

WINTER 2018

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A large, stylized graphic of the year '2018'. The numbers are rendered in a bold, sans-serif font. The '2' is blue, the '0' is teal, the first '1' is yellow, and the '8' is red. The digits are slightly offset from each other, creating a sense of depth and movement.

S O U R C E B O O K

A GUIDE TO CONTENT AND THE DIGITAL EXPERIENCE



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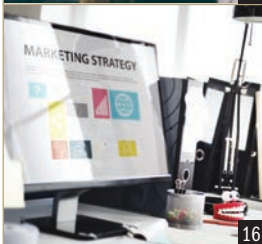
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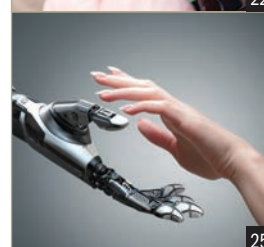
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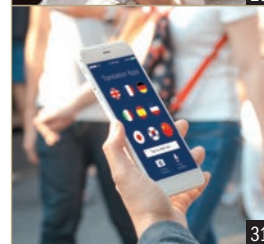
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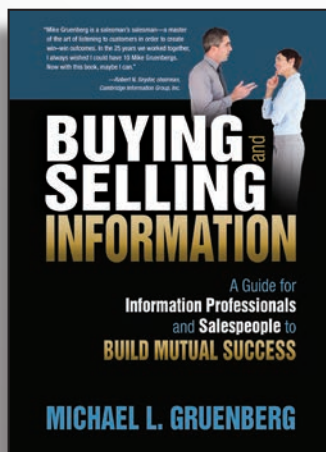


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There was a typo in the EContent 100 2017-2018 list. AppNexis should be AppNexus. Additionally, in a news article, Kurt Kratchman was mistyped as Krachtman. We regret the errors.

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Podcast Success Reinforces Old Lessons in Engagement

The other day, my significant other told me I should start a podcast called *There's This Podcast ...*, which is something he hears a lot around our house. I love NPR, but sometimes, I just can't deal with the news anymore. I turn to podcasts to keep me company while I work, clean, or walk the dog. I was excited to see that the Knight Foundation had done some research on people like me—calling us “super listeners” (which is a kind of nice thing to be called, when you think about it).

More specifically, the foundation talked to “28,964 podcast listeners, 18 years of age or older, who listened to at least one audio podcast from one of six sources: National Public Radio, WNYC, American Public Media, WBUR, PRX and Gimlet Media.” Those super listeners consume twice the content, prefer a subscription-based model and downloading and listening to content later, favor mobile content and listening on the go, prefer in-depth content, and are avid public media supporters.

But when this research popped up in my inbox, it was pitched as providing “lessons in engagement.” My mind immediately went to all the Facebook groups I belong to where fans gather to discuss their favorite podcasts—and any number of related topics—often with the hosts of the podcasts.

Personally, my podcast app is filled with true crime, some comedy, and a bit of history. For whatever reason, the true crime podcasts seem to have spawned the most rabid fans. I belong to discussion groups for *Crime Writers On...*, *True Crime Obsessed*, and *My Favorite Murder*. In fact, not only do I belong to the official *My Favorite Murder* discussion group in which “Murderinos” come together to talk about the podcast and true crime, but I also belong to spinoff groups for “Furderinos” and “Garderinos”—groups for people who love animals and gardening, respectively, as well as true crime stories.

Once, I was at an unrelated event where someone was talking about moderating Facebook groups and how she be-

longed to a group for a podcast she listens to. I immediately, and without hesitation, asked, “Is the podcast *My Favorite Murder*?” She said, “Yes! Are you a Murderino?” The other woman we were talking to was confused, so we filled her in. Later, her husband reported that she was listening to *My Favorite Murder* while cleaning the kitchen.

If you were to Google the term “Murderino,” you’d find a number of essays written by fans about their favorite podcast and what they get from it. You’d also find plenty of articles from professional writers diving into the phenomenon of a podcast about two women telling each other true crime stories, while swearing a lot and handing out advice such as, “Stay sexy, and don’t get murdered.” You would also find a lot of fan art.

Every marketer reading this wishes he or she had fans who are this engaged and evangelical. But it isn’t just Murderinos who want to tell everyone about their favorite podcasts. “96% said they had recommended a podcast to a friend. Word of mouth was the primary means for podcast discovery for these respondents, with just over half saying the primary means by which they learned about new podcasts were recommendations from program hosts or friends and family,” according to the Knight Foundation.

The thing about podcasts is that they are a completely democratic medium. Anyone with basic recording equipment can start one and has a chance to find an audience. And if they get successful enough—which has happened to many indie podcasts I’ve listened to—they’ll get snapped up by a network.

Publishers are catching on. Several of the podcasts I listen to are associated with newspapers. Newsrooms such as those at the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* and the *Cincinnati Enquirer* are catching on to the power of the podcast. But what it really comes down to is the old adage: “Content is king.” Podcasts are able to create in-depth, quality content for very specific and therefore engaged audiences. And fans can consume it all while on-the-go (Knight’s research found that 93% of super listeners listen to podcasts via smartphone). In other words, podcasts deliver the right content, to the right person, on the right device—a lesson every content creator knows is the key to success. ■

Every marketer
reading this wishes
they had fans who
are this engaged
and evangelical.



The State of WCM



There may be no tool more important to the daily life of web users, but more overlooked, than the WCM system. Ask the average web surfer what powers the content he or she consumes, and he or she would likely just look at you dumbfounded. But businesses and publishers know how important WCM systems are to getting their messages out to the masses. While WCM systems may be the foundation much of the web is built on, the industry is changing shape all the time.

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

In 2017, outside trends helped shape the WCM landscape, while a customer desire for simplicity has been driving the way vendors think about their products. Artificial intelligence (AI) was on the tip of everyone's tongue in 2017, and that was no different in the WCM realm. Tony Byrne, founder of Real Story Group, says, "Experimentation with AI-ish services to do content optimization at the edge" was big last year. Considering how AI has infiltrated the marketplace, it's no

surprise that WCM vendors have been experimenting with its application in multi-variate testing and personalization.

Irina Guseva, senior director of product marketing at BloomReach, pointed to more subtle trends impacting the way WCM developed during the past year. "CTOs and CIOs are driving change alongside the CMOs," she says. "Technology buyers in general have become more sophisticated, IT in particular is being seen more often in the driver seat for technology selections in WCM and even in the larger DX [digital experience] space."

What's driving this renewed interest in software? "Marketing and business want to innovate faster, want to reach their customers across all existing and emerging touchpoints, and they need IT to be on the same team with them," says Guseva. "They are looking for a WCM technology built for developers, but to propel marketing innovation. Dissonance between these two groups is not possible—they're working hand-in-hand towards a common goal."

So what are these teams looking for, and ultimately purchasing, when it's time for a new WCM system? A return to the basics, it seems. Byrne says, "Replacement of more complex WCM platforms with simpler alternatives" was the norm in 2017.

Marianne Kay, web CMS officer at the University of Leeds, concurs that the industry is trending toward simplicity: "For some years, WCM software vendors focused their sales and product development efforts on the features that directly impacted the end-user experience, leaving content editors and CMS developers to muddle through clunky interfaces and inflexible, hard-to-extend database structures. 2017 saw a clear shift from this previous focus on personalization, responsive layouts, and slick design themes to developer-friendly and content-editor-friendly systems that focus on fast and seamless content delivery."

'Open source will become a default option.'

Guseva has a slightly different take on what WCM customers need these days. She sees a "need for flexibility, versatility in WCM deployments." And that seems to have culminated in a drive toward headless CMS solutions."

"We can safely call 2017 the year of the headless CMS," says Guseva. "The year quickly turned from headless buzzword into the headless reality. As IT began driving technology projects to enable marketing and business innovation, they wanted to be able to accomplish two things. One, get to value a lot quicker. Two, have the flexibility and choice in technologies they use to get there. This is where the idea of experience-as-a-service (XaaS) trumped the old monolithic approaches to WCM and digital experiences."

Byrne isn't quite ready to accept headless CMSs as the solution to all of our content dilemmas. "Headless topologies are essential to enterprises that need to engage through applications and services rather than traditional websites, but it doesn't always resolve the problem of content contributors managing experiences across diverse endpoints. WCM vendors have a lot of work to do here."

A LOOK AHEAD

We won't see headless CMSs or any of these trends simply disappear as we turn the page on the calendar to a new year, but they will be changed by the expectations

of 2018. Here, our experts turn back to familiar territory. "The urgency for brands to get ahead in the digital game will drive them to explore more rapid ways to innovate," says Guseva. "Marketing innovators are already thinking in terms of amplifying the power of humans and machines via machine learning and AI. Intelligence is an absolute imperative in the digital game. Data-driven personalization that leads to 1:1 individualization of digital experiences is the modern reality."

Personalized digital experience isn't new in 2018, but it's still a challenge for many companies. Add individualization to the lineup of expectations, and the task could seem even more daunting. Guseva says, "The new generation of individualization also puts pressure on delivering the right experience to the ever-growing number of channels and touchpoints: from physical spaces to virtual assistants and smart things. You cannot do that well without the human plus machine connective tissue. You cannot do that well without an open, versatile, and intelligent WCM system, which remains a mission-critical technology today, next year, and beyond."

Technology is as big a piece of the content puzzle as strategy. Kay thinks that the technology driving these experiences will be less proprietary. She says, "Open source will become a default option. Whichever web CMS platform you choose, implementation and running costs dwarf license fees. ... The product codebase is no longer the top secret asset—it's what companies do with it that counts. Keeping the codebase open widens the developer's community and helps to spread the word about the quality of the product. Being open makes good business sense."

In fact, opening up your code to developers in 2018 can help you keep up with the eternal challenge of all content creators: the proliferating number of devices. Kay says, "Voice content is an emerging type of content that CMS vendors need to pay attention to, going forward. The demand for voice content management will continue to increase as adoption of echo devices like Alexa, and the popularity of voice search increase. It's simply a matter of time." ■

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The State of Mobile Content



Despite the significant uptick in consumer use of mobile technology, there's still a big gap between those marketers who have effectively embraced mobile to provide an engaging user experience and those who have a long way to go. While experts have been predicting a big bump in the use of more sophisticated technology to deliver better mobile experiences through augmented reality (AR), mixed reality, and virtual reality (VR), for instance, those predictions have yet to be fully borne out. Instead, what we saw in 2017 was continued growth in the app marketplaces, the rapid advent of chatbots, and a growing focus on video (specifically live video), to engage audiences.

