NewsCred



# Brands As Publishers:

15 Market
Leaders That Get
Content Right.

### Brands As Publishers

### Welcome!

We're excited about your interest in growing your content-marketing strategy. After months of research and talking to countless clients, agencies and brands, we've developed a very actionable and useful white paper that will help you define your content strategy and learn from the best in the business.

As you may already know, NewsCred connects publishers and brands with the world's best journalism.

We're committed to helping our clients succeed with creative, innovative, affordable and sustainable solutions to build their content efforts and engage audiences. We're helping many of the world's leading brands do this already—from Orange Telecom and Zurich Insurance to Pepsi.

We hope our insights can help you too.

### —Shafqat

CEO and CoFounder. NewsCred

### Brands As Publishers

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### Be useful

By delivering content that is customized, filtered and relevant, brands have the opportunity to build trust and loyalty with their audiences. Doing this, however, is easier said than done. To start, put yourself in your audience's shoes. Ask yourself, What's in it for them? Why should they care? What are they looking for? What kind of information can you provide (best practices, case studies, thought leadership, tips and tricks) that will make their lives easier and better?

"Brand awareness and sales are achieved not through traditional advertising, but by developing brand-relevant programs that help users accomplish the task at hand."

—Aaron Shapiro, author of Users, Not Customers: Who Really Determines the Success of Your Business







The Numbers
142,148
likes on Facebook
187,800
Twitter followers

Mint.com provides a way for consumers to track their finances—across saving and checking accounts; credit cards; investments; and home, college and vehicle loans—in a user-friendly web application. In addition to providing insight into spending patterns, Mint delivers bill reminders, alerts and suggestions for saving money. But what really set Mint apart and help them acquire 1.5M users?

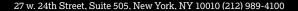
Their blog. In the early days of the start up, Noah Kagan, co-founder of Mint, focused on building out a unique personal finance blog that spoke to a young professional crowd that he felt was being neglected. The mintlife blog features updated information about everything from office organization to improving your home's curb appeal from credit expert John Ulzheimer,

consumer advocate Christopher Elliott, and personal finance commentator Beth Kobliner. Attracting 300,000 visitors a month, mintlife became a regular presence on Digg and Reddit.

Using analytics, Mint took a deeper dive into their content. Tracking conversions, conducting A/B tests around messaging and analyzing successful posts, they learned how their audience was interacting with their content and what methods were most effective. Mint gained valuable insight into their customers' behavior patterns—allowing them to continuously refine their content strategy to make it even more targeted, more relevant and more useful.

"Today's most powerful growth engine is users—people who interact with a company through digital media and technology even if they have never spent a dime. Become indispensable to users and the profits will follow."

—Aaron Shapiro, Users Not Customers: Who Really Determines the Success of Your Business



# Talk about people, not product

In spite of boundless technology, most people still turn to friends when navigating purchases. It's simple: people buy from people. In fact, according to the 2012 Digital Influence Index, 47% of U.S. consumers consult friends and family first. Brands that use relevant, quality content to champion their customers' (and their company's) culture stand out from the rest.







The Numbers 28,668,296 likes on Facebook 637,212 Twitter followers

Red Bull, an energy-drink producer that logged revenue of \$5.12 billion in 2011, doesn't talk about their products across their award-winning website. Instead, the company's strategy is centered on what they call "playground content." Red Bull hires bloggers to attend events, record the pulse of the community, and write stories about life behind-the-scenes, complete with late - night gatherings at the ski lodge, underground

music and fashion, and trips to Austin tattoo parlors. Rather than focusing on the beverage itself, Red Bull's "playground content" tells the story of the people: from multimedia coverage of global BMX, skateboarding, and motocross competitions, to in-depth interviews with influential musicians like DJ Yoda, Erykah Badu and the members of Phoenix.





Of marketers place a high value on content written for people, not search engines.

—2012 Digital Content Marketing Survey<sup>9</sup>



# Write stories, not sales pitches

With millions of websites, blogs, TV shows and apps competing for the attention of users, it's critical that you write content that grabs people's attention. The stories that endure—The Catcher in the Rye, The Lord of The Rings, To Kill A Mocking-bird—create a universe within themselves through plot, vivid details, and compelling characters.

