Why Authentic Content Marketing Matters Now More Than Ever by @krisjonescom

As we all write about the best tactics to get our content discovered or the best practices for SEO and branding, there's one valuable component that's left out of the conversation.

I'd argue that authentic content marketing, above all, is the most effective way to market to millennials, younger audiences, and prospective customers not immediately interested in your products or services.

According to one survey, 84 percent of millennials stated that they don't like advertising at all. The world is becoming more tech savvy and media literate.

To define our terms correctly, authenticity means honesty. Your audience can spot false advertising or a brand attempting to cash in on a trend from a mile away.

Consider Pepsi's disastrous Kendall Jenner commercial and how poorly it was received. Even Ram trucks caught a lot of flack after the Super Bowl for their use of Martin Luther King's speeches to sell its trucks.

When content is honest and transparent it sparks deep reflection and conversation. In industry terms, authenticity is the key to customer engagement.

Authenticity in content marketing is obviously an indispensable component of branding, but there good ways and poor ways to try and communicate authenticity.

Read more and I'll share my ideas on how you can communicate your authenticity through your content to improve your customer relations.

The Power of Authenticity

Online reputation management is often left out of the conversation when discussing SEO, even though it greatly impacts marketing strategies.

According to one survey, 84 percent of customers trust online reviews as much as recommendations from friends. Furthermore, all it takes is one bad review or press article for people to form a negative opinion of your business.

Why do consumers take so much stock in the opinions of others? Well, they're not biased; they're authentic, even if sometimes mistaken.

As consumers and even citizens, we are susceptible to the cult of personality. Our opinions are heavily biased by media and gossip.

Research shows time and time again that consumers' buying decisions are primarily influenced by our emotions, not logic.

This is why some brands, like Apple, are mostly seen as infallible in our eyes.

So what does this all have to do with authenticity?

Well, authenticity is not concerned with statistics or even logic, it's simply about being honest.

What does this provide to us as brands? Trust!

According to a survey by Cohn and Wolfe, three-quarters of people don't believe companies are transparent and even credible.

One of the best ways to improve your credibility is with authentic content. Let's explain some of the benefits and then some easy strategies you can undertake to improve your content campaign.

The Basic Principles of Authentic Content Marketing

Creating authentic content is not hard, but there are some strategies you need to consider.

- **Find your voice.** Are you humorous, authoritative, or even a little strange?
- **Provide consistency throughout content campaigns.** Don’t try to break the stream of informative content with humorous quips.
- **Know your niche and its audience.** An HVAC company should not be trying its hand at political satire.
- **Don’t be afraid to write from your perspective.** You’re an authority, are you not?
- **Maintain relevance.** Everything from the title tag and meta description to the page copy itself should be relevant to each other.
- **Be respectful to your audience when responding to comments on social media or on your website.**

The Benefits of Authenticity in Content

- Refines your audience focus by reaching specific people more likely to engage with your content.
- Makes content more readable and relatable, increasing engagement.
- Adds value to your content by making you an authority.
- Informs readers about a particular need.
- Leaves your brand top-of-mind in future searches or purchasing decisions.
- Leads to brand loyalty and maybe even advocacy.
- Seeks to increase customer retention by providing value.

- Encourages user-generated content and positive reviews.

Authentic content and personalized content will not apply to everyone in your niche, but that’s alright.

By fine-tuning your audience size, you can find the people most likely to convert or be interested in your brand. In turn, this helps to establish repeat customers or the 20 percent of your customers who make up 80 percent of purchases.

As a side note, brand consistency should be true of all of your marketing channels.

In terms of creating authority in your niche and reaching more customers, you must follow SEO best practices. This includes everything from having a fast site with sound technical structure to optimizing meta tags to show up for relevant searches.

Content Marketing Tips for Authentic Campaigns

Personalize Content

As stated before, it’s important to find your voice so that it can stand out from the rest.

Personalize content with your own research, screenshots, industry experience, and so forth to position yourself as an authority in your niche. This strategy is especially valuable for blogs and guest posting.

Consider Rand Fiskin’s Whiteboard Fridays and how many views they gather on a weekly basis.

For myself, I created an Ask Me Anything series with 100 videos in 2017. Throughout the series, I talked about everything from digital marketing trends to entrepreneurship

and growth marketing.

I received very positive feedback on the series, especially for my honesty and interest in connecting with my audience.

In a world driven by a cult of personalities, it’s key to personalize content and seek out your own personal branding campaign to become an influencer or industry thought leader.

Brand storytelling and behind-the-scenes content is also a great strategy to make your content relatable. Conduct customer surveys and share results to keep customers engaged with your brand.

Seek Social Proof

So how do you prove that your business and your brand is actually credible and legit? Provide evidence through social proof.

Strategies include:

- Garnering positive reviews for service.
- Publishing customer testimonials on your site.
- Sharing user-generated content.

In terms of writing the content itself, provide reliable statistics and facts from reputable sources. Back up claims with empirical or even logical evidence to make your points inarguable.

In an industry as opinionated and open-ended as digital marketing, we’re all familiar with the need for social proof to make our content endearing.

Be Engaging

Remember, content marketing and social media marketing go together like peanut butter and jelly. Always share content, especially user-generated content, over social media to reach

your most loyal brand advocates.

Engage with audience members on all of your marketing channels to maximize your content’s impact and showcase your authenticity.

Hold honest debates and conversations on industry forums or your own social media page to garner this engagement.

Engagement should extend beyond marketing channels as well. Get involved in your industry, whether it’s attending conferences, providing keynote speeches, or even sponsoring events. This not only shows your involvement in the industry, but your authority as well.

Focus on Users

In the end, all content should be focused on the end-user experience. This means that you need to do the proper keyword research and audience analysis beforehand to discover topics and problems that directly affect your user base.

Provide value through informative content that seeks to provide solutions simultaneously.

Authenticity aside, this should just be a core part of your content marketing strategy.

Connect All Marketing Channels

Finally, there’s something truly magical when everything comes together for that one magical campaign.

Think back to Nike’s Find Your Greatness campaign during the Olympics that connected with so many customers. With a mix of traditional ads and online digital marketing, Nike was not looking to extend its brand, but make it more trustworthy among its customers.

By capturing the right moment that conforms to your brand’s values you can create a truly memorable campaign. That’s why it’s important to always employ consistency throughout your marketing channels.

Position your voice and brand early to be an authority and invaluable to your industry.

Final Thoughts

Nowhere do I ever see the word authenticity ever included in SEO best practices. In truth, your brand and personality are all you really have in the online world so fostering trust is tantamount.

Position your brand as an authority through personalized and powerful content.

Become the cult of personality!

More Content Marketing Resources:

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