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MAXIMIZING YOUR MARKETING MONEY

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Clueless about Content? Turn Basic into Brilliant with Questions

Building messages means connecting with the audience

"I've got ideas galore to take home and strengthen my brand."

Jan Scott,
President/CEO,
St. Louis
Publishers, Inc.

Brilliant marketing results in revenues of several million instead of only a few thousand. Connect with customers through your marketing content and reap the benefits all the way to the bank. Add punch. Perspective. Most of us expect we have to be clever in our marketing content. Not necessarily so.

Marjie Bassler of Critter Wit Designs made an amazing discovery when she began to build a website for her whimsical animal art. Research showed people searched for whimsical cat and dog art but almost never used that phrase in conjunction with horses. Marjie's question: "How are people searching the web for artwork like mine?"

Coach Karen Van Cleve introduced a stethoscope into Do It Yourself Brain Surgery graphics. Focus group feedback indicated the concept didn't translate. Her site was suddenly viewed as medical in nature. Karen's question: "What do these visuals make you think of?"

Review nuances

Translate boring to stimulating with small differences, or nuances. Ask: "What makes me different?" Tweaking content involves checking, getting feedback and listening to ongoing evaluation. Balance data while working

to deepen the level of your customer's understanding.

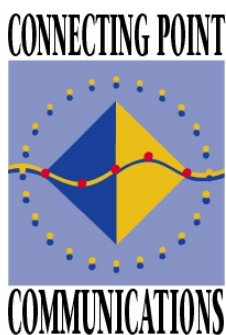
Coach Karen put it this way: "We all think we know things. Yet we only 'get it' on a certain level. We need to deepen our own understanding to communicate to others effectively." Karen's question: "How can I make this meaningful for my audience?"

Understand your clients

"I don't know if my experience is typical," said Karen. "My website is about me as a coach and the process of coaching. It didn't look any different from any other coach's. I wanted to change the emphasis to be on the subject."

"I started working with 'The Elastic Brain' as a topic several months ago, and my research developed into specialized content. At first, I didn't have a plan. I produced a presentation for trainers, for coaches and then for a weight center. When I changed the examples and the application worked, I realized I had a solid foundation for my central idea.

"I started seeing commonalities, a theme. The real leap was to put it out there and have people say, 'Yeah, that's interesting. That's something I can fol-



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What makes the big guys great? Their marketing strikes a chord. Simply reach out to customers, connect and engage.

low through on.’ That’s when my perspective for my website changed.”

Karen and I discussed the point at which you as an entity merge with your content and decided we didn’t have the answer. We agreed reinventing yourself ignites passion and generates perspective. Using different methods also generates passion.

One independent publisher spends two weeks each quarter writing content. She requests feedback from her customers via trade shows, email and blog comments.

She asks, “Is there a demand for downloadable textbooks? Do you want to receive them chapter-by-chapter? Do you prefer the text be bundled with the teacher manual and the laboratory workbook?”

This is nothing new. Hundreds of authors discuss the “how” of changing perspectives. Daniel Pink in his book *“A Whole New Mind: Moving from the Information Age to the Conceptual Age,”* discusses connecting new knowledge with something you already know.

Pink points to a premise that content needs to be less about data and more about how people plan to use the data.

Use customer perspective

Marjie described her newsletter process. “I include information about my art events, but it can’t be all about that. I like to focus on things of interest to the people who enjoy my art. For example, many enjoy hearing about animal rescue groups and events being held to benefit them.”

What Marjie outlines is a simple way of reaching out to customers, connecting and engaging. Although we read about this theory frequently, in real life it happens in small, special ways.

What makes the big guys great? Their marketing strikes a chord. Or, in Karen’s words: “If we don’t deliver what people want in the way they want it, we’re just occupying our time.”

Connect

“The human family kind of story is what goes viral,” Karen continued. “For me, the foundation and value in my content means finding that universal place. World music for example, touches everyone; it’s relatable.”

Consider the question: “How can I connect with my customers?” Ask often, “what do you think?”

Conclusion

Rather than putting yourself in the “clueless” category, begin now to talk with customers. Know that good content starts with you; as you develop and communicate ideas, content evolves to brand. You help other people understand with your question, “How can I make this better for you?” You’ll know it when sales jump, traffic increases and customers keep coming back for your content.

To Learn More

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