

A person is shown from the waist down, wearing a vibrant red dress with a gold sequined bodice. They are holding a large, bright red umbrella that dominates the upper right portion of the frame. The scene is set on a sandy beach at night, with warm, golden light illuminating the sand and the person's attire. The background is dark, suggesting a night sky or distant lights.

# TAMING THE CONTENT BEAST



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**SPEED READ**

- Content marketing can help rebuild trust
- Not enough to simply have good content
- A strategy ensures co-ordinated approach
- The Content Funnel maps a journey

Content marketing is hot. But in the rush to create content, what’s happened to marketing? CASPIAN WOODS reports on how a content marketing strategy is essential to bridge the gap.

**I**t’s undeniable that a content tsunami is building. The recent Financial Services Content Marketing survey, carried out by Editions Financial, found that although 90% of brand marketers expect content marketing to become more important over the next year, only 41% have a strategy.

Done well, content marketing has the power to add value, build thought leadership and engage audiences.

This is particularly relevant to those financial institutions which need to rebuild relationships with customers. Finance is the least trusted industry, according to the latest ‘trust barometer’ published by Edelman, with just 29% of consumers in the UK saying they trust the banking industry.

Integrity and good products and services are seen by the public as crucial in re-establishing their trust, Edelman reveals, but the top factor is a readiness to engage. As one respondent to the Financial Services Content Marketing survey explains, ‘Investors need to understand what you’re doing and the rationale behind it in order to build trust in what you are doing with their money. It helps to create a relationship by giving a face to your brand.’

With this in mind, many major finance players are turning to content marketing. More and more brands are cottoning on to the diminishing returns offered by traditional advertising, in an age where consumers can get all the ‘buying information’ they need through smartphones and other devices. Building a genuine connection through valuable, relevant content is the new holy grail of marketing.

‘We need to realise that customers don’t care about us, our products or our services – they care about themselves,’ Joe Pulizzi, the founder of the Content Marketing Institute, tells Argent.

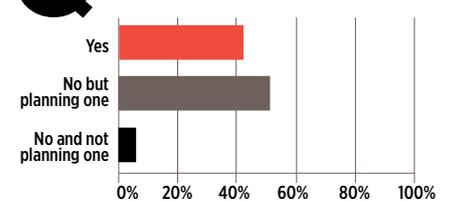
‘So we must deliver the best information on the planet to get their attention.’ He cites with approval the ‘thought leadership’ material of companies such as IBM and Deloitte.

**A STRATEGIC APPROACH**

But even the best information on the planet isn’t enough in itself. It needs to have a purpose – allowing the brand to occupy its niche with authority. Given the multitude of today’s content platforms – online, social media, mobile, video, face-to-face, email and print – this has to be co-ordinated.

Content approaches across these channels are often fragmented. Driven by departmental silos, there is no single ‘content plan’ or view. But without a strategy, brands are simply creating a content beast that needs to be constantly

**Q Does your organisation have a defined content strategy?\***



fed. Content is created and recreated, racking up costs and resulting in mixed messages and missed campaign and brand strategy goals.

It’s hard to overstate the need for a more strategic approach. The choice of channels grows exponentially as does the volume of content, while attention spans shrivel. Age or level of wealth are no longer reliable predictors of channel

**LLOYD’S OF LONDON: RAISING THE TITANIC**



**‘WE NEED TO FOCUS ON STORIES THAT WILL HAVE LEGS.’**

Solar flares are hot news. The potential of sun activity to wreak havoc on Earth recently triggered wide interest – and gave Lloyd’s of London an unusual hat-trick. Its expert pieces on the topic appeared in the Sunday Sport, the Daily Mail and the Daily Telegraph.

Disaster and risk will always draw attention, so in some senses Lloyd’s is guaranteed an avid audience for its content. But its high profile is down to a careful strategy, and a long track record of producing compelling material.

