

HOW TO
CRAFT
CONTENT
CAMPAIGNS
THAT INSPIRE
ACTION

9MM*pr*

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The Content Conundrum

It's no secret.

Making an impact in today's fiercely competitive B2B marketplaces isn't easy. Not just because of the noise you've got to compete with.

But because people have become adept at shutting '**The Noise**' out.

Having developed a form of selective attention, they can quickly identify valuable information - the stuff they can use to move themselves forward - and instinctively repel the rest.

The challenge then, for content creators, for marketers, for business owners and for You, is to craft compelling, value rich content your intended audience will want to consume and can't afford to ignore.

I'm assuming, if you're reading this, you know what you've got to do. The question you want answered, is how do you do it?

Step right this way. You're in the right place.

Time to Refocus

It's not that you can't create compelling content.

In my experience, most B2B businesses have everything they need to do so. The problem is the tendency to put the needs of your business before the needs of your consumers.

Instead of creating content that leads the reader to a better place, you focus instead on selling the benefits of your particular brand of stuff.

Of course, you do. It's what you specialise in. It's what you're passionate about. And it's what you believe in. All noble reasons.

Unfortunately, it also ultimately results in salesy, me too copy and content that does little to:

- Distinguish you from your competition.
- Emphasise why you are your market's perfect partner.

Worse, with little to differentiate one supplier from the next, larger, more recognisable brands are winning the lion share of business by default.

NOT because they are **BETTER**, but because their brand is more recognisable, they feel like the safest option.

The problem is, when you focus on **WHAT** you do, you fail to answer the most important questions every buyer subconsciously asks when gauging the suitability of a supplier.

- Is what you're saying of personal interest to me?
- Can I trust you to do what needs to be done?
- Are you the kind of people I can work with?

Supplier Choice Has Got to Feel Right

It's scientifically proven. How a buyer feels about you is critical¹.

While the features and benefits of your service may appeal to the grey matter, B2B supplier selection is the domain of the heart and gut².

Buyers are drawn to those people and businesses they feel

1. Understand them
2. Have their best interests at heart
3. Are driven by similar principles and values

To be successful in this emotional environment B2B businesses must stop selling and start producing content that:

- Demonstrates empathy for your audience's current situation and the obstacles that frustrate their forward momentum
- Tells authentic stories that connect on a deep emotional level
- Clearly communicates the values and principles that drive their business

Product and service quality will always be important. But, how you communicate with your market, the messages you choose and the stories you tell, will be the true measures of your success.

¹ How Customers Think: Gerald Zaltsman, [Harvard Business School Press](#), 2003

² How Personal Emotions Fuel B2B Purchases, [Forbes](#), 2014

Activate Your Audience

Creating persuasive content. The kind that motivates, affirmative action, requires a precision process.

One that enables you to avoid the bland banality that blights so much B2B bumf and instead, delivers engaging insights that excites the people you want to influence.

This document has been developed to walk you through one such powerful process.

We call it 'The Audience Activation Approach'.

It's the process that drives all our content campaigns. Campaigns that have caught the media's attention, filled empty pipelines with leads and helped generate 100,000s worth of revenue for our clients.

To demonstrate its effectiveness, however, we thought we'd choose a campaign that had nothing to do with making money but instead who's entire purpose was to move people to act.

After all, that's the true purpose of content.

To trigger meaningful, mutually beneficial action.

How We Help bet365 Attract the UK's Top IT Talent

When bet365 approached us, it was the same company it is today. A market leading technology business that actively encourages an entrepreneurial culture of investigation and innovation.

The key difference - because it had kept a low profile, not much was known about the business. As a result, the technology division was struggling to attract the technical talent needed to maintain its leadership position.

Media exposure would certainly help to raise the company's profile. However, for the campaign to be successful, it had to steer people away from their career comfort zones (London's technology hub) and towards something new and untested (an online betting company in Stoke-on-Trent).

This would require more than the usual boasts of great working environments and competitive company benefits.

Things have changed a bit now, but back in 2010 the IT community was passive when it came to job seeking. To motivate action, we needed something eye opening.

If we pitched bet365 using the same features and benefits as every other business, the messages would just be more white noise for the media and IT community to ignore.

And we would have failed at our job.

We needed a convincing argument. One that demonstrated bet365 was not just worthy of their target market's attention but a place in which they could entrust their careers.

For such an approach to work, we'd need to know what mattered most to the audience. Once we understood what drove them, we could identify the proof points needed to credibly establish bet365 as the company where those needs would be met.