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

Mobile is here to stay. "People spend more time consuming digital media on mobile devices than on a desktop and this trend will definitely continue," according to the "App Download and Usage Statistics" report from Business of Apps. Those between the ages of 18 and 24 spend the greatest amount of time on mobile apps, and they have a wide range of apps to choose from. According to

the report, the Android marketplace alone reached the 3 million mark in June 2017.

But while apps continue to proliferate, there was a new tool on the block in 2017: your voice. Amazon's Alexa took the world by storm, followed quickly by Google Home. These virtual assistants and other artificial intelligence-powered technology have been taking center stage.

As consumers have become increasingly connected to their mobile phones and a virtually 24/7/365 mobile experience, brands and media outlets have been scrambling to launch bots that allow ready access to information through interactions that feel increasingly real. Facebook's Messenger now boasts more than 100,000 chatbots, and others are rapidly working to catch up.

Consumers are increasingly looking for ease of use from their mobile experiences, according to a 2017 report from UserTesting that evaluated the mobile website experiences for eight of the top *Fortune* 100 Retailers: Best Buy, Costco, The Home Depot, Lowe's, Macy's, Target, TJ Maxx, and Walmart. The study measured ease of use by having shoppers attempt to locate an item, review

shipping information, and find a store location. Best Buy, The Home Depot, and Target topped the list; Costco and Walmart trailed behind.

Consumers are also looking for speed in their online shopping experience. Google has helped them find it through its Accelerated Mobile Pages (AMP), an open source code that mobile developers can use to help pages load quickly on a smartphone. When doing a search on mobile, an “AMP” in front of the search result sends a signal that the site will load quickly.

Increasingly, consumers are in the driver’s seat when it comes to how they choose to interact with brands, publishers, and others in the mobile environment. They will continue to be in charge in 2018 as brands and publishers compete for their attention.

A LOOK AHEAD

Peggy Anne Salz is founder of and chief analyst at MobileGroove and a top 30 mobile marketing influencer. She points to three key trends in mobile marketing for 2018: a user-centric approach, a focus on engagement versus acquisition, and the need to be truly multichannel.

There has been, says Salz, a “huge cycle of learning in the industry.” Content marketers now understand, she says, that “from here on out, it’s not mobile-centric; it’s user-centric.” There’s no single screen for engaging with consumers—there are two, three, four, or more. Increasingly, consumers are expecting their experiences to be coordinated and seamless across apps and devices. Content marketers are scrambling to be able to deliver that seamless experience.

‘We all need to take video very seriously because of the medium.’

Mobile marketers must now focus more on engagement than acquisition, Salz says. It’s not about building an audience; it’s about engaging that audience. Personalization, she says, is one important way to do that: “It’s not a nice thing to have; it’s a necessity.” Publishers, brands, and marketers need to take personalization seriously—and to the next level. “It used to be we thought personalization was just having your name in your email,” she says. “Now we have the technology that enables much deeper and richer personalization, segmentation, and targeting than ever before.”

The mobile experience is screen-centric. “It’s a visual medium,” says Salz, which makes mobile video a must. “We all need to take video very seriously because of the medium.”

Kristin Marquet agrees. She is the owner of three small businesses: Creative Development Agency, FemFounder.co, and TheHauteRebel.com (the last two are publishing platforms). In 2018, says Marquet, livestreaming on social platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube will “grow incredibly.” Major fashion brands have already perfected the use of livestreaming, she says, and even B2B brands and agencies are offering educational webinars and master classes in real time via Zoom or Facebook’s Live. According to Livestream, 80% of brand audiences prefer to watch live video than read a blog, while 82% prefer live video to social posts. Perhaps of most interest to marketers, according to its research: 45% of live video audiences would be willing to pay for on-demand video content.

The use of mobile is also driving another trend that will impact marketers: mobile search. According to Google, 20% of searches are now done by voice, and that number is expected to rise exponentially. And there’s another change on the mobile horizon. According to Gartner research, 20% of brands will abandon their mobile apps: “Competition for consumers is high amid the millions of options offered in app stores, and apps are expensive to support. Compelling alternatives such as progressive web apps mean the branded app economy is poised for change.” And brands and marketers will continue to explore opportunities with chatbots and new technologies such as AR, VR, machine learning, and the Internet of Things (IoT).

There is something that Salz and likely others would like to see less of in 2018: clickbait. “I would appreciate, please, no clickbait in the new year,” she says. Mobile continues to represent great opportunities for content marketers hoping to connect with consumers. But marketers risk turning those consumers off if they don’t deliver quality content. Going down the path of using clickbait to gain eyeballs is likely to backfire, she says. Marketers who can provide a seamless, visually engaging user experience not only on mobile, but across all channels, are likely to lead the pack in 2018 and beyond. ■

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The State of Big Data



Big Data, that corpus of global digital information characterized by velocity, variety, and volume—with contributions from just about every being and machine on the planet—has achieved such a scope and speed of growth that any attempt to quantify it is outdated as soon as it's measured. If, in the last year, Amazon sold 636 items per second on Amazon Prime Day, YouTube saw 300 hours of video uploaded by users every minute, and Google handled 3.5 billion searches per day, then count on 2018 to bring more of the same.

If 2011 was the year that “data” began answering to “Big Data,” Tamara Dull, director of emerging technologies for SAS’ Best Practices team, says that in 2017, “IoT ripped the ‘big’ right off Big Data’s face.” Dull says, “The story isn’t as much about Big Data, but rather, the Big Data technologies that allow organizations to store and process all kinds of data—structured, semi-structured, and unstructured—at a fraction of the cost and time of traditional technologies.”

That change in emphasis means a permanent shift to figuring out the best way to pull out what’s needed for the

people who need it—and doing so in a way that supports their decision making without requiring a data-science degree. It means integrating disparate datasets to create more personalized end-user experiences. As 5G wireless moves closer to fruition, there will be implications for when, where, and how Big Data is accessed by an increasingly mobile userbase. And while pushing data to the edges for faster decision making has its appeal, concerns around data security and privacy abound, especially after a year when data breaches dominated headlines and set consumers on edge.

With Big Data growth getting a boost thanks to such things as your organization’s customer relationship management (CRM), the U.S. president’s Twitter account, and your mother-in-law’s smart thermostat, there’s no time to lose in tackling these challenges.

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

The growth of the Internet of Things (IoT) in commercial and industrial usage is one of the main drivers of Big Data’s expansion in uncharted directions. Stan

Lequin, VP of consulting services for Insight, a technology provider of hardware, software, and service solutions to business and government clients, says, “We work with companies that have been around for 200 years, who are now able to pull client endpoint data and analyze it for the first time,” thanks to IoT. “It’s made predictive maintenance and preventative maintenance easier and created new as-a-service possibilities that are entirely new revenue streams.”

Dull sees the IoT having an impact across the board, with manufacturing, transportation, utilities, and health-care leading the way. She says, “Any organization, regardless of size or shape, can now ask questions like, What does ‘data-driven’ look like for us? What stories are locked inside our data? And can we make money with our data?”

Who gets to dive into the data to answer those questions has changed. “The democratization of Big Data means that we are seeing data push out to the edges,” says Lequin. “Business intelligence for the masses has really picked up over the past year.” He credits an increase in data accessibility within organizations, easier access to external data sources thanks to APIs, and tools that put visualization and analytical capability into the hands of decision makers.

‘What stories are locked inside our data?’

With regard to security concerns in 2017, Dull points out that the devices networked in the IoT don’t necessarily come with robust built-in security, and that puts the onus on consumers. “We can no longer assume that a manufacturer or an app developer is going to do everything they can to make our experience safe and secure. It is now our responsibility as consumers to become amateur security geeks and privacy freaks.” The upside? IoT manufacturers that create safe, secure devices will have a competitive edge.

A LOOK AHEAD

Lequin believes that for Big Data in 2018, all the key capabilities are in place, but their adoption and evolution will speed up. “There will be more accessibility; it will be easier to plug in both internal and external data sources—and the database tools with which it’s all done will be easier to work with,” he says. Dull says there’s

an urgency to getting the IoT’s contribution to Big Data right. She says, “I’ve been keeping my eye on three ‘S’ developments for IoT: security, standards, and skills. If these three areas don’t get addressed properly—and sooner rather than later—then it’s game over for IoT.”

Personalization will continue to gain importance, according to Craig Smith, CEO and founder of Trinity Insight, an optimization agency that assists ecommerce brands with managing data, digital marketing, and user-experience efforts. “A key part of Big Data is activation in the customer journey,” says Smith. He cites the example of a shopper buying a pair of children’s cleats in-store and providing an email address during the checkout process. Effective personalization might come in the form of an emailed offer for a complimentary ebook on football, a Facebook sidebar ad for football helmets, and a football equipment catalog in the mailbox 12 months later. Due to the complexity of integrating datasets such as account information, web analytics, and search behaviors, Smith says that type of implementation isn’t mainstream yet. “But it will be par for the course in 5 years.”

With the growing importance of mobile usage, all eyes are on 5G, the next-gen network system that will be characterized by higher speeds and capacity and lower latency than existing cellular systems—or at least they should be. “We’re shocked at how much people don’t know about 5G,” says Lequin. “Our expectation is that 5G will be a part of every client conversation we have in late 2019 and 2020. We know it will create a lot more accessibility.”

Finally, Lequin points to one challenge that pre-dates Big Data by approximately 200,000 years: an aversion to change. “Organizations are averse to change; it’s hard to think of as-a-service revenue streams that bring in revenue monthly rather than all at once.” It’s why Lequin says that to get the most value from their Big Data, organizations need one thing above all: blue-sky visionaries who are internal champions and can guide that transformation from analog to digital. ■

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blog



Monday, 12:40

Today, I am going to the shops. Describe the best promotions. I think you can find something interesting. I will try to take pictures and accurately describe all commodities. Compare prices and will choose stores that have the best price of the goods. Thank you all for your emails and proposal.

