



CONTENT MARKETING: RADIO-STYLE

A CRN White Paper

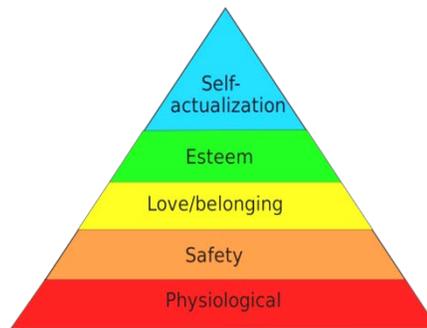
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THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CONTENT

Why would we start a 2015 white paper on the modern-day phenomenon of content marketing with a reference to a 1943 essay by Abraham Maslow?



In “A Theory of Human Motivation,” Maslow proposes his now-classic hierarchy of needs—the different stages through which human motivations generally move to find fulfillment and relieve anxiety. Often depicted as a pyramid, it progresses from a base layer containing the most fundamental, primal needs—physiological—and proceeds up through safety, love and belonging, esteem, and finally self-actualization.

When it comes to marketing and motivating people to take action, not much about human psychology has changed over time, whether examining the basic needs of a caveman or a current user of Google Glass. What *has* changed, radically, are the tools and strategies that fuel Maslow’s basic human needs.

Content marketing is one such tool. But content itself isn’t a new thing. It tells a story, just like the ones humans have been telling each other for millennia. A story puts the world into a context that gives it a particular meaning, and then persuades others to envision, think about, feel, and believe that meaning. The story says as much about its storyteller as it does about its subject. When done right, content marketing pulls the same primal levers with the same age-old responses as any other good marketing. It fosters a sense of communal belonging and moves us as individuals toward self-actualization. Welcome to the new old world of content marketing.

CONTENT MARKETING TODAY

Content marketing has never held a loftier position than it does now. A Google search for “content marketing” generates 359 million entries. There’s little doubt about the *Harvard Business Review’s* claim that we are in the midst of a content marketing revolution.

The Content Marketing Institute explains: “Consumers have shut off the traditional world of marketing. They can skip television advertising, often ignore magazine advertising, and have become so adept at online surfing that they can take in online information without a care for banners or buttons.” Why is this? The answer is simple: too much advertising everywhere and not enough focus on consumer needs.



It has taken marketing a while to shift its buyer engagement approach to a “pull” rather than “push” mentality. Say goodbye to the hard sell (whose swan song began a decade or so ago), and say hello to content marketing—that softer, shrewder technique that drives “buy behavior” without the feeling of being sold a used car.

RADIO: THE ORIGINAL CONTENT MEDIUM

While much of today’s focus is about aligning content with online and social spaces, radio—the original content medium—can be a secret weapon for marketers looking to break through the clutter.

Branded content on radio engages consumers better than ads, builds brand likeability and relationships, induces sales, cuts media costs, creates opportunities for meaningful multiplatform extensions, and provides measurable returns on business objectives.

So why would anyone not want to create content on a medium that delivers 92 percent of Americans ages 12 and up every week?

A CRN International survey last June of 525 consumers further validated the thinking that content on the radio is an expedient route to their hearts and wallets. Asked which form of radio messaging out of six options would make them the most likely to consider buying a product, 41 percent chose content—the most popular choice by more than a twofold margin over the runner-up tactic, real-people testimonials. Not only did the survey results support consumers’ desire to hear such content, but that they would remember and appreciate brands that provided it.

What’s more, in a random CRN poll of marketing professionals, 57 percent indicated they were very pleased with the results of radio campaigns that employed branded content.

This white paper is designed to describe the process of content marketing on the radio—how it is defined, how to create it, and examples of how it has been used successfully in the real world.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY CONTENT MARKETING?

Content marketing is the communication of useful, entertaining, and/or educational information that is credible, engaging and relevant to the audience—and strategic to the brand employing it.

