understanding what the consumer is buying and looking for, as well as anticipating the buying behavior, marketers can tailor their messaging and capture a larger “wallet share” from the tens of millions of consumers each year.



Don't Ignore the Customer Experience

Tamar Weinberg
@tamar

Digital Marketing Specialist and Author

"Put more love into customer experience"

I think too many companies are focused more on marketing and less on customer service. They invest in acquiring new customers and don't care about supporting their existing clients.

What these people don't realize is that their existing clients, if served well, are their BEST marketers. Do you trust a commercial or a web ad, or is a glowing endorsement stronger?

I'd go with a glowing endorsement, won't you? Put more love into customer experience and you will reap marketing rewards you'd never even dream of.





Sales and Marketing Alignment

David Meerman Scott

@dmScott

Marketing and Sales Strategist

“Sales and Marketing are optimized through great content and real-time connection”

“I’m fascinated by the convergence of sales and marketing on the web. Today buyers dictate how they choose companies, products, and services with online content driving action. The difference? Marketing is when a company communicates to many buyers at once while sales is communicating to one buyer at a time. Both are optimized through great content and real-time connection.”



Conclusion

Marketing constantly adjusts and reacts to changes in technology and attitudes, and while digital marketing has undergone a substantial transformation in the past few years, the technology that incited those changes is growing at a faster pace than most brands are comfortable keeping up with. What expert marketing figures agree upon is that brands need to look beyond the “usual channels” to stay ahead rather than simply jump on the proverbial bandwagon as we roll into 2016.

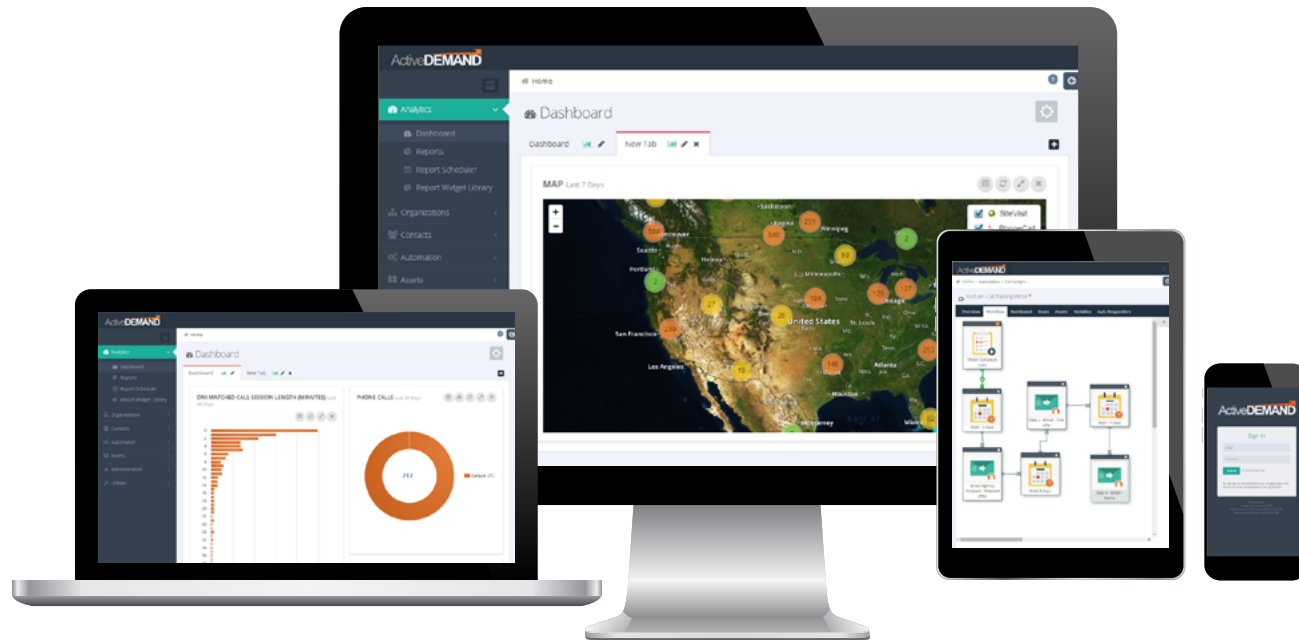
Is the pace of marketing out-pacing your marketing department’s ability to keep up with ever evolving trends? A solid integrated marketing platform, that provides the tracking tools, customer engagement data and simplified campaign execution you need can provide the added boost to ensure growth. Try a free trial of the ActiveDEMAND platform and get a leg up in your marketing for 2016.

References

1. <http://www.emarketer.com/Article/Content-Takes-Notable-Share-of-Marketer-Budgets/1010260>



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