Sunday, 14:50

Today is Sunday :) We rest. I'm going with my family to the lake. In the end deserved rest. The husband will be fished. An avid angler. I will probably go to the still children on a mushroom and a walk in the woods.

The State of Content Marketing



Another year is gone, and both B2C and B2B marketers still continue to be increasingly focused on content marketing. Despite new technology that may take the content production world by storm, movement has been somewhat slow among the masses of marketers in terms of really leveraging things such as artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning, despite the predictions of experts in last year's Sourcebook that content would become far more interactive and sophisticated as tools such as IBM's Watson came into play.

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

A couple of predictions held true for 2017. Nancy A. Shenker, founder and CEO of theONswitch, a marketing agency, pointed both to the need for content marketers to be more focused on analytics and to a shift away from a "love affair with Millennials as professional marketers" to recognizing that higher-level skills would be required.

Indeed, the demand for skilled content marketers has increased, with journalists finding themselves sought after as skilled and experienced producers of content. The quality bar is being raised, and companies of all sizes are eager to succeed.

With a proliferation of new and continued engagement with existing visual channels—such as Snapchat,

Instagram, and YouTube—content in 2017 increasingly focused on images and movement at all stages of the consumer experience. Pamela Muldoon is a revenue marketing coach for The Pedowitz Group. "As content marketers become more savvy around the strategy of content, we will see smarter content ideation happening in all stages of the buying journey or customer experience," says Muldoon. "Instead of deciding that certain types of content are good for certain stages of the marketing and sales funnel, a more holistic approach to how an audience intakes information will be considered as content development takes place."

That means, says Muldoon, that content that had traditionally been used mainly during the awareness stage—podcasts, for instance—will be considered for later stages such as consideration or retention. This also, she says, will serve to provide content up front, meeting audience needs to binge content when interested in a particular product or service.

Meanwhile, chatbots saw huge growth in 2017. Facebook's Messenger led the way, growing to more than 100,000 bots in its first year. Brands that can create and maintain trusting relationships with consumers will become go-to sources for information, particularly as consumer trust in content is diminishing.

Jamie Posnanski, head of digital content with Accenture, says, “Brands are up against false content creators, who are utilizing bots to curate a perception that content is getting Likes and comments—so, in turn, brands are at war with the algorithms.” Today’s consumers know they’re being marketed to, states Posnanski: “This presents a challenge as marketers try to build a content strategy based on engagement and personalization.”

Addressing that challenge will require content marketers to be increasingly strategic, he says. “What has been interesting for us has been to see the gradual change amongst marketers who are only now starting to recognize the need to shift away from campaign-based thinking to a more comprehensive mindset for content and customer engagement,” Posnanski says.

‘Yesterday’s editor-in-chief in publishing is today’s content strategist in the digital ecosystem, and businesses will increase their focus on finding top talent in that field.’

Analysis has become part and parcel of the content marketing process, he states. “Marketers are now looking for analytic insights that can influence everything from ‘test and learn’ experimentation to media planning and channel optimization in a continuous cycle rather than a periodic campaign scorecard report.” This kind of refinement based on real data and increasingly sophisticated analytics will continue into 2018 as content marketers keep looking for real results.

A LOOK AHEAD

The demand for top talent will continue into 2018, predicts Megan James, a clinical psychotherapist and content strategist for MGID, a native advertising marketplace. “Yesterday’s editor-in-chief in publishing is today’s content strategist in the digital ecosystem, and businesses will increase their focus on finding top talent in that field,” she says.

In addition, James predicts, there will be an increasing focus on creating high-end media formats, especially video. “Infographics, galleries, podcasts, and video content will all be hugely popular in the content marketing field,” she says. “Video is dominating the space, with many consumers preferring this format and new plat-

forms entering the space every day. If a brand is investing in new visuals, it should focus on video.”

Technology will continue to play a role in how consumers engage with content. “As we move into 2018, we are seeing a fresh romance blossoming with the physical world,” says Posnanski. “Content marketers are stepping outside of their screens to take a good look at the world around them and curating experiences utilizing augmented and virtual reality.” He points to IKEA Place as a great example of creating augmented reality (AR) for shoppers—making it possible for consumers “to view a potential piece of furniture in their living room to ensure it’s the right size, color, shape, style for their space before making the purchase.”

With the continued emergence of the Internet of Things (IoT), says Posnanski, content marketers will need to consider “how to format and distribute content across an expanding array of non-phone or computer devices.”

Content consumers will play an increasing role in both creating and consuming content, with a growing reliance on user-generated content, says James. “This differs from influencer marketing, where a brand pays to engage with an influencer for content creation and distribution. This is capitalizing on positive word-of-mouth from actual consumers, and all savvy brands will be doing it.”

Mike Catania is the founder of PromotionCode.org. In 2018, he says, the question will be: “Who controls your content?” Catania predicts that “between Google AMP, Facebook Instant Articles, and your internal publication/syndication ambitions, it’s going to be hard to prioritize ownership over eyeballs, particularly with the Google AMP.” While Facebook and Google options have been in place for several years, they’ve grown out of their infancy, says Catania. “Content owners and writers are going to have to be more deliberate about distribution options that give away the control over who owns the content and how readers consume it.”

As we move into 2018, content will continue to be top of mind for marketers and consumers. Generating interest, earning trust, and driving engagement will be key to achieving real results. Keeping pace with the demand for high-quality content and continued competition, while learning to leverage new technology, promises to have content marketers very busy indeed in the new year. **EC**

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MARKETING STRATEGY

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The State of Digital Marketing



In an increasingly high-tech world in which artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning are rapidly accelerating our understanding of customers and paving innovative pathways to reaching them more intuitively, digital marketers have to ask themselves a logical question: Are the robots coming for my job too? No, not yet. Those tasked with reaching more eyeballs and raising brand awareness online can likely bolster their job security by staying ahead of important trends and carefully watching industry developments.

Carol Eversen, CMO of ALM, says that digital marketing has evolved from a separate functional role within the marketing department to a primary enabler that all marketers should be using to conduct business. “Many marketers are still coming up to speed on digital technologies and struggling to deliver explicitly on the goal of ROI optimization. Also, the pace of change is high, making it challenging for even seasoned digital marketers to stay on top of all the changes,” says Eversen. She also notes that no professional can claim to be an expert in all digital channels (SEO, paid search, social, video, account-based marketing, content marketing, etc.).

Eric Johnson, digital content creator for Feedback-Wrench, agrees. “Digital marketers are always going to struggle to keep up with the changing landscape that

online platforms present,” Johnson says. “The platforms that are popular now change almost daily, and it’s always possible that new platforms will come along. Marketers who are slow to adapt to these changes risk being left behind.”

Reach and scalability remain vexing too. “It becomes harder and harder to gain attention and engagement of consumers who expect less interaction, yet more personalization across an exploding number of marketing channels and technology devices,” says Chatmeter CEO Collin Holmes.

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

The past year proved to be both promising and challenging for digital marketing players. For instance, ad fraud is getting worse and is expected to cost advertisers more than \$16 billion in 2017, according to a study conducted by Adloox. And digital marketers worldwide are bracing for expected headaches after the European Union adopts the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in 2018, which is intended to harmonize data privacy laws throughout Europe. Once the GDPR is in place, marketers will have to follow several rules or face stiff fines. This includes making sure the data they process is collected fairly, legally, and for legitimate reasons; implementing

privacy settings within their websites' digital products; and regularly assessing privacy impact measures.

On a positive note, voice search and the Internet of Things (IoT) devices exploded in 2017, providing new ways to distribute content and reach consumers. Facebook and Google, which now account for around 70% of the total digital ad market today (per MAGNA), rolled out better technologies to enable marketers to personalize their ads. Meanwhile, small and big players alike demanded greater transparency in the media supply chain.

New standards are being promoted, such as those proposed by the Coalition for Better Ads—which suggest that publishers and marketers abandon several desktop and mobile advertising approaches that drop beneath the threshold of consumer acceptability and drive consumers to block ads. Digital ad sales are expected to total \$84 billion in 2017—a 16% increase from 2016—according to MAGNA's fall update Advertising Forecast; amazingly, the report indicates that digital will surpass offline ad sales by 2019 (\$101 billion versus less than \$94 billion, respectively).

'The industry is focused on developing better standards and tools for providing more transparency and visibility. ...'

John Lincoln, author of *Digital Influencer: A Guide to Achieving Influencer Status Online* and a digital marketing faculty member at the University of California—San Diego, believes the digital marketing landscape became more relevant and robust over the past year. “Ad dollars are shifting fast from offline to online. Facebook and Google are now offering in-store targeting and tracking. Google and Bing are now offering in-market audiences you can advertise to,” says Lincoln. “These abilities symbolize the level of innovation happening across the industry.” Consequently, digital marketing “has now become the most important component of doing business online,” he insists.

However, ask Rusty Coats, CEO of the Local Media Consortium, and he'll tell you that there are many formidable hurdles to be cleared. “Digital marketing is in a state of flux. We see the industry as a giant adolescent in love with its developing strength but frequently unaware of the consequences wrought by its flexing,” Coats says.

“The problem for consumers is disruption of content consumption, diminished user experience, and the occasional feeling that Big Brother is watching.”


A LOOK AHEAD

Expect more media to be transacted in a data-driven way in the future. “The industry is focused on developing better standards and tools for providing more transparency and visibility into how pricing and decisions are made in the digital supply chain. This has raised the focus on the quality of ads, interactions, insights, analytics, and performance,” notes Kerry Bianchi, president and CEO of Visto. “I anticipate in 2018 to see more industry discussion about how to align on metrics and standards that make sense.”

Also, as more media becomes data-enabled and targetable, “expect to see continued demand for cross-channel tools that allow marketers to easily plan, allocate, optimize, and analyze performance of their targeted buys across multiple screens and formats,” adds Bianchi.

Many are hopeful that content monetization and digital subscriptions will improve in the months ahead. “There are a number of efforts underway that aim to see publishers compensated based solely on the quality of the content they produce in its resonance with their audiences. These developments should lead to far superior user experiences, as we become slightly less reliant on advertising dollars to fund our operations,” says Coats.

AI and voice search will also require more careful strategies for marketers in 2018. “This turns content marketing upside down. People speak and ask questions in natural language, not keyword-based searches, which means your content will either have to include FAQs or be peppered with questions and answers,” Holmes says.