Good content engages consumers by drawing them in and holding their attention. This is where Maslow’s hierarchy comes into play—in order to do so, it must be relevant to them; it meets their needs, enhances their experiences, and improves their lives. It should be designed and produced from the audience’s point of view, and make an emotional connection. When effective, it spurs the listener to respond and sparks a relationship between the listener and the brand, often before the brand has even described its product. It builds trust. That brings us to credibility.

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Credibility goes beyond providing accurate, expert information; the audience must perceive the brand as a credible source for the content. This means that the content needs to be relevant in some way to the brand, as well. Would you trust a bank to give you health advice?

But it can't just stop at being relevant to the brand; the content must advance the business objectives of the brand employing it. Specifically, the content should communicate something about the brand that you want consumers to believe and remember. Ultimately, it needs to move a consumer to purchase. Like any other story, it's all about context.

IS IT CONTENT, OR IS IT ADVERTISING?

The content cannot sound like an advertisement, though. If you're not sure whether something is content or advertising, it's probably advertising. Over-producing the audio or including too much brand sell language tells listeners they are hearing an ad and they will tune it out. While an ad is a communication in its own right and does everything it can to advance the brand, that's pretty much where the similarities end.

Content needs to be of real value if it's going to be accepted by consumers. Quality content is sought after and "shareworthy"—something that bears retelling, something that would be of interest to friends, neighbors and family members. The key to good content is finding the sweet spot between consumers' needs and the brand's objectives.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR THE BRAND?

1. Consumers will like you better because you are providing something they are actually interested in hearing about.
2. By not "pitching" consumers and instead providing them with something that's helpful, makes them think or makes them feel good, you are building a relationship.
3. It will take you less financial investment to break through.

This last point warrants some explanation. With ads, you need to repeat your message numerous times for it to have any chance of resonating with the audience (the "push" strategy). Not so much with content that is sought after (the "pull" strategy). If content is compelling, more people will lean forward to hear the message and its accompanying brand language, requiring less frequency and, hence, less investment to break through.

Also, radio stations often see good content as enhanced programming for their listeners, so they will be more open to integrating it into their regular programming space, which positions it away from the clutter of ad stop sets. Stations are also more apt to provide "earned" exposure of the content in the form of continuous "tune in" promotion messages.

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TYPES OF BRANDED CONTENT ON THE RADIO

There are two forms of branded content on the radio: station-produced content and custom content.

With station-produced content, an advertiser approaches a station looking to sponsor a pre-existing content segment. It could be a segment related to news, sports, traffic, or weather. It could be a block of music. Whatever the content may be, sponsors not only achieve brand name recognition but lift their name outside the crowded commercial stop set. They have the opportunity to be a recognized part of a recurring feature, providing continuity and better recall. Since station-produced content tends to be relatively short, there is also an element of “stickiness” to it.

On the flip side of these benefits, there is minimal brand advancement in station-produced content, along with a lack of true ownership—a brand can’t really “own” weather, or news or sports, for that matter. Also, station-produced content is sometimes difficult to separate from the clutter.

The other form of radio content is custom content, which is essentially created from scratch and not merely “sponsored” by the brand, as with station-produced content. It isn’t merely a quick “brand tag,” as sponsorships often are. Custom content can range in length from a few seconds to a few minutes, or can be as long as a whole radio show. Custom content is harder to develop but offers greater rewards because it can be tailored to address precise consumer needs and interests, tell a particular story about the brand, and meet very specific marketing objectives. So how do you go about it?

HOW TO CREATE CUSTOM CONTENT FOR RADIO

There are four basic stages to creating custom content:

1. **Identify the root marketing problem.** Before you start, know specifically what it is that you are trying to accomplish. Hint: It usually goes beyond the overall goal of generating increased awareness. What is the brand’s pain, if you need to call it that, and what is the outcome you are seeking? What is it that you want the content to communicate about your brand? What story do you want to tell?

Take the example of a fictitious brand, “Layla’s Pretzels.” Layla’s is a fairly new brand and wants to increase its share in the snacks category during a high-purchase time period—the Super Bowl. How can content help it do that? What does Layla’s need to communicate about its brand to make it stand out from the Frito Lays of the world?

