

Accurately Tell Your Brand Story in a Fragmented World

by Michael Weissman

Are you looking to build your brand and create a lasting, positive image in the market? The challenge is often these stories must be communicated through partners (resellers, bloggers and others) and their websites. That's where the trouble begins.

Communicating our brand stories through others online is tricky. As soon as important marketing and product content is distributed to partners, several key problems emerge. The first problem is accuracy. Partners don't always use the correct marketing content. The second problem is the partner usually doesn't have enough space to tell the whole story on the website. This causes them to pick and choose which parts of the story get told. As a result, marketers lose complete visibility and control over their brand. The third problem is, over time, the content on the site gets stale or becomes obsolete and inaccurate. The final problem is the content tends to be elemental—meaning only one kind of content (a video, a slide show, an image, etc.). The total brand story is rarely told in an integrated, organized fashion.

Today, national brand owners must rely more on partners to tell their stories for them. As content gets dispersed across the web to partners, there is no way for marketers to know where the content goes. Marketers don't know where their un-tethered content elements go, who uses them, or whether they are up to date. Marketers are now stuck with ceding control over their online brand experience to information technology (IT) managers who control reseller websites or news sites. As a result, marketers face an ongoing tug-of-war battle between widespread distribution of the brand experience, and the desire to ensure its consistent and complete delivery.

Worse yet, shoppers have short attention spans and consume content in smaller bits and from multiple sources at different times. This results in highly fragmented and disjointed brand stories. Imagine watching a movie one minute per

day in 120 days. If you did that, you'd never understand the story being told. It would be too disjointed. Well, that's where Internet marketing has been heading. Marketers spread their content across multiple locations. They put one element of the story on a reseller's site, another element in a news article, some more on social media or YouTube and so forth. How often does the viewer see the whole picture? Rarely.

What's a marketer to do? How do you ensure the story received is accurate and up to date? Clearly, new tools and new approaches are needed.

The Consistency Factor

The need to deliver a consistently accurate story is even more critical for dietary supplement and functional food brands where product accuracy is a must. Customers need to have confidence in the trustworthiness of something they put in their body. Consumers want clarity about why products are beneficial or "right" for them. This creates an opportunity for brands to help establish trust by guiding them through the purchase process and delivering product information with simplicity. But informative content is not enough: it must be correct, accurate and up to date. Consistency of content is vital to make sure customers have the right information for safety considerations, too. Customers need to really understand, with confidence, what they are buying and the important distinctions in product offerings.

Today's marketers finally have access to tools that let them regain control over their brand and product content online.

Finding a Practical Way Forward

New tools have emerged that can help marketers get control over their online brand stories. When looking for the right tool, consider the following five simple approaches to overcome this problem.

1 Control your story. If you have a story to tell, you must tell it well and keep the story accurate—everywhere it goes online. You cannot allow

for your channel to misinform your customers any more. Tools exist. There are no more excuses.

2 Tell a bigger story. Don't fragment your story. Tell more of your story on more places by creating integrated marketing components that can be shared with your partners. This means integrating video with PDFs, HTML5 and so forth. Research shows a nine-times improvement in effectiveness when combining content together.

3 Automate your content distribution. Using new distribution technologies allows for easy sharing of brand content—without resorting to manually sending static content that instantly gets out of date.

4 Maintain control. Centrally manage your content in a way that ensures control over your entire message—no matter where it goes online. Use remote content management tools that can update content across the web without handing over the storytelling to your partners.

5 Measure, measure and measure again. You manage what you measure. Find tools that will allow you to see what content is working, how much of the story is being heard, where it is being delivered and how much interaction people are having with the content.

By taking these five steps, marketers should be able to tell their whole story, in a compelling way, on partner sites while maintaining complete control over their brand experience. Only then will you build a lasting brand in this highly distributed marketing climate. ■



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