‘As a market rather than a company, our product is the brand,’ explains **Digital Content Manager Kassy Dignam**. ‘So we’ve really been doing content marketing for a number of years, to sell our thought leadership and expertise.’

Recently, however, the function has grown in importance, with Kassy taking on a new role to

co-ordinate content across media, digital and other teams.

Lloyd’s has notched up 11,000 Twitter followers and now sees 20,000 monthly visitors to its web news section. Its print magazine, Market, offers deeper analysis.

According to Kassy, there is almost too much content: ‘It’s never difficult to find stories, but we need to focus on stories that will have legs. And while we have lots of insurance specialists, one of our challenges is giving them the confidence to act as spokespeople.’

While generating fresh material, Lloyd’s also aims to give existing content new life. Its popular story on the 100th anniversary of the Titanic’s demise didn’t sink without trace when the centenary year ended. Instead, Lloyd’s created a Titanic section in its website, which continues to attract lots of hits.

‘We have a great body of content – we’re working quite hard this year on ways to keep it alive and relevant,’ says Kassy.

**‘A SIGNIFICANT BENEFIT OF PLOTTING A JOURNEY IS THAT MARKETING EFFECTIVENESS IS NO LONGER JUDGED SOLELY IN TERMS OF ACTIVITY LEVELS.’**

# ‘THE CHOICE LIES BETWEEN TRYING TO STRETCH CONTENT THINLY OVER EVERY CHANNEL OR ONLY GOING FOR THE SAME WELL-TRODDEN ROUTES WITH DIMINISHING RETURNS.’

## BREWIN DOLPHIN: THREE-TIER CONTENT



**‘WE DON’T WANT TO ALIENATE THE NEW ENTRANT WITH THE JARGON THAT SO OFTEN PERVADES OUR INDUSTRY.’**

How much knowledge can we assume? That’s the challenge currently preoccupying the marketing team at investment specialists Brewin Dolphin.

‘Our clients and prospects have different levels of expertise – from what you might call the beginner or new entrant, through to those who are market professionals,’ explains **Marketing Director Philip Browne**.

‘It’s important that we can engage with each of them at the right level. We don’t want to alienate the new entrant with the jargon and acronyms that so often pervade our industry.’

To that end, the firm’s content

management strategy foresees splitting its audience three ways and providing tailored content to each.

In the meantime, stakeholders are divided along more conventional lines. For clients, there’s Brewin Dolphin’s flagship magazine, *Perspective*, issued twice a year in print and app formats. Then there’s a quarterly version with entirely different content for the company’s intermediary community, chiefly targeted at IFAs.

‘A lot of what we do is generated in-house, by our research teams and investment managers,’ says Philip. ‘We also have an investment writer on the marketing team who curates a lot of content to ensure it’s consistent and appropriate.’

‘We use Google Analytics to understand what people engage with on our website. And we analyse the types of leads and enquiries we get, to help us see what we’re explaining well and where there might be gaps in our content.’

## COUTTS: KNOW YOUR STRENGTHS



**‘YOU’VE GOT TO RING-FENCE TO PROTECT YOUR CREDIBILITY.’**

Effective content marketing is a powerful tool in protecting a brand’s credibility. But only if you get it right.

**Sarah Wyse, Head of UK Marketing at Coutts & Co**, explains: ‘Coutts is a wealth management business so we feel we have the right to talk comprehensively about wealth management. But if we want to produce other content that’s just genuinely interesting to our clients, we produce it with other experts who have editorial integrity around that subject area. For example, we produced a style guide two years ago on the etiquette of dress code. But rather than doing it ourselves, we worked with Net-a-porter. This year, in association with Condé Nast, we produced *The Experts* – a little black book of all the people you need to know in travel.’

It’s important to understand where your competencies lie, and know where they don’t. ‘Some brands make the mistake of trying to commission lifestyle content and pretend that it’s theirs,’ Sarah adds, ‘but you’ve got to ring-

fence to protect your credibility.’