The consumer might be interested in info about a topic that relates to a problem your product solves or an experience your product enhances.

2. Look at your consumers' interests—beyond their interest in your product.

Develop content from the user's point of view. Do you believe that the most interesting thing in the world for the consumer is learning about your product? Probably not. At least, not yet. The consumer might be interested in information about a topic that relates to a problem your product solves or an experience that your product enhances. Of course, part of our definition of content is helping to advance your brand. But at this stage, stretch your thinking beyond this realm. The consumer is multidimensional, so we are looking to find what interests him or her. Build content around that interest, and then find ways to link it back to your product message.

Layla's target consumers skew somewhat upscale. They're very social and strive to be in the know. They love throwing parties big and small, and look to sources like Martha Stewart and HGTV for entertaining and decorating inspiration. They want to provide their guests with something a little different, special, memorable, because it makes them feel good about themselves and because they feel that sharing new things with their friends enriches their relationships.

Now that we know a bit about the consumer's lifestyle, what makes them tick, and the kind of recreation they enjoy, how do we use this insight to create effective content?

3. Find a cross-section between the product and consumer.

Create content that the consumer really wants and that's also in line with your product's tonality, features and benefits. The content should not be *about* the brand but be *relevant* to it. Choose topics that make sense.

From the brand's standpoint, Layla's makes the best pretzels in the world. From the target consumers' standpoint, they might be contemplating throwing a party coinciding with the Super Bowl. But they don't just need a great snack to serve. A natural fit might be "Layla's 10 Tips for a Super Party," a content series featuring useful, unique suggestions on decorations, food, drinks, entertainment, and other things that will make their party special and memorable.

By going beyond the snack bowl and providing useful information about relevant things, Layla's has engaged the consumer and advanced the brand. Layla's Pretzels can be linked back as the perfect snack to serve guests. The content creates a "halo effect" on the brand—by offering unique, memorable party-planning suggestions, the brand is communicating to consumers that Layla's Pretzels are unique and memorable, too. And in doing so, it identifies and targets the emotional needs and motivations of the consumer. Remember Maslow's hierarchy? Layla's target consumers seek belonging, the respect and admiration of others, and self-esteem. The content is designed to help them get there.



Why confine great content to one medium when it can easily be adapted and extended elsewhere?

4. **Maximize the content.** If effective content exists on radio is and well promoted, it can be successful in and of itself. But why confine great information to one medium when it can easily be adapted and extended to websites, social media, contests and sweepstakes, and even retail stores and displays? Think of radio as the catalyst to creating greater presence on other media. Extending content to other media extends reach.

Layla's could turn the party tips into a contest on radio station Facebook pages, asking listeners to share their own "Tips for a Super Party" for the chance to win a home theater system that'll make their guests feel like they're *at* the Super Bowl. Layla's could post a written version of the content on its website, a video version on YouTube, and tweet a tip a day on Twitter. The content could be extended further online, such as providing detailed recipes for the dishes and instructions for making the party decorations. It could even create a thematic display for retail, completing the sales loop.

EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL CONTENT MARKETING ON THE RADIO

So now that we've explored a hypothetical example, let's take a look at a few real-world executions.

MICROSOFT'S "SMALL BUSINESS MINUTE" AND "SMALL BUSINESS SUCCESS STORIES"

Microsoft needed a strong introduction for its Small Business Accounting software. The thinking was that small business leaders want to align themselves with products and companies that help them, not pitch them, and as small businesses they pay close attention to what goes on in their local markets. A series of Microsoft-titled radio programs was created offering advice to small businesses and profiling local business leaders. The on-air content was made available as podcasts on the brand's website. It was extended to a thematic sweepstakes, testimonials by small business owners, and more. As a result of the campaign, Microsoft Small Business Accounting received unprecedented, unaided awareness scores for a new product of 40.8 percent in radio markets. More importantly, sales in campaign-supported markets outperformed non-campaign markets.