But telling a great story doesn't mean agonizing over a keyboard. Instead, strive to create content that is original, fresh and never afraid to go exploring.







The Numbers
10,892,737
likes on Facebook
262,030
Twitter followers

In the tech world, it's the glossy customer-facing companies—Apple, Google, or Instagram—that steal headlines. In this matrix, the stable and steady brands that power the world's electronics often go overlooked.

Determined to buck this trend, Intel, the \$54B semiconductor chip company, launched iQ by Intel in May. With the site, a publishing platform curated by they company's researchers and engineers, Intel hopes to "connect with a younger audience and tell them the bigger story of who we are as a brand," according to editor-in-chief Bryan Rhoads. 10 "Many of them don't know, so we need to tell them the story of Intel that is beyond PCs and beyond processors."

The site, organized in a Flipboard-like magazine, features original content and aggregated news stories from sites like The Guardian, paidContent, and Mashable.

What sets iQ by Intel apart is its approach to curation. Specifically, the site puts curatorial control in the hands of the company's 100,100 employees. By passing on ownership, the site functions as a true expression of the company's collective voice, proving once again that telling a great story doesn't require a pen.

## Chapter 2

# Think of content as commerce



As the line between brands and publishers becomes increasingly blurred, so does the line between content and commerce. Fashion editors are taking positions at leading e-commerce sites and traditional publishers are now introducing flash sales, local deals and e-shops. Consumers are also getting smarter about how they spend their time and money, expecting retailers to present them not just with a product to purchase but with an entire lifestyle to go along with it.

# Break down barriers to entry

With the proliferation of the Internet, the relationships between online retailer, digital publishers and consumers have drastically changed. Brands no longer need to invest solely in print advertising to make their voice heard. Instead, brands are finding creative ways to capture consumers with their own editorial content. For example, the advertising effectiveness company Flite partnered with MovieConnect to allow users to watch film trailers and buy movie tickets within the confines of a banner ad. Best Buy created On, a digital magalog with editorial content and advertisements from other brands. Thrillist, an event recommendation site, has pioneered the very concept of "content as commerce" with e-mail newsletters that curate the best of men's culture while also promoting their commerce site, JackThreads.

So what's the trend? Brands are breaking down barriers to entry, using editorial content to connect directly with consumers.





The Numbers
47,941
likes on Facebook
23,270
Twitter followers

Charles Schwab was in the midst of a large campaign to promote its mobile app, including 400 million display impressions on more than 44 publisher sites, when, in August 2011, S&P downgraded U.S. treasury bonds. Changing gears to reflect consumer demand, Charles Schwab partnered with Flite, an advertising platform that creates dynamic banner ads that can be updated in real time. Flite embedded Charles Schwab's thought-leadership surrounding the downgrade inside banner ads.

The dynamic ad unit provided customers with an immediate (and easy) point of access. Based on Charles Schwab's benchmarks, the Flite ad had a 63% higher CTR, a three-fold increase in interaction rate, and 15% more time spent within the ad unit compared to a similar rich media execution that Charles Schwab ran in June and July of 2011. The ad also outperformed industry benchmarks, yielding a 62% higher CTR, a 2.7 times higher engagement rate and 2.3 times more time spent within the ad unit.





"We are not in the publishing business; we are in the editing business. But if I were in the media business, I would be concerned because it used to be that in order to reach a certain kind of consumer, brands used to have to buy ads in relevant magazines or with a certain kind of television programming. That's clearly not the case anymore."

—Susan Lyne, Chairman of Gilt Groupe<sup>11</sup>



# Curate a lifestyle to covet

Rather than promoting your blog and e-commerce separately, take a cue from editorially-driven online retailers like Bergdorf Goodman, Barneys New York and Gilt Groupe, who lead with their voice and vision, then carefully layer in their product and service offer. By collating culture, commerce and "cool," brands curate a lifestyle—an entire brand experience—that consumers can buy into. Through photo diaries, newsletters, tips and videos, online retailers have an opportunity to create a more connected and meaningful shopping experience—and a strategic business proposition.