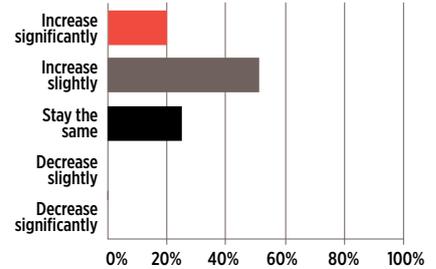
And it’s not just quality that counts. Coutts recently commissioned a six-part TV series with BBC World News on the changing patterns of wealth. Sarah explains: ‘We knew people would spend half an hour watching a TV programme where they’re unlikely to spend half an hour reading a piece of material.’ That BBC content was also used in outbound newsletters to clients – they were sent links to where they could view it online. ‘It’s not just TV content; it’s also video content that can be accessed in different ways,’ she adds.

‘The adage that people need to see, hear, feel or touch your brand six or seven times before they become engaged remains absolutely true. It’s become more complex, and yet in some ways it has more straightforward to engage. There are so many different ways to touch people and you’ve got to make sure you get it right.’

And as for measuring the success of content they’ve produced? ‘Nothing is more of an affirmation of what we’re doing than key clients telling me what they’ve seen and how they’ve felt about it. I really do value that, rather than me telling them what we did. That’s the greatest measure of success,’ she concludes.



Over the next 12 months, do you expect your content marketing budget to:\*



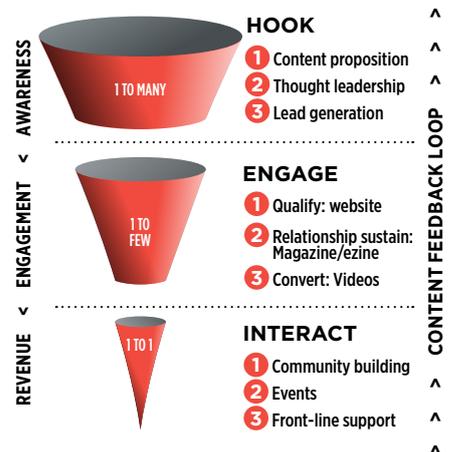
preference. Meanwhile, there are more calls on limited marketing budgets. The choice lies between trying to stretch content thinly over every channel or only going for the same well-trodden routes with diminishing returns.

By contrast, a content marketing strategy defines a clear proposition for different audiences, maps this across the customer journey and then focuses on the most cost-effective channels, with an efficient re-use of tightly focused content assets.

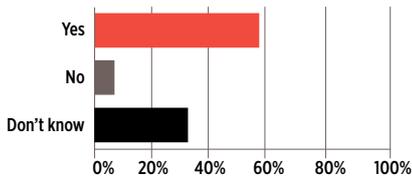
At Editions Financial, we have designed an aid to strategy formulation: a ‘content engagement funnel’, which allows brands to map out the ideal journey of their customers across each channel (see below).

The journey moves from the initial hooking of consumers’ attention – perhaps through thought leadership pieces – to engagement in richer media channels such as ezines and video. Customers then

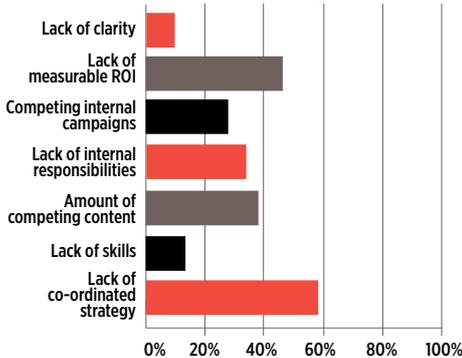
## CONTENT ENGAGEMENT FUNNEL



**Q** Do you believe content marketing is more effective than other approaches to help rebuild trust in financial services?\*



**Q** What are the greatest hurdles in developing content marketing?\*

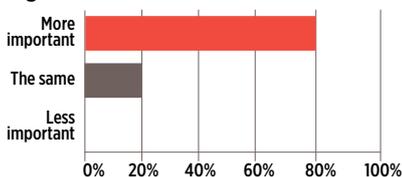


move on to interact through social media, events or one-to-one contact.

