



The Secret to Winning the Content Creation War

By Adriana Langford

We are in a content creation arms race.

Brands have realised that creating content is now your best weapon of choice to rank high in Google, engage with your customers and be a thought leader in your industry. So writers are the new digital age hired guns and given instructions to crank it out. Blog posts are published, ebooks are written and whitepapers are whipped together.

The problem is that we end up with written drivel that is so bland that I want to throw up! It has no character, is written for key search engine phrases that dominate the headline and the text. We see posts with no personality or humanity.

Just algorithmic awfulness.



Has Google created a monster?

This content creation strategy threatens to turn our minds to mush, our thoughts to self harm and make us fall asleep at the screen. Part of the reason this is happening is that Google has rolled out changes to its algorithm. It is rewarding unique content above keyword stuffed SEO laden text articles on corporate websites and blogs.

This is driving corporate marketing tactics that are about SEO and not about contagious writing. SEO should be in the mix but it should not dominate.

Will we end up with articles written by robots?

Is this the future?

In a recent article on Wired they reported a

news story written by "Narrative Science". This isn't a person but a computer that writes news stories. Here is the piece.

"Friona fell 10-8 to Boys Ranch in five innings on Monday at Friona despite racking up seven hits and eight runs. Friona was led by a flawless day at the dish by Hunter Sundre, who went 2-2 against Boys Ranch pitching. Sundre singled in the third inning and tripled in the fourth inning ... Friona piled up the steals, swiping eight bags in all ... "

It doesn't read like a computer wrote it. Kristian Hammond the co-founder of Narrative science is predicting that within 15 years that more than 90% of news could be written by a robot!

Now the technology behind narrative is cool but it isn't the future for bloggers and content marketers. The future is the art of creating content that is memorable, creative and contagious...Oh yes, begs to be shared!

How do you do that?

Tips for winning at content creation

Despite that glimpse into what is happening now and what could happen in 15 years, here are some tips to make your articles zing and zang.

1. Create an opening line that pops

This is easy to say but sometimes hard to do. But have a go. You are not going to do this every time but think hard about that opening line.



2. Use facts that surprise

I remember stumbling upon the fact that Snapchat was offered \$3 billion in cash by Facebook. Then and there I decided it had to be woven into a blog post.

Sometimes they even get corralled out of the post and tweeted!!

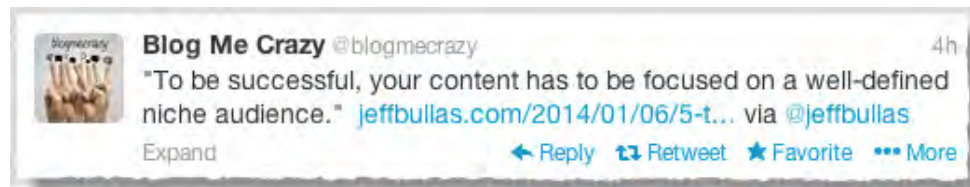


3. Insert insights that are not obvious

Have you ever read an article and everything seem regurgitated. You thought “nothing new here“.. moving on. Insights within and industry or niche come from persistent reading and the blood sweat and tears of creation and expression.

One that dawned upon my consciousness, was that your owned online properties should be treated as assets. Just like a car or a bricks and mortar building.

Here is another one.



4. Make up a creative subtitle

We often play safe so that often means boring. Make your sub-titles interesting. Put on your inspiration pants.

If it gets tweeted you know you might be on to something!



5. Use rhythm in your writing

Write long sentences and short. Writing has rhythm and it adds to the interest. Sentences can be two words.

Try it.

6. Break the rules

Your writing teacher may have told you to get to the point. One of my favourite magazine writers is Top Gear’s Jeremy Clarkson. He breaks this rule in almost every article. I counted the words in his intro before he got to the point. 1,000 words....but it works.

They also may have told you other rules that are often constraining. Formal and proper is what the English teacher taught you. Now people expect a more casual style of writing.

Writing how you speak or “conversational writing” is needed on a social web.

8. Develop a voice that is original

Finding your writing voice is a journey. At first you will copy, then curate and finally you will create and weave your own unique voice. Push your boundaries.

9. Include visuals in your articles

The age of text, text and more text is over. We live on a visual web that demands multi-media and images.

10. Use statistics that are mind blowing

Whenever you come across some statistics that grab your attention, think how you could use that in blog posts or articles. If it grabs your attention then it will most likely have a similar impact on your readers.

Put it in the opening paragraph.



11. Write a title that is not ordinary

I remember driving along one day and had an inane idea about a blog post topic. It was "10 Reasons Why Ducks Just Don't Get Social Media". I stopped the car and wrote it down with a few relevant points. It took me a few weeks to be brave enough to publish.

Guess what? It worked.



Don't be afraid to push your comfort zone.

12. Ask an unlikely question

Pose a question that is unexpected. Here is one that resonated for me "Are brands out publishing traditional media companies?"

If the title gets repurposed you know you hit a home run.



13. Use stories

Don't forget to include stories. That is what makes us human. Robot writers struggle with that.

14. Practice, practice, practice

Creating memorable, insightful and contagious content comes from the mundane. The art and craft of just sitting down to do the work. So practice and practice some more.

The inspiration will show up!

So what is the secret?

Be human. We are innately creative. Humanity mixed with technology equals magic!

What other tips can you add to winning in the content creation arms race? Look forward to your insights and stories in the comments below.

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