## The Numbers 775,473 likes on Facebook 286,853 Twitter followers

"For us, this is nothing new," Claudia Plant, editorial director of Net-A-Porter, told the New York Times in 2011. "For 10 years, we have been giving people information they want in a compelling, entertaining format while they shop. We fuse content with commerce and fashion." 12

Mr Porter, an offshoot of Net-a-Porter that delivers high-end retail for men, feels like a beautiful online magazine, rather than a retail destination. By layering sales promotions and products under editorial content—how-to tips, video manuals, photo spreads, a weekly journal and call-to-action messaging—the site creates an immersive digital experience. For example, their "Style Guide" promotes their mobile app, essentials (classic

items every man should own), a "Stylepedia" and even "Style Advisors" who you can call up for advice. Net-a-Porter's iPad app takes content and commerce a step further. In horizontal mode, the app offers a slide show of models walking the runway. In portrait mode, individual items appear in a retail environment, ready to purchase at the swipe of a finger.

## Get people to like, <u>love</u>, want, buy

The small things still make a big difference. By making it easy for your customers to become brand advocates through small social gestures, recommendations and personal endorsements, you'll build trust and loyalty and, eventually, transform brand advocates into customers.



"A very small fraction of visitors—typically between 3% and 10%—are actually interacting with the content portions of a site, but those visitors visit more frequently and convert at a higher rate."

—Maureen Mullen, research and advisory lead at L2, a think tank for digital innovation<sup>13</sup>





The Numbers
51,434
likes on Facebook
1,115,506
Twitter followers

Elle recently launched a shoppable trend guide on Facebook. Taking advantage of Facebook's Open Graph, users can go beyond the traditional "Like" buttons and "Love," "Want," "Own" or even "Buy" a look, an option that directs users to the online stores of Elle's product partners. The Facebook app allows friends and followers of Elle.com to push sales through personal endorsements and

recommendations. When users click on one of the "embed" buttons, a "Shopable Story" will show up on both their wall and their friend's newsfeed. It's a smart strategy, regardless of whether or not someone chooses to "Buy." Every small action becomes an automatic brand endorsement—and gives people enough confidence in the brand to come back and make a purchase.







## Make sharing simple

According to comScore, social media now consumes 1 out of every 5 minutes spent online. For brands, promoting content across social networks can be daunting. But doing it well, and making sharing easy with accessible prompts and opportunities to act, can take your brand to more places at no added cost. Spotify, for example, owes much of its massive user growth in 2011 to its integration with Facebook's Open Graph. Spotify's app makes it seamless for users to share what they are listening to on Facebook and find music recommendations from friends. Since its U.S. launch, Facebook has helped Spotify add 7 million users. 19







The Numbers
15,280
likes on Facebook
156,014
Twitter followers



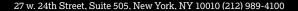
Seventy-five percent of social media time is spent on Facebook.<sup>20</sup> With this in mind, @WalmartLabs launched Shopycat, a Facebook application that produced gift ideas based on social data. While Shopycat could have limited the products available to those it stocks in its stores, Walmart took the uncommon approach of including other retailers, ranging from Barnes & Noble to Hot Topic, in its database.

In doing so, Shopycat provides users with a truly comprehensive search engine for gifts without requiring them to leave the Facebook interface.

Paid advertising of the Shopycat service drove 275.4 million impressions. More impressive, however, is the way Shopycat's utility earned an additional 117.3 million impressions—a 43% boost—through social sharing.<sup>21</sup>

"To utilize social media tools effectively and properly, you must absolutely generate spontaneous communications in direct response to what others are saying or to what is happening in that moment. Be yourself. Be conversational. Be engaged."