Phase 1: Audience Investigation

Every business is multifaceted. On one level there's your products, your people and your process. Dig deeper and you find your experience, expertise and the results you achieve by applying them.

Dig further still and you find the values that drive the business - the foundation stones of your customer mission and vision.

The question is, where do you focus your message? Which aspects should you choose, so that what you say exerts the greatest pull on your prospects?

In principle the answer to these questions is deceptively simple. You focus on the things that matter most to your market.

The challenge of course, is finding out what those things are.

For that you must ask them.

This is crucial. When you take the time to speak with your target market, you'll discover everything you need to know to sell to them.

No need for back room brainstorm sessions or guesswork. They'll tell you exactly where to focus your key messages and campaign content.

They'll tell you what they want, why they want it and why they are struggling to get it. Each of these elements are crucial. They enable you to unearth the person's hopes and dreams, their fears and their frustrations.

These are the triggers that encourage them to act.

Their discomfort drives them away from their current situation and their aspirations push them towards something better.

Understand First

Rather than ask them about their job seeking habits or to describe their perfect job, we sought instead to understand their current situation:

- What they liked and disliked about their current roles
- Where they found satisfaction in their work and where it didn't meet their expectations
- Where they wanted their careers to take them and the challenges that got in the way of their achieving these goals

Our investigation demonstrated that the target audience was motivated by 3 key drivers:

- To feel like they are contributing to something meaningful
- To challenge the norm and be challenged by their work
- To feel valued for the contribution they make

In many cases we found that employers weren't meeting these needs. Worse many working environments actively worked against their achievement.

Many felt undervalued or bogged down by political hierarchies. There was under investment in new tools and technologies, which inhibited their own career progression and ability to get the job done.

There was also the belief that this is just how things are and there was little they could do to change their circumstances. That, even if they changed employer, their situation wouldn't improve.

By understanding the audience's current situation both in terms of their aspirations and their frustrations, we had a powerful roadmap for where to focus the bet365 message.

Phase 2: Narrative Coherence

Armed with a clear picture of what motivated our audience, we spoke with key members of staff to find out how bet365 met the aspirations highlighted in the first phase and identify the evidence needed to back up our claims.

Talking the talk is one thing but to gain real buy-in from your audience, you have to prove that you can walk the walk.

Both the media and the public at large are primed to repel vacuous superficiality and false promises. So, it's vital to back up any claims with real proof.

Our in-house investigation revealed a company at the forefront of technical innovation. One that gave its development teams the tools, support and freedom needed to innovate.

We found a company that consistently encouraged its people to strike out into unfamiliar territory, to find solutions to the complex challenges of this fast growth internet business.

This gave us our content sweet spot. The place of rich storytelling that would become the cornerstone of our campaign, supported by 3 pillars that remain the same today as they were then:

- The scale and scope of bet365's in-house technical development and supporting architecture.
- The innovative approaches and technologies utilised to help overcome key technical challenges that few companies have had to combat before.
- The techno-entrepreneurial culture that's been established and how this gives the IT department (now a separate business) the freedom to make a meaningful contribution.

Hone Your Message

The copy below offers a strong example of how we integrate the above hooks into the messaging.

Founded in 2000 in North Staffordshire, bet365 is the world's largest online sports betting business.

The company employs more than 3,000 people, is live in 18 languages and delivers an unrivalled online experience to over 21 million customers worldwide.

Giving its development teams the freedom to innovate is key to its success. Today bet365 continues to push technological boundaries and break new ground in software innovation.

Each line has been composed with the target audience in mind. It doesn't speak to customers or investors. It is directed squarely at the IT community and their dreams of a job where they can make a meaningful difference.

This messaging has become the cornerstone of the PR campaign. What's more, it's been adopted by the business.

Its influence can be felt on the corporate website, in company literature and within every press release, case study and opinion piece we place in the media.

Phase 3: Campaign Planning

Having completed phase 1 & 2, we had the map we needed to design the media campaign.

The job would be to tell the bet365 story in a compelling way and maintain momentum by reporting on the ongoing work taking place within its four walls.

As a result, we placed the following 3 key elements at the heart of the campaign content:

- The new technologies the company adopts
- The inventive use of these technologies and the innovation they deliver
- The people and culture that makes this innovation possible

By doing so, we continue to demonstrate bet365's commitment to creating a working environment that celebrates its staff's talent and achievements.

One where every team member has the chance to make a meaningful difference and is given the tools and freedom to do so.