Semantic SEO/keyword search will be a big deal in 2018 as well, predicts Johnson. “And Instagram will continue to ring out the rag with their algorithm, ensuring that marketers become less effective on the platform and that only great content wins.” 

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TENNIS COURT



The State of Online Video



Consider, for a moment, the latest staggering stats. Worldwide, people watch an average of 5 hours and 45 minutes of online video weekly—a 34% increase from 2016, based on the results of Limelight Network’s “The State of Online Video 2017” consumer survey. By 2021, a million minutes of video content will cross global IP networks every second, according to Cisco; at that rate, it would take you more than 5 million years to watch all the video crossing the network each month. And within 3 years, IP video traffic will account for 82% of all consumer internet traffic, per Cisco.

There’s a good reason why online video’s reach is so pervasive. “Video lets you cut through the noise of digital clutter. Why? Because video is human and authentic. It makes us feel. And, increasingly, how you make someone feel is the reason people choose to do business with you,” says Caren Cioffi, executive VP and general manager in the digital marketing and enterprise business unit at Brightcove.

Remember, it wasn’t so long ago that online video primarily consisted of checking out short clips on YouTube or watching a friend’s video on Facebook, notes Mike Milligan, senior director of product and solution marketing at Limelight Networks. “But consumers today are shifting to longer-form professionally produced online video content,” Milligan says. “This has a lot to do with the proliferation of internet-connected devices that allow people to watch this content whenever and

wherever—from mobile gadgets like smartphones and tablets to streaming devices like Roku, Apple TV, and smart TVs.”

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

The past year was a seminal year for screen watching. In 2017, Facebook videos got longer; the average video clocked in at just under 4 minutes versus 55 seconds in 2015, per Locowise. Video aspect ratios alternated more toward vertical and square. Consumers demonstrated that they wanted to produce, as well as consume, video content. This is evidenced by a rise in mobile journalist apps and sites such as Fresco News, Storyful, and Stringr. More local news organizations used smartphones to report live from remote locations such as hurricane sites.

Last year, major companies (such as The Walt Disney Co., Comcast, and YouTube TV) announced their foray into the streaming market to appeal to cord cutters. Sports leagues, such as the NFL, began licensing games and programs to online streaming services such as Amazon and Twitter.

Shoppable videos became more popular too, especially on Instagram. Livestreaming and 360-degree video took off, while adoption of 4K streaming proved to be slower than anticipated.

Dror Ginzberg, co-founder and CEO of Wochit, says that, while 2016 was online video’s breakout year, 2017 was more about figuring out what works—the distribu-

tion platforms, aspect ratios, monetization strategies, and original programming—and building on it.

“Last year, Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon emerged as production studios and OTT [over-the-top] providers. Now, we’ve got Facebook, Twitter, BuzzFeed, and more all entering the competitive field,” says Ginzberg. “We’ve also seen massive adoption among brands with the launch of Stories on Instagram, which has become a primary marketing channel in many industries.”

After 2017, the term “online video” seems redundant. “Online video is omnipresent, and its sources are now less important to the average person,” says Jun Group’s CEO, Mitchell Reichgut.

‘Video lets you cut through the noise of digital clutter.’

But the industry observed trouble spots in 2017. Quality of experience, for example, remains an issue. “Consumers are watching longer-length videos, often on mobile devices with wireless connections. This can increase the likelihood of problems such as video rebuffering, making for an overall poor-quality viewing experience,” says Milligan, adding that 61% of respondents to his aforementioned survey will stop watching an online video that rebuffers twice. “This year, content distributors must look to strengthen their delivery infrastructure to ensure that content is delivered at the highest quality possible.”

Online video providers also faced several difficulties in 2017. “Access to compelling content is tough, and the cost of content rights remains challenging. The cost to produce premium quality content is also high,” says Mike Chapman, global lead, media and entertainment and video strategy at Accenture. “In addition, the ability to scale subscribers is key to profitable growth, but it’s not easy to execute—and [it’s] where many providers struggle.”

Perhaps the most daunting obstacles that industry players have to clear are competition for eyeballs and pathways to monetization. “There’s so much quality content available to consumers for free today, and the marketplace is so competitive that their propensity to pay for content is low,” Chapman notes.

A LOOK AHEAD

The experts forecast a pivotal year for online video in 2018. “Companies will increase their use of artificial


intelligence to help provide consumers with more personalized video experiences. And content quality and immersive experiences will continue to improve as video becomes more widely available in 4K and HDR,” says Chapman.

Others believe more user-generated video content and on-the-spot journalism are on tap in 2018, thanks to innovative and relatively inexpensive technology for the masses. “One of the biggest changes has come from Apple’s iOS 11, with its ability to capture video without using a third-party app. This will add to the revolution of faster and cheaper video production, editing, and repurposing,” says David Burrows, founder of the M+M Agency.

Others predict major advances in the coming year in the delivery of low-latency livestreaming. “Adobe Flash has traditionally been used for this, but the upcoming end-of-support by Adobe and the removal of Flash support from web browsers is forcing content distributors to look for new solutions,” says Milligan.

Expect more incentive-laced videos this year, as well. Findings from AdColony’s “2017 Consumer Sentiment Survey” showed that, when offered video ads that provide in-app rewards in exchange for watching, 40% of consumers consider these ads acceptable—compared to 22% acceptability for playable ads.

Additionally, “value exchange ad units—which let people unlock entertainment, points, or other digital content in return for engaging with advertising—will explode in 2018. They are non-interruptive and virtually fraud-free,” says Reichgut.

To autoplay or not to autoplay—that will be another important question this year. “Many publishers have already switched to more text and less sound to capture audiences on Facebook. But with Safari’s recent blocking of autoplay, I foresee that some publishers are going to have more issues drawing viewers in,” Ginzberg says. 

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The State of Social Media



What makes the world go round today? Some say money. Others say love. But many would point to social media. And who would argue, considering that we increasingly rely on social media platforms to communicate, share content, get news and information, watch video, make purchases, and more?

We've reached a point at which it's become the go-to tool of choice, the indispensable Swiss army knife of tech utilities that can replace newspapers, telephones, TVs, emails, and even human interactions. And therein lies great opportunities for—and the need for greater responsibility from—marketers and brands that seek to wield this formidable weapon.

Consider that, today, more than 70% of Americans use social media—up from only 5% tallied in 2005, according to the Pew Research Center. A handful of key players in the space continue to rule. Social Media Examiner's "2017 Social Media Marketing Industry Report" revealed that the top platforms used by marketers are Facebook (94%), Twitter (68%), LinkedIn (56%), Instagram (54%), YouTube (45%), Pinterest (30%), and Snapchat (7%).

"Social media is still viral," says Franco Aquino, co-founder of REN Marketing. "A few years ago, it was more about engaging with family, friends, and influencers. Now

it's all about content—mainly video. You have Twitter showing livestreams of sports, Facebook promoting regularly scheduled shows on Watch, and Instagram pushing selective content that keeps the user on their feed."

Nevertheless, effective social marketing is harder than you think, says Matt See, SVP of social and digital innovation for FleishmanHillard. "Many think that utilizing it as a marketing tool is easy—it's not. It's a science that now involves statistics, data analysis, budgeting, creative writing, creative content, and more," says See. "Because of that, many businesses struggle in how to connect with their users."

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

Social media dominated major headlines in 2017, underscoring its pervasiveness as well as its potential for controversy. The current president became a Twitter sensation, for better or worse. The proliferation of fake news across social media and the revelation that the Russians manipulated Facebook to swing our election sowed mistrust among Americans. Major ad agencies and brands began boycotting Google in response to offensive video content.

DAU (daily active users) became a more important metric. The platforms introduced or perfected innovative

new features such as Facebook's Watch, LinkedIn's Video, and Instagram's Stories (which overtook Snapchat's entire userbase). Chatbots and messaging apps became more valued customer service tools for companies and consumers alike. And AOL Instant Messenger bit the dust.

But the biggest social stories over the past year have been dominated by Facebook. Andrew Selepak contends, director of the graduate program in social media at the University of Florida. "In its quest for money and profits, Facebook allowed Russian operatives to spread fake news and dissent into our election. Now, they've begun to face a backlash and an outcry in the media for Congress to act on the power of Facebook over news consumption and advertising," says Selepak. "Also, after unsuccessfully attempting to purchase Snapchat, the company turned its attention to destroying their rival by introducing similar features on Instagram to a wider userbase."

'Without core values, privacy, and true transparency, these platforms will burn out their users.'

2017 was also the year when "social" became a largely meaningless signifier when describing media, according to Kyle Bunch, managing director of social at R/GA. "The central role that these platforms play in our lives has ensured that all media has to be inherently social. Everything we do in a post-social world has to inspire an action, be it a conversation or click, or it's likely to fail," Bunch says.

Other worries that festered in 2017 included user resentment and skepticism. "Without core values, privacy, and true transparency, these platforms will burn out their users. Platforms that do not provide more power back to the people will experience a strong push back," says Janice Taylor, CEO of Mazu. She and others fear that social media is quickly reaching a breaking point. "People are starting to ask themselves if this is actually good for us," Taylor notes. "Are we more connected or further divided?"

A LOOK AHEAD

Going forward, social professionals must be increasingly sensitive to the fact that more users are becoming suspicious of the product. "There's a growing awareness that


social media is not free. As users become more literate to the terms of service for social media and how brands, the government, and employers are using this information, social media will face a backlash," says Selepak.

To stay pertinent on social media, brands must carefully and responsibly collect data on their audience and insights on customer behavior, many believe. "The biggest challenge is understanding your audience, interpreting data, and then developing actionable strategies that can lead to meaningful content and experiences that drive business results," says Bunch.

