



## ***Content and its Impact on Engagement and Brand Loyalty***

Over the past two years we have seen content marketing explode into the forefront of every marketing director's agenda. Content production is certainly one challenge faced by today's marketers, but ensuring that their audience is engaged with the content offered is another battle entirely. How can you truly utilise your content strategy to drive engagement with consumers and inspire brand loyalty?

Who better to answer this question than Mark Brayton, Content Marketing Director at Barclays. With over 15 years of experience, Mark leads a team of over 120 marketing professionals and oversees branch marketing, colleague engagement and the editorial strategy, as well as holding responsibility for social media and creative content. Mark also co-chairs Barclays UK Marketing Executive Committee.

On Wednesday 11 January over 150 Forum Members tuned in to a webinar with Mark, live from the Barclays building in Canary Wharf, looking to gain insight into how Barclays have made content the foundation of their customer engagement strategy. In an excellent 40-minute presentation Mark did just this, outlining the key areas of transformation that have allowed Barclays to build their content strategy 'from the inside out'.

Mark began by explaining that at inception it had been important for the team to understand why exactly content was the case for change and furthermore, how should Barclays go about investing in a content strategy.

As Mark sees it, following the shift in consumer trust post-crash, many financial services companies felt that there were only two communication strategies available to regain reputation. Option A was to take heed of the bad feeling and wait for it to all blow over, not a strategy that entirely aligns itself with customer engagement. Alternatively, there was Option B; shout the key messages of positivity from the rooftops and try to change consumer perception by overt persuasion.

Yet neither option felt like the right path. In fact, with the emergence of digital channels such as internet and mobile, Mark believed that the real opportunity to regain trust lay in embracing the hypoconnectivity of digital and using it to gain a deeper understanding of the new consumer expectations of brand engagement and content that were emerging. Mark asked, what is the presence of our brand in these channels? And what are the consumers' needs and expectations of the brand's behaviour? Digital affords companies with a chance to get close to their customers and talk to them in a different way – a focused opportunity to gain trust by offering personalised and informative content at times and mediums that suit the customer.

Whilst older consumers are beginning to become increasingly comfortable with using digital channels to carry out day-to-day tasks, an entire generation of new customers are growing up with mobile and social as the norm. The youth of today will soon become tomorrow's banking customers. What expectations will they have of the channels and services offered by financial services companies in years to come? As Mark outlined, businesses must constantly think ahead and place the ability to change and transform at the core of their business strategy to remain successful.

Touching upon Barclays transformation journey, Mark noted that 'People and Talent' – and how to nurture the skills of the content marketer of the future - was crucial to the continued evolution of content strategy. Mark explained that it is important for marketing heads to not only ask themselves what capabilities the team will need to succeed in the future - but how best they can continue to inspire and nurture talent. How exactly will these capabilities be personified as hypothetical team members?

Technical transformation has also been a key factor in growing Barclays' content marketing strategy. Mark explained that the development of core editorial themes that run throughout the business have been led by social listening, SEO, data analytics amongst other barometers, giving the business an acute understanding of what themes their consumers are actively engaging with and interested in. New content management systems overlay a single source across multiple platforms and allow the company to fully utilise all channels available. Due to this, the business can be 'present and active to its core', as Mark explained, and provide content on channels that are 'native to its audience' such as mobile.

Finally, creative, which Mark identified as what he believes to be the key competitive differentiator in producing outstanding quality content. The use of video has been a key element in Barclays' strategy, allowing the brand to produce relevant and focused content with a defined brand perspective. The relatable 'human story' element of the 'Digital Eagles' video series has proved popular with consumers, whilst the magic combination of 'right topic, right channel, right creative and relevant' led to a video campaign helping consumers avoid 'distraction fraud' occurring at ATM's gain significant social cut-through.

To conclude, Mark outlined 4 key reflections from Barclays' transformation in Content Marketing:

- 1) The content revolution is here and change has already happened. Financial services companies are now in a position to strive to evolve and transform to retain competitive advantage.
- 2) For Barclays, maturity of the content strategy has been staged over three levels of transformation; People & Talent, Technical and Creative.
- 3) Constant adaption to meet the changing needs of the consumer is key. In order to do this, companies can consistently seek to better understand the changing expectations of the consumer.
- 4) Content should be innovative, yet planned and aligned with editorial strategy.

This was a thoroughly insightful and thought provoking webinar and we enjoyed a fantastic attendance from members with a lot of participation during the 'digital' Q&A. Thank you to Mark and the team at Barclays for hosting.

Our next webinar will be looking at 'The Future of Financial Services – Utility vs Meaning' on Wednesday 8 March 2017, looking at how brands such as Nike and Uber have used technology. You can register on BrightTALK now via this link:

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