Every word written and interview completed is designed to destroy preconceived assumptions that all working environments are the same and to instil the belief that the audience's career aspirations can be met at bet365.

This is not spin. We do not embellish the truth. We speak authentically and openly about what is actually happening in the business.

The reason we are successful, is we know exactly where to focus our content creation.

Phase 4: Execution

To truly connect with the audience, they should feel like we were talking directly to them. This is why we rarely do anything via a press release. We find them too impersonal.

We want to build a relationship with the reader and find the best way to achieve this goal is through 1-2-1 interviews and authored articles.

These activities give us the means to talk directly to the audience in their language.

If a press release is necessary, we ensure that the voice of each spokesperson can be clearly heard. Rather than leaving the quote to the end, we use them liberally throughout, so that it's more like a conversation.

You can see examples of our testimonial driven press releases in the appendix at the back of this document.

By letting the people who work on each project tell its story, we create engaging tour guides who our audience can relate to. Because they are people just like them.

It gives us a way to do a deep dive on the project and provide greater insight into both the working environment and the kind of people that bet365 attracts.

Each interview is recorded so that we can capture the exact language the technical community uses and reflect it in the copy and content.

Take the company's use of Erlang, a programming language that's helped them smash through the limitations of traditional technologies.

Rather than develop a press release that announced its adoption, we instead increased the impact of the coverage through briefings and opinion pieces.

This has meant that we've been able to build a more compelling story that demonstrates:

- The value bet365 places on innovation
- The investment the company is willing to make in new technologies
- The enthusiasm and commitment of its people

Below are links to some coverage highlights:

<http://www.computing.co.uk/ctg/analysis/2398561/why-bet365-made-the-switch-to-erlang>

<http://www.techrepublic.com/blog/european-technology/how-to-scale-online-services-for-millions-of-users-without-losing-vital-data/>

<http://www.techworld.com/apps/how-bet365-solved-reliability-scalability-by-swapping-java-for-erlang-3600737/>

<http://www.information-age.com/technology/applications-and-development/123459196/why-bet365-swapped-java-erlang>

<https://www.infoq.com/articles/key-lessons-learned-from-transition-to-nosql>

Epilogue

Since embarking on the IT recruitment campaign, bet365's IT department has grown by many hundreds of people. This has helped the company to smash through development milestones, invent new ways of working and produce innovative services that helps to maintain their leadership position.

We are told that the coverage we generate is mentioned in the majority of interviews.

Lessons Learned

We are constantly debriefing our work to see how we can improve what we do. Below are 5 key takeaways that we've learnt during our work with bet365. We hope you find them useful.

1. When developing the strategic direction of your PR programmes and content campaigns, don't succumb to the temptation to look at your business first. Start with your audience and their key drivers.
2. Ensure your messaging and positioning consistently refers back to the key audience drivers identified during your research.
3. Seek evidence for each of your key messages and put it at the heart of your campaign.
4. This is a constantly evolving process. As your business grows and evolves, ensure that your content, copy and evidence continues to keep pace with it.
5. Use your spokespeople to tell a more compelling and human story that offers greater insight into your company and the products and services it provides.

If you haven't read the bet365 case study that accompanies this guide, you can check it out [here](#).

About 9MM PR

9MM is a strategic communications consultancy that helps the owners and marketing directors of B2B businesses to build presence, pipeline and profits.

We specialise in the creation of compelling sales and marketing content that showcases your exceptional talents and demonstrates your unique ability to get results.

About the Author

Alex has been helping to position B2B businesses at the very head of their industries for well over a decade.

His journey began at Bite, one of the UK's leading communications groups, where he learned the art of public relations and became a specialist in thought leadership.

It was in that converted Fire Station in Chiswick that he devised and executed campaigns for some of the biggest technology brands in the world. Brands like Samsung, Lycos and BT.

Since then he has worked on many more. Some you will have heard of bet365, Avaya, Marvel, Ministry of Sound and Phillips.

Some you may not. Challenger brands that he's helped to punch above their weight.

Today he continues to use his skills to help the owners of established B2B businesses to achieve their vision by creating content driven campaigns that influence and attract their most profitable prospects.

By helping his clients to demonstrate the value of their skills, knowledge and expertise, he's helped build pipeline worth hundreds of thousands of pounds.

Appendix: 2 Testimonial Driven Press Release Examples

bet365 Selects SwiftStack for Move into Object Storage

26th May, 2016: bet365, the world's largest online gambling company has today announced its move into object storage with the implementation of SwiftStack. The aim of the deployment is to reduce the complexity and cost of managing the massive amount of data that is generated by the business.