— Aliza Sherman, a partner at Conversify, a social marketing firm<sup>22</sup>



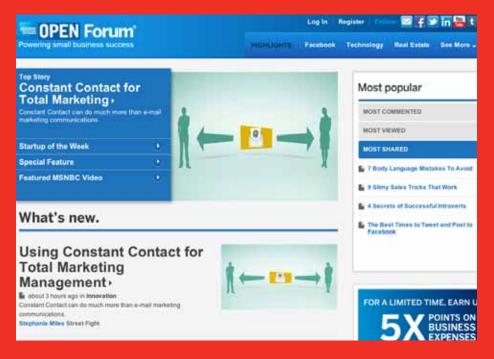
# Get your content out into the world: syndicate

Publishers aren't the only ones with the opportunity to monetize their content through advertising or sponsorships. Brands are encroaching upon this territory too. L'Oréal, for example, brings in new revenue by syndicating the content on Makeup.com and Charles Schwab uses up-to-the-minute financial news content in banner ads to drive traffic to their site.

As a content producer, you've spent countless hours developing your voice and opinions through content. Why keep it locked inside a blog or website? Syndication not only offers an opportunity to get your content out to the world, it can also provide an additional source of revenue.







The Numbers 250,827 likes on Facebook 152,755 Twitter followers

The award-winning educational and networking community, OPEN Forum, was founded by American Express in 2007 with the aim of helping small businesses grow. Since its launch, OPEN Forum has passed more than 1 million monthly unique visitors and has grown into a social networking hub that enables small-business owners to communicate and share ideas with one another. Part idea hub, the OPEN Forum arms entrepreneurs and small-business owners with practical information, such as how to leverage Facebook effectively or ways to improve your mental toughness. The platform also enables small-business owners who have an American Express OPEN card to create a profile, share ideas and market their own companies.

The success of OPEN Forum can be accredited to not just the quality of its content, but also its

syndication strategy, which gets American Express content into more places and attracts new audiences.

"Our mission is to be everywhere our Cardmembers and merchants are," Leslie Berland, SVP of Digital Partnerships and Development, told Mashable.<sup>23</sup> "To engage with them, service them, deliver unique value that's shareable and create seamless digital experiences that surprise and delight."

By syndicating their content through RSS feeds, widgets, rich video and conversational ad units, American Express brings content to the user when and where it is most relevant, creating new levels of customer engagement and reaching new audiences. It also provides Amex with deep insight into how their content is performing around the web so that they can understand who is consuming their content, how it's being used, on which platforms, and how it's performing.

"What's required is a kind of social media sherpa, who can find you the audience you seek, who can reach them on the platforms where they are already congregating, and who can help promote in tasteful ways that fit the sensitivities of the networks where your audiences are found."

—Chris Brogan, president of Human Business Works, a strategic advisory company<sup>24</sup>



## Go mobile

According to Nielsen, 49.7% of Americans own a smart phone. <sup>25</sup> Each year, that number increases. What's even more surprising is that most people look at their phone about 150 times a day, at an average of once every 6.5 minutes. <sup>26</sup> According to the digital strategist Jinal Shah of JWT, brands interested in capturing the attention of customers on-the-go need to provide ways to create a mobile content experience that's natural, convenient and offers real-time information, like driving directions, prices and reviews. <sup>27</sup>





"Web-based traffic will eventually be zero. It will all be mobile. The devices are too good. Your office is wherever you're sitting."

— Bob Bowman, president and CEO of Major League Baseball Advance Media<sup>28</sup>







The Numbers
1,365,290
likes on Facebook
2,195,979
Twitter followers

Twelve years ago, baseball commissioner Bud Selig asked Bob Bowman, now CEO of MLB Advance Media (BAM), to take Major League Baseball into the digital age. By building MLB. com, apps and online games, Bowman did that—and then some. This year, 65% of BAM's media will be consumed wirelessly via MLB At Bat: an app that gives users access to live, streaming HD video, archived games, radio broadcasts, highlights and breaking news.