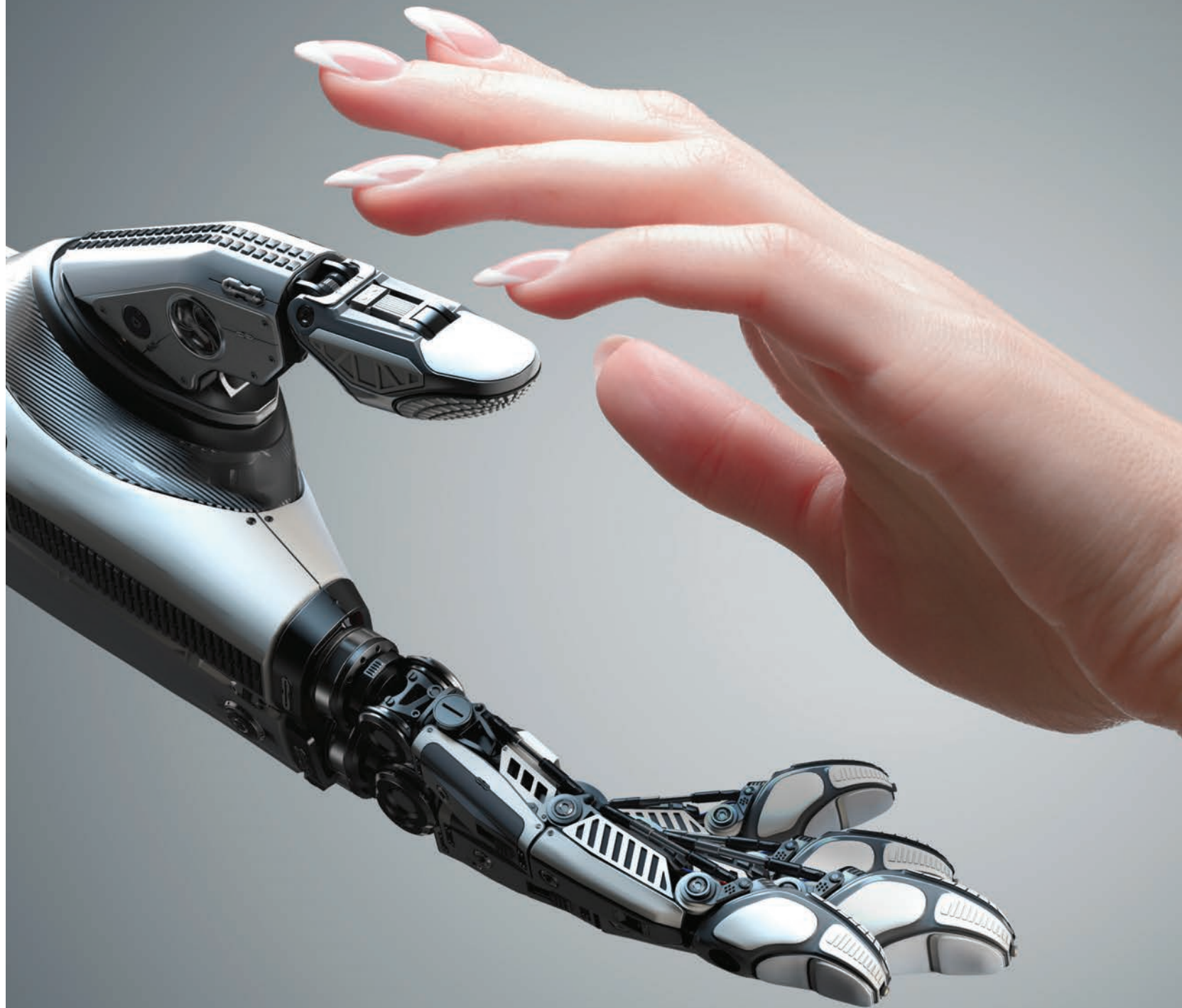
Another concern that needs to be addressed moving ahead is showing return on your social marketing investment, which requires more than just creativity and content to succeed. "Marketers need to track if any potential customers who engage with their brand also convert into leads and, at a later stage, into customers," Yuval Ben-Itzhak, CEO of Socialbakers, says.

Additionally, more real-time personalization is needed to prevent users from being turned off by unimportant or annoying content on social. "Brands need to adopt a personalized approach to how they target consumers within messenger applications, keeping the interaction very natural and non-invasive if they want to be relevant to their audience," adds Ben-Itzhak.

See agrees. "Look for more personalized micro-experiences in 2018. Gen Z has an attention span of about 4 seconds—nearly half that of Millennials. So brands will have to create micro-videos to grab attention and compete for consideration."

Aquino predicts a stronger user preference for video on social media in the coming year, as well as more features that will allow consumers to edit videos within apps before they're shared. Aquino adds, "We'll probably see augmented reality become more mainstream as well, helped by Apple's ARKit framework." 

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The State of Artificial Intelligence



If you ask Elon Musk, artificial intelligence (AI) should be feared. “I don’t think most people understand just how quickly machine intelligence is advancing,” Musk said on stage at *Vanity Fair*’s New Establishment Summit: The Age of Innovation. He also sponsors open AI, “a non-profit AI research company, discovering and enacting the path to safe artificial general intelligence.” Despite Musk’s misgivings, AI is infiltrating just about every corner of our lives and the digital content industry.

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

2017 was the year AI became a household name—just ask Alexa, your new voice-activated assistant. “We saw enterprise use cases emerge in text analytics, natural language processing, voice recognition, image recognition, and, of course, structured data analysis in a variety of domains,” says Kashyap Kompella, a contributing analyst at Real Story Group. “I’d say in 2017 we reached the tipping or inflexion point when it comes to enterprise adoption of AI technologies.”

Why is AI exploding now? The answer isn’t simple. Or is it? Kompella says, “The terms ‘convolutional neural networks’ or ‘recurrent neural networks’ may sound intimidating, but deep learning is not. Just as the moniker ‘Big Data’ played its part in accelerating the adoption of a set of data-analysis techniques and technologies, the rebranding of neural networks and other machine-learning approaches as ‘deep learning’ is helping speed up enterprise adoption of AI technologies. That, and, of course, the availability of data and advances in computing techniques and processing capacity.”

Much of the conversation about AI in the digital media context has been around automating marketing functions, but it’s not the only application that we saw in 2017. Michelle Manafy is the editorial director at Digital Content Next (DCN), a trade organization dedicated to serving the needs of high-quality digital content companies. Manafy keeps a close eye on DCN’s member companies, and she saw plenty of AI-related action last year. “A number of publishers automated

formulaic and high-volume writing using natural language processing,” she says. “The Associated Press is generating thousands of stories about U.S. corporate earnings and sports. *The Washington Post* is also using this kind of ‘robo-journalism’ to generate brief, timely news updates.”

Chatbots were also all the rage in 2017. Marketers love them, but so do publishers. For instance, Manafy says, “The Weather Channel uses its AI-powered chatbot to answer questions about the weather. It can also answer more complex questions like what to wear today—whether you are going running in your neighborhood or to a board meeting in another state.”

While Manafy isn’t exactly on board with Musk’s dire warnings about AI, she has seen some cause for concern in 2017. “An unfortunate trend I see in AI is that of algorithmic bias. Essentially, we flawed human beings either build our AI with our own biases, or our algorithms learn them from our collective behavior. This can cause far worse problems than filter bubbles. It is a common misconception that machines will be neutral. For better or worse, they are only as good as we make them.”

That being said, the worst fears of some haven’t been realized. “There’s a lot of fear about the jobs that AI will take away from journalists (and other professions). So far, though, AI is being used to augment media coverage and free up human reporters to take on more complex reporting and writing projects,” says Manafy.

A LOOK AHEAD

AI just came into its own in 2017. In many ways, we can expect to see familiar trends continue. Kompella says, “Because of deep learning, voice recognition is more accurate and powerful now. Expect to see voice interfaces [added] to more apps. ...”

Manafy agrees: “I believe that voice-based interfaces offer an amazing opportunity to leverage AI. ... I hold out hope that AI can also help detect fake news and identify other disturbing trends we see in terms of media manipulation online.”


Kompella points to a trend that may be completely new to some. “AI-inside—going forward, this is going to be a big trend. Be it devices or applications, they will have ‘smart’ or ‘cognitive’ capabilities. Some examples: think Amazon Echo, Apple EarPods, Google Pixel Phone. ... On the enterprise side, Salesforce Einstein CRM brings some AI capabilities to its CRM [customer relationship management] apps.”

As hot as AI may be in 2018, publishers still seem to have a few blindspots. “AI is used by other industries for predictive analysis—and I don’t hear about media companies doing this,” says Manafy. “I hear about sentiment analysis, in which they are monitoring comments on social and traditional media for both their organization and that of brands they are working with. But predictive models can be used to target advertising, subscription, or membership offerings. The analytics identify consumer patterns and project the potential outcome. One of our members, the *Financial Times*, uses predictive analytics to correlate revenue to content usage and conversion rate to engagement.”

‘AI-inside—going forward, this is going to be a big trend.’

She also says personalization—the ultimate goal for any publisher—could use some help from AI. “Content recommendations are one of the low points of the web experience. I’d like to see publishers work on developing artificial intelligence that truly learns from consumers’ content consumption and provides them with real, valuable, substantive recommendations. This will not only increase time spent on your site, it would have the added benefit of improving your relationship with the reader.”

While Musk certainly sees a fantastic, and possibly frightening, future for AI, Kompella sees more mundane use cases in 2018. “The mind may conjure up spectacular examples, such as self-driving cars, when you think of AI. But in the digital content industry, the examples are going to be less spectacular,” he says. “In fact, in the content space, you could even say that we have not been using the term ‘AI’ per se, but been tinkering with intelligent search and discovery, advanced personalization, real-time recommendation engines, behavioral targeting, dynamic ads, marketing automation, and much more. The digital content industry is an early adopter in that sense.”

In other words, our experts think AI will mostly be used to enhance familiar experiences. It will be employed to make your life better in ways you may or may not notice. 

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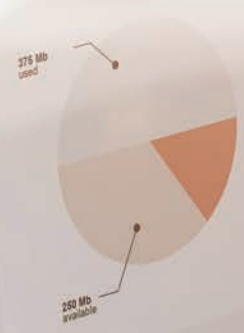
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Space Usage (750 Mb)



Who is your audience and what are their needs? This can help you better articulate the benefits of doing business with you and deliver a smarter product or service.