A significant benefit of plotting a journey is that marketing effectiveness is no longer judged solely in terms of activity levels, such as 'likes' or 'click-throughs', but the extent to which they drive action and revenue to the bottom line.

Clare Hill, Managing Director of the Content Marketing Association, explains: 'The key differential between traditional marketing disciplines and content marketing is that measurement is quite easy in our world. In many cases it enables you to identify sales conversions,

**Q** Do you expect content marketing to become more or less important for your organisation over the next 12 months?\*



## ABERDEEN ASSET MANAGEMENT: SIMPLE YET EFFECTIVE



**'THE SITE EXPLORES AND CELEBRATES SOME OTHER THINGS IN LIFE.'**

Content marketing has become Aberdeen Asset Management's primary route for all fresh lead generation activity for end investors and intermediary audiences, be that targeting retail investors or financial advisers in the wholesale channel.

'It's all about engaging users while they are in-market or, an awkward phrase this, fertile. Once you have established the engagement and communication, we then need to nurture that relationship and build trust,' says **Piers Currie, Group Head of Brand.**

And to achieve that, you need to get in front of the right people, in the right place and channel, at the right time. Aberdeen uses a variety of channels to target its audiences.

'In the UK, Europe and the US, we promote online events for existing intermediary audiences, typically at fund level, usually through BrightTalk. We use Dianomi's Marketviews for Investment Trusts and closed end funds in the UK as a recruiting sergeant to

top-end retail prospects. And we use email marketing of white papers to US advisers through intermediary media partners. These are followed up with geo-targeted nurturing emails,' Piers explains.

It also focuses on promoting content and ideas from its Simply Aberdeen microsite at [www.simplyaberdeen.com](http://www.simplyaberdeen.com). 'Asset management to the side, the site explores and celebrates some other things in life – including people, design and ideas – that we feel embodies our "simple" philosophy, values and attitude,' he adds.

Piers has found that, at its best, content marketing is much more measurable and tangible than many other forms of advertising and communications. He explains: 'It leaves an audit trail. As a result, we've found that it offers a more transparent return on investment for marketing spend.'

'But you need to get the content right,' he cautions. 'We aim to be consistent. In practice, this normally means we look for plain English where we can. But it's a constant process of self-improvement. We're in a sector bedevilled by jargon and we need to root out unnecessary complexity of explanation. That can be harder than it looks. Keeping it simple is hard, but it's the right goal.'

if that's the objective.'

Piers Currie, Group Head of Brand at Aberdeen Asset Management, agrees: 'Good content marketing leaves an audit trail. As a result, we've found that it offers a more transparent return on investment for marketing spend.' ■

**'EVEN THE BEST INFORMATION ON THE PLANET ISN'T ENOUGH IN ITSELF.'**

\* Results from the Financial Services Content Marketing survey

Full results of the Financial Services Content Marketing survey are available online. Visit [www.editionsfinancial.co.uk](http://www.editionsfinancial.co.uk) to download a copy of the report.



### THE KNOWLEDGE CENTRE

Additional articles and event presentations are available online via [www.theforum.co.uk/knowledge](http://www.theforum.co.uk/knowledge) including:

**The Power of Video:** Content is king, and there is no more powerful or engaging content than video. Brand messages are now less about top-down advertising, and more about content distribution via social media. Alwyn Gosford takes us through a few examples and statistics of online videos.

**At Last, Quality Content Drives SEO Performance:** In 2012, Google launched a multitude of technical refinements to its search results algorithm. The competition for higher rankings is now driven by the value of content, according to its relevance, the extent to which it is regularly updated and whether it links into social communities who engage with it.