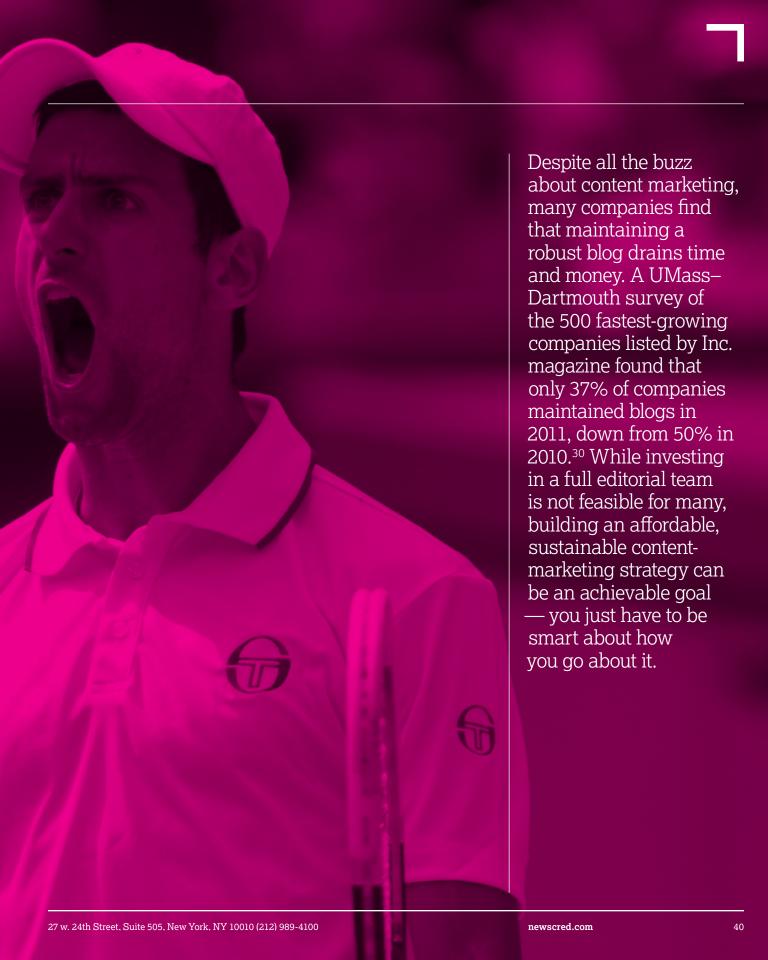
The takeaway? Developing a successful mobile product wasn't so much about seeing the future as acting on it. At a time when content on the Internet was mostly free, BAM took a different tack. "Our philosophy was just because it's on the Internet it shouldn't be free," Bowman told Fast Company in March.<sup>29</sup> "It was a risk." Bowman's bet has paid off. Today, the company has 2.2 million paid subscribers and an annual revenue of \$620 million.



## **Chapter 4**

Build an affordable, sustainable content strategy





### Find your content balance

Let's get practical. You want to create quality content that will engage your audiences, keep up with the speed and scale your audiences demand, and be flexible enough to get your content onto new platforms, devices and social networks. But you lack the budget to hire an editorial army.







The Numbers
115,224
likes on Facebook
1,910,192
Twitter followers

Betsy Morgan, former CEO of The Huffington Post, pioneered the "rule of thirds," an audience and cost strategy that allowed the publication to grow to a multibillion dollar business. She advises publishers to use one-third aggregated content, one third original content, and one-third voice and opinion.

Brands can learn from this model too. Thought leadership, the first part, defines your brand voice

and sets you apart from the crowd. Curated third-party content provides an affordable way to support the objectives of your thought leadership. Finally, social media efforts across Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest provide a space for engagement and conversation.

## Focus on what you do best

Creating quality content takes time and resources. Moreover, it can distract you from other marketing priorities. Rather than struggling to manage blog posts, white papers, thought-leadership pieces, newsletters and social media campaigns, do less but do it well. As for the rest? Outsource it.

Complement original content creation with quality, licensed articles, images and video. Seventy percent of marketers plan to do just that over the next 12 months, according to a survey by Brandpoint and the Content Marketing Institute.<sup>31</sup> Marketers consider creative storytelling, engaging content and professional-level writing the most important attributes when outsourcing content.







The Numbers
224,185
likes on Facebook
12,854
Twitter followers

With over 17 million customers, Orange Telecom wanted to build their content-marketing strategy and expand their offer as one of the leading destinations in Europe for entertainment news. While their vision was ambitious, Orange Telecom's marketing team was already stretched. Rather than hiring an editorial team to create original content, they leveraged licensed, curated content to deliver real-time news across four languages.