"As our data footprint continues to grow on a massive scale, it's becoming more challenging to store, access and manage," said James Nightingale, Principal Systems Architect, bet365. "We currently have over 3 petabytes of block storage on SAN and NAS systems. It's an expensive way of doing things and challenging to scale."

After a successful Proof of Concept, SwiftStack was chosen because of the simplicity of the solution. The initial deployment is to be hosted across two of bet365's primary datacentres.

"We looked at a few alternatives but felt that SwiftStack's laser focus on object storage best suited our needs. By adding more functionality or by including object storage in existing solutions, other vendors had made their products less effective and overcomplicated," said Nightingale.

bet365 is already looking to scale this out to other core datacentres, which is where the simplicity of the underlying SwiftStack architecture really pays off. Other products tested by the company, didn't allow for expansion across multiple sites and regions, without significant complexity and cost burdens.

"The SwiftStack platform can grow with the business, when and where the business needs it," said Nightingale.

The move to object storage will not only give the company greater access to and control of its varied data sets but also enable bet365 to leverage the cost efficiencies of commodity hardware and open source software.

"Our SwiftStack solution means we no longer need to use enterprise grade servers and software. This is the first time that bet365 will host a production system on commodity hardware with open source load balancer technology," said Nightingale.

In addition to its SAN and NAS systems, bet365 has traditionally written a large quantity of its data to tape and stored it offsite. Once offsite, it's a real challenge to access. Initially the SwiftStack solution will ensure that bet365's data can be stored online where it can be easily accessed and managed by the infrastructure team.

"Today, this is very much an infrastructure initiative. However, we are certain that as the wider organisation engages and benefits from the new solution, we will build further use cases across the business," said Nightingale

The SwiftStack solution is expected to go live in the third quarter of 2016.

"The most demanding new web applications with millions of concurrent users simply require a new breed of storage for their data," said Joe Arnold, Founder and CPO, SwiftStack. "We are always pleased to work with innovative organizations at the vanguard of technology, and are honoured to have been selected as the object storage solution for bet365's platform."

About bet365

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www.bet365careers.com

bet365 Begins UK Expansion in Manchester

bet365 announces recruitment drive for first satellite office

6th April, 2016: bet365, the world's largest online gambling company has today announced that it will open its first satellite technology office in Manchester's Spring Gardens. The company is looking to recruit 50-70 people to support its development teams in Stoke-on-Trent.

bet365's Manchester office opens early May. The company is in the process of recruiting candidates and has already started on-boarding new recruits in Stoke.

"It's difficult to recruit to one location when you have the demand for IT talent that bet365 does," said Dom Hawley, Head of Software Development at bet365. "We've found exceptional people in Stoke but it's clear that we now need to expand our operation outside of the local area to grow our development teams further."

Manchester has been chosen for the first phase of bet365's technology expansion because of its excellent reputation as a tech centre and strong commuter links to Stoke and the rest of the North of England.

"Manchester was the obvious choice for establishing a blueprint for our growth. It has a superb technology culture. It's close enough to Stoke that people can move between offices if necessary and the commuter links are such that we may also attract people from further afield," said Dom.

bet365 is looking for both seasoned professionals as well as those new to development to work across a range of projects. Employees will have the opportunity to help advance the company's back office trading applications, User Interface, middleware, information security and web development for its Sports and Gaming products.

"We will start in the areas where we have the work backlog but the remote office will be a great opportunity to extend resource across each of our product areas," said Dom.

Each new staff member will spend their first few weeks in Stoke. This on-boarding process has already started and will include being introduced to their team and brought up to speed on the technology, tools and projects they'll be working on.

Warren Hughes will be the Head of Systems Development in the Manchester office and has said that “The recruitment in Manchester has started off extremely positive and is already proving to be a location that can offer us highly skilled software development professionals who are passionate about technology.”

“We wanted to ensure we offered a range of work options as well as clear career progression. This is not going to be an unstructured group of remote workers engaged in autonomous tasks. They will be a fully integrated part of the bet365 business,” said Dom.

Following its successful partnership with Keele, bet365 is also working to build relationships with Manchester’s Universities. The company is interested in talking to the Heads of Computer Science and finding ways to engage with the student body.

“Our work with Keele University and the success of our graduate intake has demonstrated the important role that graduates will play in bet365's future. We’ve found that when you get people in early, you can help them develop both their skills and shape the right mindset for the journey ahead,” said Dom.

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