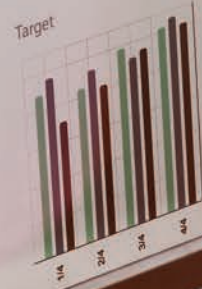
Interactive User
1,505
New Users Registration

18,321
Registered Users

Marketing Chart



Target



Realtime Dashboard



The State of Analytics



Wouldn't it be nice if technology development proceeded in an orderly, logical, and predictable manner? Once you finish laughing—or crying—at that sentence, recognize that especially when it comes to content and marketing analytics and the Big Data that underpins their viability, it was entirely unrealistic in 2017. “Technology didn’t wait for us to get our data act together,” observes Allison Snow, a senior analyst at Forrester.

As content and marketing analytics teams will attest, getting one’s data act together was made trickier by a number of factors last year. The explosive growth of Internet of Things (IoT) data—and the tantalizing insights it holds for predictive and prescriptive analytics—was accompanied by a rising prominence of unstructured data (such as video and audio) and a multiplying number of external databases that could uncover valuable relevance, if integrated properly. Add in the fact that much of an organization’s interaction with a customer could take place entirely on a third-party platform such as Facebook for a sense of the challenges in synthesizing and leveraging data for operational decision making in 2017.

Luckily, it was also a year in which artificial intelligence (AI) showed serious promise in helping to shoulder the workload reliably. Tools for decision makers to

extract and interpret Big Data became easier to use and more powerful in their capabilities. More sophisticated attribution tools enabled marketers to pinpoint their role in creating value. And as analytics unlocked new insights, it spurred new creativity. Indeed, Forrester’s research showed that insights-driven firms were 69% more likely to report year-over-year revenue growth of 15% or more. The big question for the year ahead: How fast must the tools evolve to keep up?

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

The growing application of AI in content and marketing analytics had a profound influence in 2017. “Lots of marketers have been collecting data and doing analytics, for years,” says Snow. “But marketers fall down operationally because of bottlenecks like limited design resources and the approval process. So the extent to which we can use AI to automate responses to triggers—so it doesn’t take 2 weeks to process a buyer’s intent—is extremely important.” Snow gives the example of a customer who signs up for a company newsletter, at which point AI is used to assemble a personalized version from multiple content sources based on the customer’s known attributes, all within a fraction of the time it might have taken even a year ago.

Christina Noren, chief product officer of the behavioral analytics company Interana, says that in the publishing industry in 2017, she's seeing evidence of increased analytics use to drive content development. "We're learning that in an age where social media platforms own so much of the customer acquisition, there's a shift in emphasis on analysis to re-engage with existing customers. The goal is to maximize the lifetime value of the customers you do have." Noren also sees companies more efficiently layering in external data sources, looking for affinities across topics, and uncovering relationships (such as seasonality) that may influence buyer behavior.

Another major step forward in the application of marketing analytics in 2017, according to Snow, was in improved attribution, allowing marketers to not only track return on marketing dollars spent, but to better understand messaging impacts and the customer acquisition journey with increasing granularity. "Marketers have more insights than they used to, but they didn't necessarily know how to claim credit as a business grows," says Snow. The growing sophistication of attribution solutions means that marketing professionals are better prepared to define their department's contribution to the bottom line.

'Technology didn't wait for us to get our data act together.'

What has underpinned all of these advancements, according to Stan Lequin, VP of consulting services for Insight, a technology provider of hardware, software, and service solutions to business and government clients, are analytics tools that are easier than ever to use, which are important at a time when qualified data scientists continue to be a rare commodity. "Six or 7 years ago, you had to know SQL and be strong in that area to do analysis," he says. "But because it's gotten easier to connect to external sources and use APIs, we write a lot less code than we did even a year ago."

A LOOK AHEAD

Given the continued dominance of distributed content and customer interactions on third-party platforms, Noren believes that publishers must come together to demand better raw data from those pipelines. "It needs to become a condition for getting on those platforms and needs to happen in a more consistent way." She'd like

to see publishers force third-party platforms to provide clickstream data and the tools to allow them to analyze it internally.

Expect continued evolution of the tools that will enable content and editorial teams to drill down into datasets. Addressing the need for easier visualization tools, Noren says that Interana has doubled down on user research to understand how its clients use its tools. "We've created flexible tools for content and editorial teams to explore data on their own terms." Interana customer Bleacher Report uses behavioral data across departments. The content team prioritizes and plans new content based on customer engagement, the product team uses the data to streamline the onboarding process, and the marketing team uses it to build and test user personas.

As external datasets become easier to integrate, the ability to identify heretofore unseen relationships will spur new and powerful insights. Lequin gives an example, saying, "We've engaged with organizations in the healthcare field on staffing, and with some of the data that we can now pull back and test, we've enabled them to save \$100 million in staffing costs over 5 years." Forrester senior analyst Tina Moffett says, "The integration of different datasets, things like brand value, brand relevance, and customer identity, will allow marketers to understand more deeply the drivers of purchases."

Snow is hopeful that the advances in attribution will mean a fresh look at the marketing budget approach in the coming year. "Don't just replicate your 2017 budget; imagine you're starting from zero. Are you poised to generate revenue from existing customers versus an acquisition-only focus? There's a disconnect between what marketers are doing and what attribution analytics can tell us." As Moffett says, regarding the gap between insight and operational activation, "Activation isn't a technology issue. It's a cultural and organizational issue." ■

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The State of Translation and Globalization



Technology, a growing demand for content across global geographies, and a trend toward voice and video are all having an impact on the translation and globalization space. Demand for translation services is growing and shifting, says Michael Stevens, growth director at Moravia. “One of the biggest trends that has surprised me ... is how fast demand has snowballed for localization services over the phone, as well as for video interpretation,” he says. That demand has likely been driven by the growth in webinars, online events, and other two-way digital communication methods.

“From a broader perspective,” says Stevens, “the growing demand for interpreters is clearly a byproduct of the shift from digital print communications to an increasing preference for more voice and audio content in general.”

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

Translation and globalization are big business—and the field of service providers comprises some big and growing businesses, says Matt Arney, co-founder and CEO of TranslateNow. 2017 saw some massive movement among large companies in the space, he says. “Large players, including Lionbridge, Pactera, LanguageLine [Solutions], Welocalize, and soon TransPerfect, have all either been sold or merged with others in the past 15 months. Key acquisitions include life science companies—Luz, Foreign

Exchange, Corporate Translations—and many smaller deals,” he says.

But smaller businesses have a place in the market as well. “Lots of startups in tech have emerged, including countless marketplaces and hybrid MT [machine translation] tools,” says Arney. But, he adds, “Large companies like Thumbtack, YouTube, LinkedIn, and Upwork have attempted to enter the translation space mostly for cheap, one-off projects.”

Technology companies, says Arney, “are finding it hard to exist in an industry that doesn’t like to buy a lot of software. Research groups place the total translation services spend in the \$40 billion range, while technology (i.e., tools, gizmos, online translation sites) does less than \$200 million collectively.” Some technology firms, he says, are migrating from software to service. He points to Smartling as one example of this: “Smartling is the latest to do so having raised \$63-plus million and is likely feeling pressure to bring in revenue, so they launched a services division.”

Julie Pereira is the head of marketing at Smartling. “Continuous delivery has been a popular theme throughout 2017 as more and more companies embrace agile principles across the enterprise,” she says. “For years, agile has been considered practically a religion in tech circles. Today, it is being applied across all business functions, including content creation and marketing activities, as a

means of delivering content and messaging more quickly to end users and customers,” Pereira says. The localization and translation industry is also embracing agile in order to continuously deliver new translations and localized content to global audiences. “To compete in a world that values speed to market for products, services, information, and messaging, ambitious companies find that being nimble, shortening release cycles, and iterating quickly are paramount to driving global business,” Pereira says.

Data management and quality measurement for translation are top challenges for content and localized content in general, says Pereira. There are, however, solutions coming to market that can now help to solve these data and measurement challenges. Pereira points to Smartling’s announcement of its Quality Confidence Score (QCS), which uses machine learning to predict the likelihood that a translation will be a good one.

Craig Bloem, founder and CEO of LogoMix, is on the customer side of the translation relationship. In 2017, he says, his company “greatly increased the amount of content we translated.”

A LOOK AHEAD

In 2018, says Arney, a slowdown in the U.S. economy is likely to positively affect the translation industry. “Companies will seek to boost declining revenues by aggressively expanding to new markets overseas,” he predicts. “We saw a similar trend in 2008 during the last major economic crisis.”

Balancing demand with budget may see more companies bring some of this talent in-house, says Bloem. “We’ve seen more small businesses translate their websites, but in 2018, more small businesses will begin to produce and translate educational content. Because of this, translators and foreign-language copywriters will become more an extension of a marketing team, rather than an outsourced vendor,” he predicts. “To manage a smooth process, it’ll become more important to build strong working relationships with these resources. The goal will be to build a global content team—not just find a transactional translation vendor. This may result in an increased use of freelancer platforms like Upwork and WriterAccess. WriterAccess has added a translation feature for this exact reason.”

Demand for translation is heating up for certain southeast Asian languages, says Arney. “We believe there will

be a big push towards southeast Asian languages like Malay, Thai, Vietnamese, and Indonesian. These emerging economies may be boosted by China’s large Belt and Road initiative.”

Additionally, machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI) have been hot topics throughout 2017, says Pereira; they’re likely to continue to be a focus in 2018. “One of the most talked about technologies in the content localization space has been machine translation using neural networks and other forms of AI,” she says. “Great strides have been made with machine translation for decades, although several recent improvements and developments in neural machine translation and adaptive machine translation are providing potential for many more compelling applications.”

Localization will also remain top of mind for marketers in 2018, says Stevens. “As content continues to go more digital, knowledge of international digital localization strategy is much more critical than ever before. Whether companies have the resources internally or they prefer to partner with an external provider, content marketers need to know how to manage a wide range of localization issues, including how to optimize search internationally, how to bundle language-related devices for multiple markets, how to drive cost-effective and efficient ways to manage multilingual communications, and, most importantly, how to measure the success of multinational digital communications,” he says.