AMBI'S "ASK THE BEAUTY EXPERT"

An early innovator in the African-American skincare category, AMBI began facing increased competition from newer brands and needed to make a change to avoid decline—on a limited budget. AMBI focused on its legacy of expertise to re-ignite consumer brand passion. A content series voiced by a popular African-American beauty blogger shared on-air information and advice on skincare and answered listeners' online questions. Listeners who asked the questions were entered into a sweepstakes to win a day of expert beauty and style consultations. This content, combined with the endorsements of female African-American station personalities, repositioned the brand as the expert in skin of color, and resulted in local-market sales lifts that ranged between 20 to 50 percent, an impact that exceeded the brand's TV ROI from previous years.

ABSOLUT 100'S "ONE HUNDRED PLACES TO LIGHT UP THE NIGHT"

Absolut 100 was being introduced in the competitive super-premium spirits category. As part of its brand strategy, Absolut secured sponsorship of Kanye West's "Glow in the Dark Tour" and was also planning sampling events at local nightclubs. The brand targeted its consumers' club-scene lifestyle with 60-second radio programs highlighting popular upscale nightspots in each market. The programs were extended to a sweepstakes that gave listeners the chance to win a high-end sound system just for naming their own favorite nightspot. The campaign also included brand spots, promotion of sampling events, and a sweepstakes tie-in to the Kanye West tour. Because the brand provided valuable content and prizes to listeners, stations were willing to provide more media for its budget. In fact, Absolut received a campaign value that was 30 percent greater than the investment. Not bad for its first foray into radio.

HORMEL "SKI WATCH REPORT"

Hormel wanted active adults to associate Dinty Moore Beef Stew and Hormel Chili with great winter fare. But it couldn't just *tell* this particular target about it; Hormel needed to put the brand in context with the active winter lifestyle. The solution was the Hormel Ski Watch. At the center of the campaign was "The Ski Watch Report," a ski and winter activity report that employed dozens of local-market ski reporters and aired on a custom-built network of hundreds of stations across the country. The Hormel Ski Watch included numerous elements designed to drive sales and exposure, along with retailer-integrated elements to build trade relationships and performance. Among these were exciting thematic contests with major prizes; local and national ski events; extensive Hormel Ski Watch merchandising; a dedicated Ski Watch Report website and phone feed; on-slope sampling; retailer-integrated advertising; and more. The program ran for 15 years. Hormel experienced dramatic sales growth as a result of involvement with the program.



RAM “HEAVY DUTY MOMENTS IN SPORTS”

The RAM 1500 HD pickup truck re-launched with the “Heavy Duty Moments” campaign, tying perfectly into RAM’s heavy-duty features. The series, narrated by sportscaster Dick Stockton, recounted history-making sports stories, pausing at a “cliffhanger” moment for a RAM spot before revealing a twist ending. The two-minute feature grabbed listener attention outside stop sets, told hard-working success stories that resonated with the truck’s consumer, and tied these stories back to product features and benefits. As part of a larger on-air effort that included sweepstakes, dealer appearances, and more, the content helped generate a 56 percent sales increase during the campaign.

JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE’S “DRIVING ADVENTURE”

Jeep was introducing its Selec-Terrain feature, which adjusted the vehicle to different terrain and weather conditions. More than 350 local radio programs were created on outdoor events and activities, each aligned with a Selec-Terrain setting. The content extended to station weather sponsorships linking the day’s weather to a Selec-Terrain setting, a “Choose Your Own Adventure” sweepstakes with trip destinations matching each terrain and weather condition, and more. All of these elements were focused on the target consumer’s adventurous lifestyle. Stations appreciated getting useful content and exciting prizes for their listeners. As a result, Jeep received 43 percent added media value for its budget.

BEST PRACTICES FOR CONTENT ON THE RADIO

Repurpose existing content. Too often when brands think about content, they feel compelled to seek outside sources of information when the best content creators might be sitting in the next office. For example, Unilever has executive chefs; USAA has financial experts. Consider your internal assets first; you’ll often find they have perfect information for consumers and will certainly reinforce your brand message in delivering it.