The team created an entertainment portal that gave people a new way to interact and share entertainment news and multimedia content—whether it was on web, tablet or mobile platforms. With fully licensed multi-media content that automatically updates in real-time—for 1,500 movies in 4 languages, along with music news and reviews for 500 musicians—the portal is easy to maintain. Orange Telecom's marketing department took on the role of curator rather than content creator, allowing the company to spend their time and dollars on other initiatives without sacrificing quality.

# Leverage technology to make life easier

Advancements in curation technology, semantic analysis and NLP (natural language processing) are enabling brands to create smarter, faster and more targeted content strategies. Leading content marketers, from GE and American Express to Johnson & Johnson, are leveraging technology to do the hard work for them. For example RSS feeds that pull relevant content from around the web, algorithms that add a contextual layer to raw content to make it more meaningful (think of Amazon's trick, "If you like X, you might also like Y"), and the use of semantic analysis to filter, organize and customize content.





The Numbers
8,376,401
likes on Facebook
836,000
Twitter followers

Decades ago, launching a global marketing campaign across 200 markets would have required tremendous effort. Leveraging technology, Pepsi was able to launch Pepsi Pulse, the digital home of their new campaign, Live For Now.

In Pepsi Pulse, a multimedia entertainment platform hosted at Pepsi.com, the company blended new technology with a decades-long commitment to supporting musicians. "When we look at what Pepsi really stands for," Simon Lowden, CMO of PepsiCo, told *AdAge*, "We've been an entertainment platform for as far back as anyone can remember."<sup>32</sup>

"Pepsi Pulse" offers users a "cheat sheet" of the top 10 entertainment stories of the day surrounded by live tweets from Pepsi fans. Consumers will be able to tweet, "like" and pin items from the dashboard, as well as participate in unique challenges sponsored by celebrities.

Just a few years ago, constructing the site would have been a nightmare of individual licensing contracts and copyright laws. Instead, Pepsi partnered with NewsCred to license and curate content. Using NewsCred's semantic technology and API, they were able to customize the site to a number of hyperlocal markets and launch it in just 3 weeks.





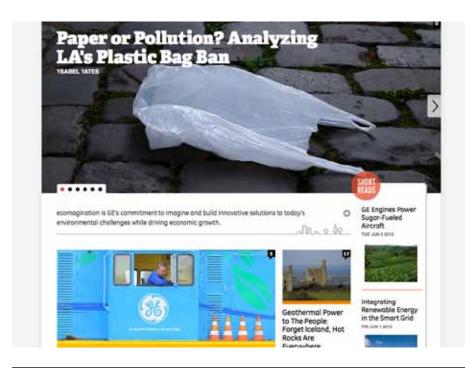


## Lead with purpose

The strongest brands put purpose at the heart of what they do. This helps consumers navigate choice. Moreover, it helps brand define their personality, find their voice and project an authentic image. The strongest brands build a purpose around an idea that is bigger than the product or service they are selling. Your content-marketing strategy should follow suit.







#### The Numbers

86,166 likes likes on Facebook 86,198 Twitter followers

"As innovation becomes increasingly crucial to the progression of our society, the value of the entrepreneur will continue to rise. It will be these makers—these doers—who help create a prosperous economy and a sustainable planet. It will be these uncompromising individuals who help create a better future. Let's not forget, sometimes it takes 3,001 tries to finally get it right."

—Michael Parrish DuDell, former Managing Editor of ecomagination<sup>1</sup>

GE's brand purpose, "Imagination at Work," brings the company's 310,000 employees together around a shared business strategy: creating new value for customers, investors and society by helping to solve energy efficiency and water challenges. With ecomagination<sup>SM</sup>, GE is riding the cutting edge of content marketing, offering its readers a "forum for fresh thinking and

conversation about clean technology and sustainable infrastructure." All of GE's content—from their daily posts on topics like LED lightbulbs and preventing deforestation—hits on this core purpose. Build a content-marketing strategy around a purpose bigger than your company.



Of brands now engage in cause marketing. Moreover, 97% of marketing executives believe cause marketing is a valid business strategy.