One key impact here, he says, is neural machine translation (NMT). “Even though NMT is still in its infant stages commercially, it’s gaining momentum because of its ability to automate translations more easily between languages that have virtually nothing in common, like, for example, Finnish and Chinese,” Stevens says. “Google, Microsoft, and Baidu are just some of the major companies that have already switched to NMT for their translation engine. It’s a major step forward in translation technology that’s already having a major impact on language localization processes.” ■

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- ✓ Close the customer feedback loop

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- ✓ Translate, localize & optimize industry-specific content
 - ✓ Support multilingual SEO
- ✓ Offer hosted multi-vendor CMS

Multilingual Search Engine Optimization: Taking Your Global Marketing Strategy Further

Search engine algorithms are shifting—getting smarter, yet more complicated, all the time. Your industry seems to be perpetually evolving, and presence in the dynamic digital space is a high commodity. You're cognizant. You've been sharpening the blade of your own global marketing strategy, fine-tuning your content marketing plan and expanding your web presence in multiple countries.

But one question keeps pestering you like a bright red pop-up ad.

Are we ready for multilingual search engine optimization (MSEO)?

When combined with a proper global marketing strategy, it's one of the most effective ways to optimize your multilingual website and content for online search purposes. But how do you initiate and execute a consistent, structured MSEO strategy while maintaining the integrity and unique voice of your brand?

THINK LIKE YOUR CUSTOMERS

First, get into your end user's mindset. Are your target audiences ultimately looking to research one of your products, consume content, make a purchase, all of the above? When you know what is motivating your customers' online search behavior, you will have an edge in identifying the specific language that resonates most strongly with them.

SELECT RELEVANT KEYWORDS

It's not as simple as compiling a list of keywords in your source language and translating those directly into other languages. Words and phrases rarely retain their full meaning when translated literally. Additionally, someone in Mexico would use different search language than someone in Spain. Only an in-country, native-language-speaking marketing expert can tell you which terms are being used locally in a specific target country to find your service or product through online searches.

Remember, too, those specialized terms your organization uses internally are probably not what your customers are typing into search engines. For instance, "low fare" is considered a travel industry-specific term, but the average person is more likely to use the common phrase "cheap flight" instead. Going a step further, the search terms people use will differ from country to country.

Preferred search engines can differ from country to country as well, and it's important to keep this in mind when building SEO strategies for your global website. While Google seems omnipresent, like the *Great Oz* of Web Search, it's simply not the case in every country.

PLACE YOUR KEYWORDS STRATEGICALLY

Where you place your keywords is arguably just as important as the keywords themselves. Once you have your list of ideal search terms for every target language, it's important to know where to insert them for optimal results.

The best places to put keywords within a webpage's source code:

- Meta titles, which specify webpage title on a browser window frame
- Headers in page content
- Meta descriptions or text that describes each webpage's content
- The meta keyword tag itself
- ALT and anchor text words describing images and links

For effective keyword placement within your digital content, abide by a rule of "left to right" in order of importance, with left designating the most important keywords.

Also, make sure your web designers and writers are operating in tandem, working with the same standards in mind. It works best when multilingual search engine optimization is treated holistically—meaning fully-integrated into your entire global marketing content creation and localization lifecycle.

ADDITIONAL TIPS:

- Perform regular testing to monitor site traffic and your keywords' effectiveness in each target market.
- Conduct research on the latest industry keywords to make sure you're still using the most beneficial terms.
- Consider multilingual search engine tactics for additional target languages if it aligns with your company's growth pattern.

Of course, it starts with having a solid global marketing content strategy.

Once in place, you can follow these best practices in deploying strategic keywords for each target language. In time, you will experience greater web traffic, higher conversion and a more consistent brand image across every country into which you expand.

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Artificial Intelligence Requires Smart Content

By Dave White, Chief Technology Officer, Quark Software

EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

Artificial Intelligence is here and our world is getting better every day! Except, not yet, not really, and not without a lot of work. But, hey, that describes all deployments of automation from digital assistants to paint robots. To make good on the promises of AI, we need to take a closer look at content. Content powers AI – today and will well into the future. There's a very specific type of content that makes systems like Watson smarter: content that is structured, organized by taxonomy, infused with metadata, and easily managed, tracked, and updated. In other words: Smart Content.

WHAT IS ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE?

There is considerable hype about the deployment of AI. It's a catchy phrase and an intriguing concept: That a computer can "think," as in answer a question, in a way that was not the result of calculation by pre-defined algorithms (i.e. traditional software code). There are different types of AI – some say three types, others say 33 types. Let's start simply, though, with three types of AI:

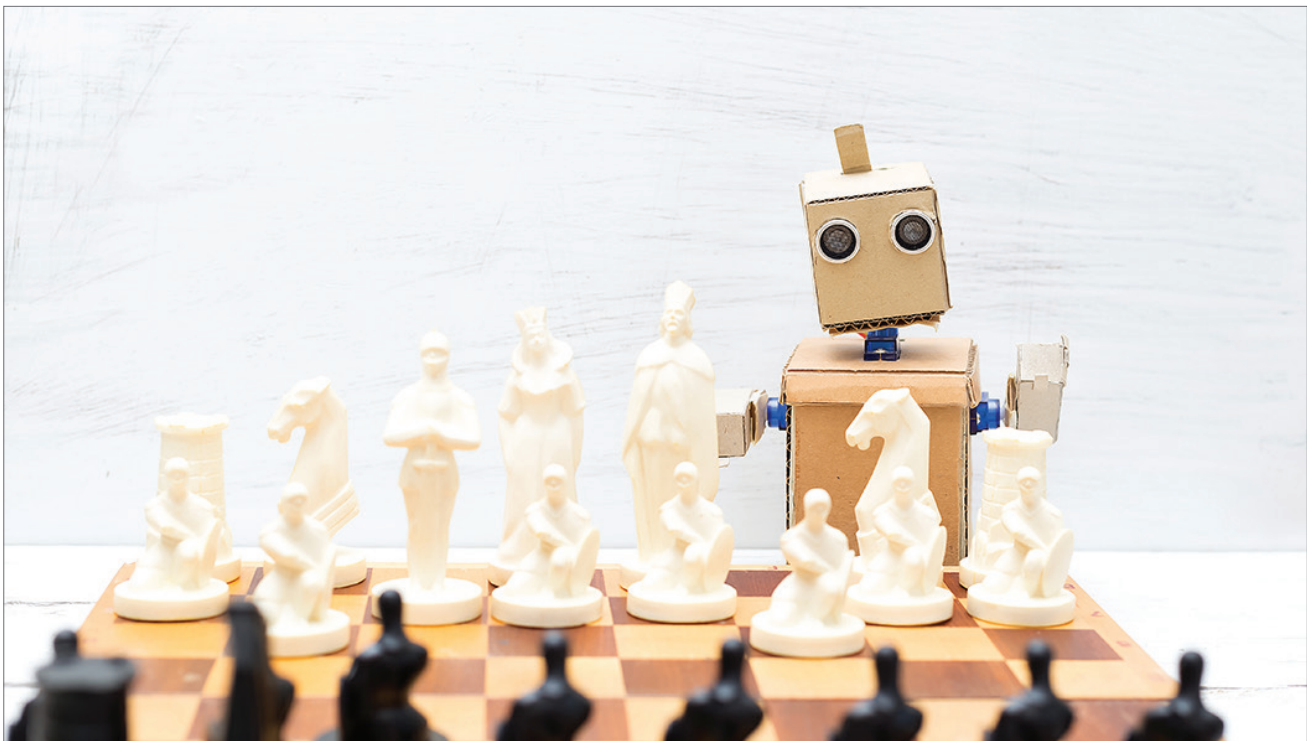
- Applied AI (also Weak, Narrow, or Specific) – is the most common AI deployed today and is built to focus very narrowly on a related set of information to accomplish specific tasks.

Applied AI requires significant "training" in the specific problem domain. Self-driving cars are an example of Applied AI, because the AI for a self-driving car would not be able to drive a boat.

- General AI – is what most people think of when they hear the term 'AI.' While there is a lot of research in General AI, it does not exist today as a commercial offering (if at all). General AI can learn without further programming, it can extrapolate potential results from past and current situations, even those that are not directly connected to the current problem state.
- Super AI – is AI that has intelligence that far surpasses the ability of humans. This is the most feared result in science fiction: Skynet, I, Robot, the Matrix, etc. Currently it's just a science fiction concept.

TODAY'S USE CASES FOR AI AS APPLIED TO CONTENT APPLICATIONS

In this articles we want to take a deeper look at the most realistic and common type of AI: Applied AI. Applied AI may or may not use "memory" in the generation of a result or answer to a question. For example, Deep Blue, IBM's chess computer, did not look at



the history of the current game, it only calculated from the current board state to the future board state and picked the optimum move to achieve the optimum future board state, checkmate.

According to industry analysts, AI implementation specialists, and customers, the current, most common application of AI related to content (document-based) applications, is to improve customer support results through self-service on the web.

If you've purchased a product or service, and something is not working as expected, the first thing you want to do is find the answer via that company's website. The last thing most people want to do is to place a call, sit on hold for a time, and then talk with a customer support representative (CSR). Self-service is preferred in most cases over human service. But, finding the answer to a problem can be very difficult, especially for complex technology. A full-text search is simply not good enough for most problems.

For example, if you have a problem with your internet connection – it's slower than you expect – what words do you use to search for an answer? If you search for the phrase 'slow speed,' the results might return information about the movie, Speed; marketing documents that declare how their connection speeds are promoted; how to upgrade to a higher speed; and what cable modem to use for the highest speed connection. If the search returns 25 items on the first page of search results and none of them are related to your problem, it's time to call support.

But AI can improve the results by knowing:

- The search was started from the business' customer support website
- That you are a customer, what equipment you have, how long you have been a customer, and your level of service
- If there is a system performance issue already being investigated
- If other customers in your area are also logging into the support site
- If your equipment is working as expected by sending a short test signal to your internet modem to check its state and the connection performance

Then it can derive a better result for you, up to and including a message that could avoid any further work. You'll be a happier customer, the service provider will have spent very little resource and everyone saves time – the ultimate win-win.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

When it comes to document-oriented content such as customer support-case processing, the success of an AI system depends on the quality of the content and its ability to parse, identify, and interpret the words written. However, a document rarely conveys all of the knowledge needed to identify the right context, make a decision or take an action. Metadata that describes a document can be very helpful, but only if that metadata is complete, accurate, and fits into a known knowledge ontology.