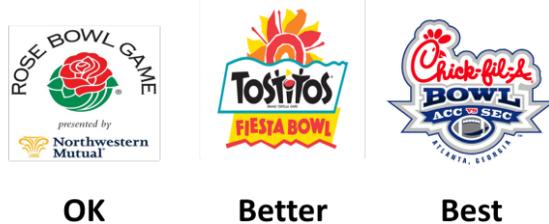
Local is better. An audience’s ears are attracted to local references. Products that position themselves as part of the community earn loyalty and are remembered.

Tag content with station call letters. One way to make content local is to give some ownership of the content to the local station. Stations have cache with audiences. Concluding a content piece with something like “...keep listening for more right here on KC101” adds credibility and implies station endorsement.

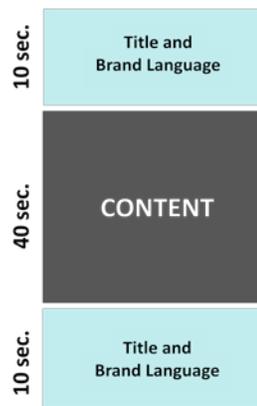
Take title sponsorship. Title sponsorships tell consumers the sponsor is *providing* the content, not simply *buying* it from someone else and lending its name to it. Advertisers with title sponsorships are recalled far more than advertisers tagged onto content under “presented by” or “sponsored by.”

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Consider the subtle differences between these three examples of college football bowl sponsorships:



1. It's okay that the Rose Bowl Game was "presented by Northwestern Mutual." The sponsorship garnered some brand exposure, but probably not a whole lot of recall.
2. It's better when a brand actually is part of the title of the game, such as the Tostitos Fiesta Bowl. (It also doesn't hurt if your logo matches almost perfectly in design and color with the Fiesta Bowl.)
3. It's best, though, when the brand actually *is* the title of the game. You can't find the Peach Bowl anymore in the bowl lineup; it has been replaced by the Chick-fil-A Bowl.



Wrap content with your brand message. Use the beginning of the content piece to introduce listeners to the series and set up the link between your brand and what they are about to hear. Use the end of the content piece to loop back to your brand message and call listeners to action—whether to find your product at a retail partner, take advantage of a special offer, visit the brand website for more information, or simply to purchase.

Be mindful of the balance between product messaging and real content. Honest, solid information will set up the product message much better than a disguised effort to make a self-serving advertisement sound like editorial.

Content should change daily. Keep it fresh. No one listens to the same newscast or sportscast over again. Repeating content will suggest to listeners they may be hearing advertising and generate the same negative result.

Promote. Content should be promoted by the radio station with appropriate brand and call-to-action language. This will not only increase awareness and frequency for your message, it will call attention to the brand's enterprise in providing relevant information to its consuming public.



Content marketing on the radio continues to evolve, with more options and opportunities than ever.

IN CONCLUSION

Blatantly or not, with content marketing you are making a deal with consumers. You are going to provide something they want to hear. It will entertain them, inform them, or teach them. It will impart meaning about the world. It will help satisfy their human needs. In return, you are asking them to listen to what you are going to say about your brand. Your content has primed them—and now you are ready to deliver your message.

Radio has an enormous reach. It is easy to target a specific demographic. You can have an idea for a campaign in the morning and have it on the air by the afternoon. And you can change copy as needed. Radio production is relatively inexpensive. So is content creation.

Radio is the oldest medium for true content marketing, although it was called something else in its early days. It continues to evolve, with more options and opportunities than ever. Take advantage of all it has to offer, as long as you find that sweet spot between the consumer and the brand. That's the Holy Grail.

About CRN International

CRN International (www.crnradio.com) uses radio differently to solve marketing challenges for major brands. It excels in using non-traditional promotional tactics, including content marketing, to separate brand messages from the clutter and to generate measurable results. It is based in Hamden, CT, and has offices in New York; Minneapolis; Detroit; and Hershey, PA.

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