—2010 PR Week/Barkley PR Cause Survey<sup>2</sup>

#### <u>Inspire</u> people to do

The Internet drives \$1.2 trillion in consumer spending between research and online retail shopping.<sup>3</sup> This intersection of digital and retail worlds is creating a new space for brands and users to interact. According to a report by Barkley, 30% of non-Millennials and 37% of Millennials engage in cause-supported purchasing.<sup>4</sup> With this in mind, the most effective brands use this platform to inspire action, building a forum that enables people to share, communicate, collaborate, make and create—before they even think about making a purchase.





### The Numbers 2,141,788 likes on Facebook 61,374 Twitter followers

"By combining the principles of 'radical openness' and of 'leveraging the power of ideas to change the world,' TED is in the process of creating something brand new. I would go so far as to argue that it's creating a new Harvard—the first new top-prestige education brand in more than 100 years."

-Anya Kamenetz of Fast Company 5

TED created a viral platform for global thought leadership by tapping into our innate curiosity and leveraging the power of quality content. While TED events stand out for their ability to bring the greatest minds together in service of greater ideas, it's TED's embrace of technology to distribute video that makes it stand apart.

Today, over 900 TED Talks available in 86 languages—all translated for free by 3,100 Open Translation Project volunteers—are available online to almost anyone with an Internet connection. Rather than diluting the TED brand, this syndication strategy has helped the organization grow exponentially. The organization has a social profile that crosses national borders, and includes more Facebook followers than the United Nations, the World Bank, NATO, and the World Economic Forum—combined.





Of global consumers believe that business needs to place at least equal weight on society's interests as on business' interest.

-Citizens Engage!: Edelman goodpurpose® Study 20106



## Build community: on the ground and in the cloud

Building a community around your brand is not a marketing strategy; it's a business strategy. Take Harley-Davidson, for example. Faced with bankruptcy in 1983, Harley turned the company around by putting their community at the center of everything that they did, from marketing programs to operational procedure and governance structure. Since then, they've transformed themselves into a \$7.8 billion company.

As a content marketer, it's important to remember that your efforts—creating a robust blog, promoting engagement through social media, providing educational tools and resources—won't mean a thing if they exist in a silo. The solution? Step back and look at the big picture. Build a consistent brand experience across all touch points, merging your offline and online strategy. Focus on helping people meet their needs, whether it's emotional support, encouragement or engaging with their interests—whether those interests include deep-sea fishing, online gaming or education reform. As Susan Fournier and Lara Lee wrote in the Harvard Business Review, "brand communities are a means to an end, not an end in themselves."





The Numbers
221,617
likes on Facebook
24,197
Twitter followers

By merging their offline and online brand experience, Intel and Vice have joined a league of next generation publishers, creating an arts and culture "channel" that allows them to produce their own original thought leadership and inspire others to do so as well.

In 2009, Intel and Vice magazine partnered to launch The Creators Project: a global network dedicated to the celebration of creativity, culture and technology. The network was founded on the principle of blending the online world with an offline reality, bringing together artists with the digital world. From the record collection of a legendary DJ to a 24-hr panorama of planet earth, the Creators Project features the work of visionary artists who are using technology to push the boundaries of creative expression.

With documentary videos, a content-creation studio and a travelling event series in San Francisco, Paris, São Paulo, Seoul, Beijing and New York, The Creators Project built community around a shared interest in creative expression, taking the idea of "content + marketing" far beyond the blog.



NewsCred connects publishers and brands with the world's best journalism. NewsCred licenses, curates and syndicates full-text news articles, images and videos from over 900 of the world's highest quality sources—ranging from original work by award-winning columnists to captivating editorials from publishers like <a href="The Economist">The Guardian</a>, <a href="Forbes">Forbes</a>, <a href="Bloomberg">Bloomberg</a> and many more.

NewsCred's editorial team and powerful semantic technology filters and customizes thousands of articles every day for each of their clients' specific needs, however broad or niche. With 1 platform, 1 license and 1 bill, NewsCred makes publishing simple, affordable and instant.



The Numbers 50+ employees 3 offices (New York, London and Dhaka) 900+ sources 1000s of Journalists 1000000s of dollars back into the news ecosystem.



## Get in touch; share the good news.

Shafqat Islam CEO and CoFounder platform@newscred.com



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