In some cases, the format of the document (HTML, PDF, scanned images, Microsoft Office documents, etc.) may make it

impossible for an AI system to “know” much if anything about the document. For example, many companies publish their technical content in PDF. Technical support documents often use tables to format complex ideas including system requirements, feature comparisons, and decision trees such as: «if power on, then do X; if power off then do Y.”

Even when a table, for example, holds real text it is currently very hard for a computer system to understand what the purpose of the table is, how it is structured, and what the relationship between the rows, columns, and cells means. This presents a problem when the system is required to make automated decisions. The solution? Fuel artificial intelligence with Smart Content.

SMART CONTENT IS CRITICAL TO AI SUCCESS

The ideal description of content that feeds an AI system, then, is the definition of Smart Content:

- Content that is modular and componentized rather than large, monolithic documents
- Content modules that are described with robust metadata that describe the context for which the content is useful
- Content that uses terminology consistently and adheres to a well-defined terminology hierarchy
- Content modules of the same type that are ordered consistently from one document to another

Even better if the content itself uses rich semantics to communicate to a computer all the knowledge that the author of the content, the subject matter expert, knows about that content – not just the words to be read but semantics that can unambiguously declare if the word “Chicago” is meant as the city, the style of hotdog, the style of pizza, one of two different baseball teams, the musical, the manufacturing company, etc.

HOW DO YOU GENERATE SMART CONTENT?

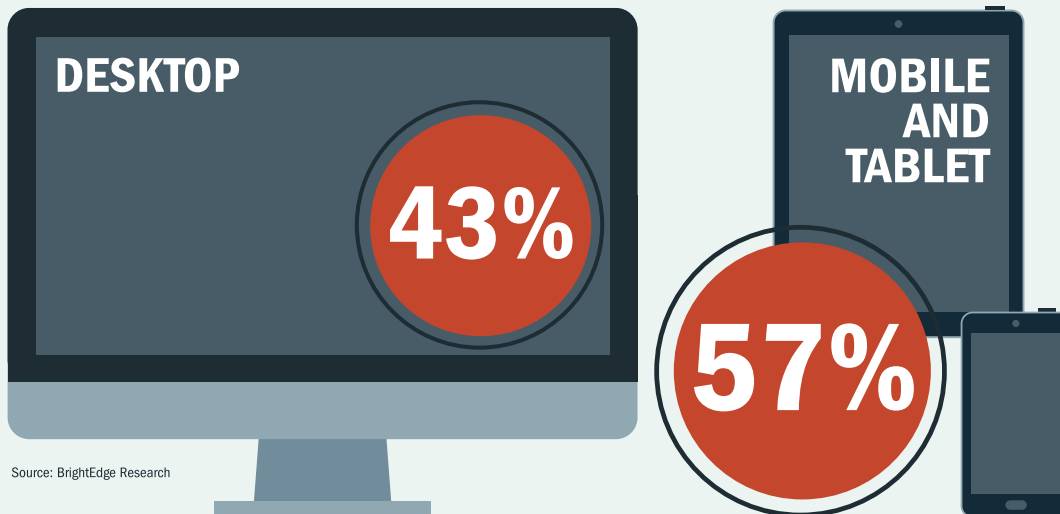
Smart Content creation is typically a key component of a content automation solution that can not only power AI but also transform the overall content lifecycle. Content automation enables omni-channel publishing, reduces time-to-market, ensures content compliance, and ultimately drives increased customer engagement by delivering the right content to the audience at the right time.

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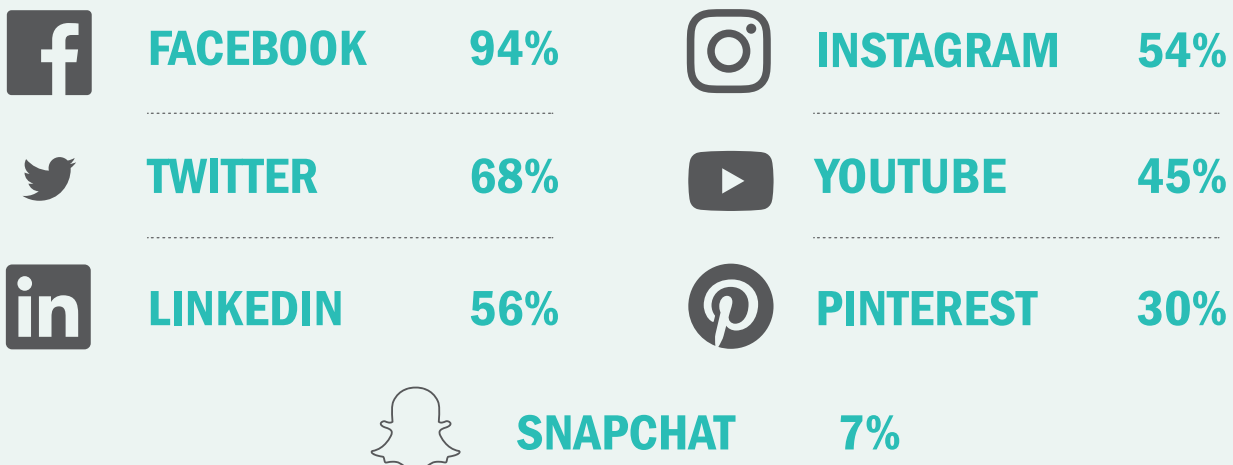
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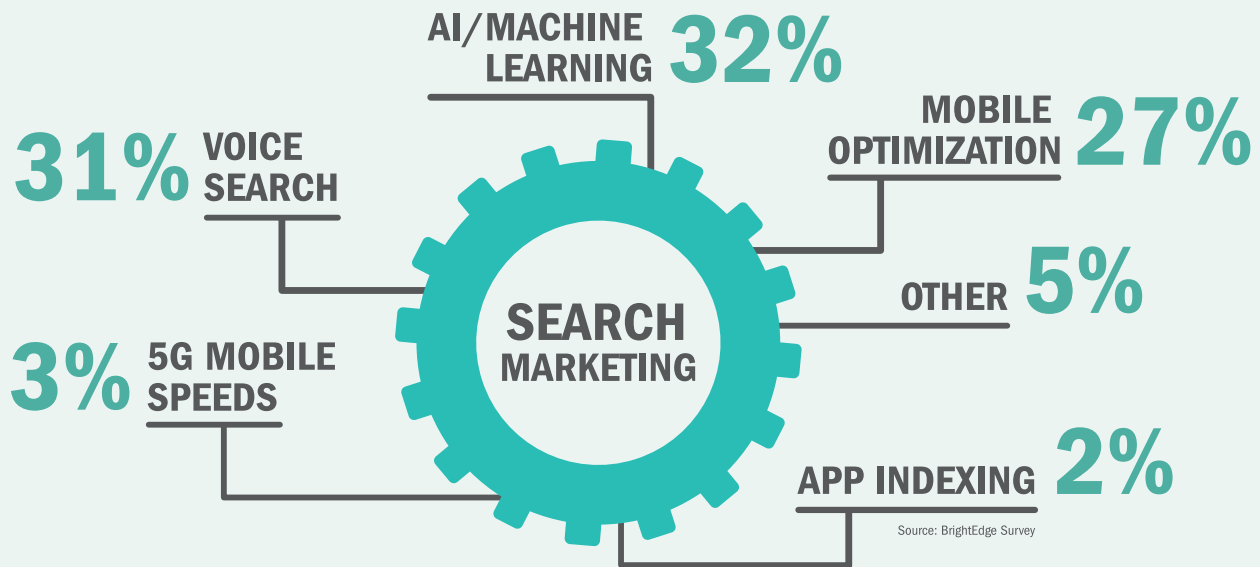
SOCIAL PLATFORMS MOST USED BY MARKETERS IN 2017

Source: Business Insider, based on "2017 Social Media Marketing Industry Report"

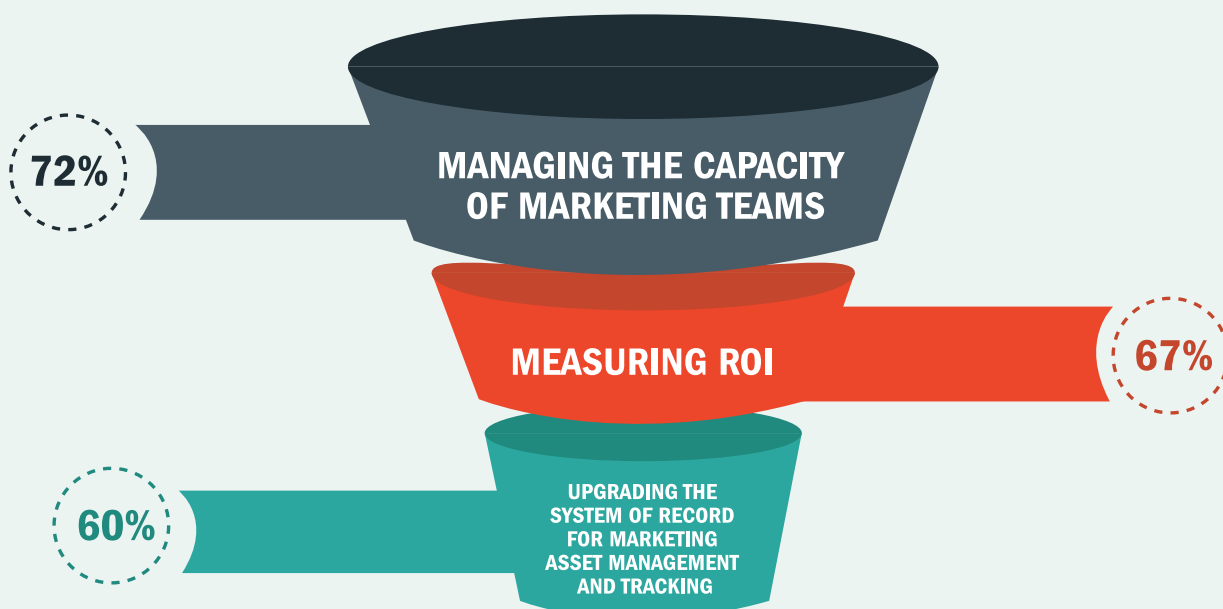


INFOGRAPHIC

WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE NEXT BIG THING IN SEARCH MARKETING?



THE TOP CHALLENGES FACING MARKETERS



Source: Aprimo's "Mayhem Survival Guide"

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